

# Democracy and the Making of the President's Cabinet in Nigeria: A Reflection of the Olusegun Obasanjo's and Goodluck Jonathan's Cabinets

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## ABSTRACT

*The Presidency, especially in Federal systems, holds peculiar and haunting fascination for scholars in their attempts to diagnose the workings of modern governments. The increasing powers of the Presidency, the recurrent debates over their use or abuse and the continuous interrogation of the extent of the legitimate use of such powers, invariably compel attention to the study of the Presidency. In Nigeria, a critical inquiry that goes beyond the surface seems to be long overdue and an appraisal of the making of a Presidential cabinet appears a vital part of the advancement of knowledge in this regard. Thus, this study is a review of democracy and the making of the presidential cabinet in Nigeria with a reflection of the Olusegun Obasanjo's and the Goodluck Jonathan's Cabinets. The aims are (i) to investigate the role of the President as crisis manager when a nation faces serious internal security challenges; (ii) to appraise the President's role as manager of the economy – especially when fiscal and monetary policies are set in the context of double – digit inflation and severe economic dislocations; and (iii) to assess the interactions between the President, the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and the National Assembly. The study reveals among many others that for the President to be effective he needs a cabinet that fully understands what he wants to achieve, the way he wants to go about it and the time he wants to achieve it. In fact, the president needs a cabinet that shares in his vision of development for the country. Sequel to the above, the president should rely more on expertise and competence by lifting square peg into square holes.*

**Keywords:** *Presidential cabinet, donated appointment, Federal systems*

## INTRODUCTION

In more advanced democracies like the United States, the selection of cabinet Ministers may take the form of Search Committees, Screening Committees or an individual loyal to the President who clears recommended names. In the regime of George W. Bush, for instance, Dick Cheney his Vice President, served as the

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clearing house. Of course, it is not difficult to understand why Cheney was saddled with such a huge assignment. He was the Secretary of Defence to the Senior Bush and, as such, a trusted ally of the Bush family. He was also a very experienced politician and technocrat. He was Halliburton's top executive for many years. Whereas the selection process in the United States looks more or less like a straightforward business, it is not so in Nigeria. Here, it takes the form of intense politics, lobbying, blackmail, nepotism and partisanship. Some even add mystical powers! The Constitution recognizes the high-stake nature of the issue by stating that at least one Minister must be appointed from each State of the federation. According to Section 147(3) "...Provided that in giving effects to the provision aforesaid the President shall appoint at least one Minister from each state, who shall be an indigene of such State". This provision is in line with Section 14(3) of the Constitution which seeks to reflect the federal character in the appointment to public offices in order to eliminate domination by one group. The federal character principle on its own seeks to take into account the plural nature of the Nigerian society and the variegated interests in terms of ethnicity, class, region, religion, language and other particularistic interests.

Yet, it is important to understand that the United States is not a homogenous society. In other words, like Nigeria, the United States is a heterogeneous society with many sub-cultures and diverse groups. There are Whites, Blacks, Hispanics and other minorities including women. Divided as she is, scholars rather refer to the United States as pluralistic rather than plural. The difference between a plural society like Nigeria and its pluralistic US counterpart is that in the former, cleavages or divisions are of more fundamental character. For example, in the US, the position one takes on a number of political and economic issues does not necessarily depend on whether he or she is White, Black or Hispanic; whereas in Nigeria, for instance, most people take position on some basic issues, including ethnic or religious affiliations. Take the simple cases of Amnesty for Boko Haram insurgents, state creation, or zoning of the presidency, most Nigerians take their positions as the issues concern their ethnic or religious groupings.

The consequence of this for political decision making is that it is easier to reach some minimum national consensus on certain issues in the United States than in Nigeria. This was what President Barack Obama meant in his acceptance speech on his re-election when he declared that Americans are not as divided as their votes suggest. That being the case, it is safer to assume that it is less problematic to put together a Presidential cabinet in the United States than in Nigeria. Whereas in the United States, the overriding criteria that would recommend a person for Ministerial position are academic or professional qualification, loyalty and commitment to the President's programs and competence, in Nigeria, factors like ethnicity, religion and gender are still too important. That notwithstanding, a non-rigorous process of recruitment continues to have implications for performance. Without delving much

into some psycho-historical perspective, it would help to understand some characteristics of President Jonathan so as to appreciate the making of his cabinet. How does his personality fit into Nigeria's political arena and his conception of his role as president? What is his own image of self and his conception of his role as President? How well does he believe in himself with regard to acting on principles, ensuring fairness in the face of the competitive pressures coming from the political class with large egos? And, more importantly, to what extent has his cabinet appointments fulfilled the expectations of the people to whom, as usual with politicians, he quite eagerly and tendentiously made specific promises while appealing for votes? Moreover, has he, like some of his predecessors, been subjected to subconscious forces beyond his power to control? And to what extent has his image as a flexible and accommodating President preoccupied with mediating conflicts to preserve the equilibrium of the system affected the making of his cabinet and vice versa?

The increasing challenges being faced by the Jonathan administration and the level of appropriate response, periodically assessed as performance and/or non performance of the Ministers in the President's cabinet have, of course, further fuelled more interests in the way and manner the Ministers were selected. Could the method of the constitution of the federal cabinet impact directly on the performance or non-performance of the Ministers? Has the President adopted a performance-driven selection method or has the constitution restricted his options? Has partisanship swallowed up objectivity in the selection process? Has gender equity been the overriding principle rather than competence? What is the ratio of technocrats to politicians in the cabinet? Finally, what effect has the selection process of relying on nomination by various interest groups, including the President's adversaries, had on effectiveness?

### **THE OBASANJO ERA (1999 – 2007)**

As a prelude to an analytical peep into the Cabinet of President Jonathan, a look into what happened before him would be beneficial. In 1999, when General Olusegun Obasanjo (rtd) was elected President of the federation of Nigeria, he went about rather meticulously in assembling his cabinet team well ahead of his inauguration on May 29; Obasanjo combined a number of methods in choosing his Ministers at that period. Apart from some key politicians whom he appointed on the basis of party loyalty and investment, he relied on the objective recommendations of his trusted and long-time friends and associates who are well versed in statecraft, as his search team. For instance, it is understood that Professors Eyitayo Lambo and Fabian Osuji were recommended by Professor Emma Edozien. Osuji was even living in far away United States at the time of his nomination. He also benefited from his own wealth of experience as a former military head of state and a widely traveled person who understands every contour of Nigeria geography. There were also

nominations from the leaders of his political party and other interests. President Obasanjo did not, however, decide fully on the recommendations. He also objectively assessed the names recommended to him by direct observation and other informal processes. Many of those who ended up as Ministers in Obasanjo's first term were members of the Transition Committees, which he set up and some of them were part of his entourage in the many trips he made before his inauguration which afforded him the opportunity to assess their competency levels and ability. The nominations of Ministers during his second term (2003-2007) came largely from his Search Committee composed of accomplished professionals and administrators. Whether the Ministers under Obasanjo were successful or not is another matter entirely. But it remains undeniable that the former President exercised absolute control over the process that produced his Ministers. In short, Obasanjo appointed his Ministers who were generally loyal to him or under his direct or indirect control. There was a report that Obasanjo made the Ministers sign their resignation letters before they even took their oath of office. The report was subsequently confirmed by one of the affected ministers, Alhaji A. Shagari.

#### **PRESIDENT JONATHAN'S CABINET**

As Acting President after the death of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan inherited a cabinet which he reshuffled thereafter. After his inauguration on May 29, 2011, as President, he announced a cabinet of 37 Ministers whose names were forwarded to the Senate for screening and clearance. Some of them were among those inherited from his former boss, the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. This is significant against Jonathan's assumption of office as President at the demise of the former President, amidst a better and intriguing politics around his ascension to power which marked some of the Ministers out as his opponents and some as friends. It was not surprising that some of the alleged antagonistic Ministers (like Abba Ruma) were dropped before the 2011 Presidential election while people like Emeka Wogu, Deziani Alison Madueke and Godsdai Orubebe who were appointed by Yar'Adua remained in the cabinet.

When President Jonathan announced the list of his cabinet Ministers, some analysts and the media quickly termed it a "cabinet of many colours." It was indeed a cabinet of different colourations based on the backgrounds of those on the list, whether one considers their education, their states of origin, their professional experience, gender and, more importantly, their political source. They could be classified variously but the three categories which broadly sum them up are: Seasoned or professional politicians, relatively new entrants into politics from diverse backgrounds and the technocrats brought in on the basis of their demonstrated or assumed competences. The most striking feature of the cabinet is that, quite unlike the Obasanjo's cabinet and based on the accommodating and liberal disposition of Jonathan, his cabinet appears largely to be donated by the Governors and a few

friends of the President, godfathers and, of course, his rival stakeholders like the Senate President. Some examples will suffice: Comrade Abba Moro, the Minister of Interior was a nominee of Senate President David Mark while Inuwa Abdul-Kadir, the Minister of Youth Development, was the candidate of Governor Aliyu M. Wamakko of Sokoto State. Viola Onwuliri, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, a Professor of Biochemistry, was indeed the running mate to Ikedi Ohakim, the former Governor of Imo State who was defeated by the incumbent, Rochas Okorocho. The Minister of Education, Ruquayyatu Alkali, a Professor of Islamic Studies, was reported to have been donated by Governor Sule Lamido of Jigawa State. Ms. Ama Pepple, a grossly apolitical former Head of Service of the Federation and Nyesom Wike, the Minister of State for Education were donated by Governor Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers State. Wike was the Chief-of-Staff to Governor Amaechi and perhaps one of his closest aides on the basis of which the Governor was reported to have done everything possible to block the reappointment of an accomplished and widely respected and favoured Odiom Ajumogobia into the Jonathan's cabinet.

Mike Onolememe, the Minister of Works is a nominee of Chief Tony Anenih, the Chairman of the ruling party's Board of Trustees. A former Minister of works himself in the Obasanjo presidency, Chief Anenih is a highly influential party chieftain whose recognition as a key player and a redoubtable godfather has earned him the epithet of "Leader". A key party functionary remarked after the constitution of the cabinet in 2011 that the Esan Chief had seized the Works portfolio since he left the Ministry by ensuring that subsequent Ministers of Works are his own nominees. Olajumoke Akinjide, the Minister of State for the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) was, of course, elevated from the position of being an aide in the Presidency to being a Minister of the Federal Republic! It may be safely assumed that she was either nominated by her father, Chief Richard Akinjide, an influential First Republic Minister and a PDP Board member, or the former President, Olusegun Obasanjo, who also donated Ambassador Olugbenga Ashiru, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, the Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Erelu Olusola Obada was former Deputy Governor of Osun State, under Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola. Erelu Obada, a lawyer, is close to Olusegun Obasanjo and some other godfathers. Mrs. Sarah Ochekepe, Minister of Water Resources who was born in Plateau State and a very close associate of her fellow Birom-Jonah Jang, the Governor of the State was donated as an indigene. She is also married to someone from the Senatorial District of the Senate President David Mark in Benue State. Of all the Ministers, among those that can be identified to be really Jonathan's people include, Godsdai Orubebe, the Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, Deziani Allison Madueke, the Petroleum Minister, Caleb Olubolade, the Police Affairs Minister who was Jonathan's Military Administrator in Bayelsa State and Stella Oduah, Minister of Aviation.

### **The 2009 Cabinet:**

<b>Ministry</b>	<b>Minister</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Zone</b>	<b>Gender</b>
Agriculture	Prof. Sheik Ahmed Abdullah			
Aviation	Mrs Fidelia Njeze	Enugu	SE	F
Commerce & Industry	Sen. Judbril Martins-Kuye	Ogun	SW	M
Culture & Tourism	Abubakar Sadiq A. Mohammed			
Defence	Chief Adetokunbo Kayode, SAN	Ondo	SW	M
Education	Prof.(Mrs) Ruqayyah Ahmed Rafai	Jigawa	NW	F
Environment	John Ogar oday	Cross River	SS	M
FCT	Senator Bala Mohammed	Bauchi	NE	M
Finance	Olusegun Olutoyin Aganga	Lagos	SW	M
Foreign Affairs	Henry odeni Ajumogobia	Rivers	SS	M
Health	(vacant)			
Information & Communications	Prof. Dora Akunyili	Anambra	SE	F
Interior	Capt. Emmanuel Iheanacho	Imo	SE	M
Justice	Mohammed Bello Adoke, SAN	Kogi	NC	M
Labour & Productivity	Chukwuemeka Ngozichineke Wogu	Abia	SE	M
Lands & Urban Development	Hon. Nduese Essien	Cross River	SS	M
Mines & Steel Development	Arc. Musa Mohammed Sada			
National Planning Commission	Dr. Shamsuddeen Usman	Kano	NW	M
National Sports Commission	Hon. Ibrahim Isa Bio	Kwara	NC	M
Niger Delta Affairs	Elder Peter Godsdai Orubebe	Delta	SS	M
Petroleum Resources	Mrs. Diezani Alison-Madueke	Bayelsa	SS	F
Police Affairs	Alhaji Adamu Waziri	Yobe	NE	M
Power	Ag. President goodluck Jonathan	Bayelsa	SS	M
Science & Technology	Prof. Muhammed K. Abubakar			
Special Duties	Navy Capt. O. Caleb Lubolade (Rtd)	Ekiti	SW	M
Transport	Yusuf Suleiman	Sokoto	NE	M
Women Affairs	Mrs. Josephine Anenih	Anambra	SE	F
Works	Sen. Mohammed Sanusi Daggash	Borno	NE	M
Youth Development	Sen Akinlabi Olasunkanmi	Osun	SW	M

### **The 2011 Cabinet**

<b>Ministry</b>	<b>Minister</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Zone</b>	<b>Gender</b>
Agriculture & Natural Resources	Dr. Akinwunmi Ayo Adesina	Ogun	SW	M
Aviation	Mrs Stella Oduah Ogeimwonyi	Anambra	SE	F
Trade/Commerce				
Invest (State)	Dr. Samuel Ortom	Benue	NC	M
Culture & Tourism	Mr. Edem Duke	Cross River	SS	M
Defence	Dr. Bello H. Mohammed	Kebbi	NW	M
Communication Tech.	Mrs Omobola Johnson Olubusola	Ondo	SW	F
Defence (State)	Erelu Olusola Obada	Osun	SW	F
Agriculture & Natural Resources (State)	Alh. Bukar Tijani	Borno	NE	M
Education	Prof. Mrs Ruqayyatu Rufai	Jigawa	NW	F
Environment	Mrs. Hadiza Ibrahim Malaifa	Kaduna	NW	F
FCT	Senator Bala Mohammed	Bauchi	NE	M
Finance	Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala	Abia/Delta	SE/SS	F
Foreign Affairs	Amb. Olugbenga Ashiru	Ogun	SW	M
Health	Prof. Oyebuchi Chukwu	Ebonyi	SE	M
Information & Communication	Mr. Labaran Maku	Nassarawa	NC	M
Interior	Comrade Abba Moro	Benue	NC	M
Justice	Mohammed Bello Adoke, SAN	Kogi	NC	M
Labour & Productivity	Chukwuemeka Ngozichineke Wogu	Abia	SE	M
Lands & Housing	Ms Ama Pepple	Rivers	SS	F
Mines & Steel Development	Arc. Mohammed Musa Sada	Katsina	NW	M

National Planning	Dr. Shamsudeen Usman	Kano	NW	M
Sports	Mallam Bolaji Abdullahi	Kwara	NC	M
Niger Delta Affairs	Elder Godsdoy Orubebe	Delta	SS	M
Petroleum	Mrs. Diezani Alison Madueke	Bayelsa	SS	F
Police Affairs	Navy Capt. Caleb Olubolade (rtd)	Ekiti	SW	M
FCT (State)	Mrs Olajumoke Akinjide	Oyo	SW	F
Niger Delta Affairs (State)	Hajia Zainab Ibrahim Kuchi	Niger	NC	F
Health (State)	Dr. Mohammed Pate	Bauchi	NE	M
Works (State)	Amb. Bashir Yugudu	Zamfara	NW	M
Power	Prof. Bart Nnaji/Prof. Chindeu Nebo	Enugu	SE	M
Foreign Affairs (State I)	Prof. Mrs Viola Onwuliri	Imo	SE	F
Foreign Affairs (State II)	Dr. Nurudeen Mohammed	Jigawa	NW	M
Education (State)	Mr. Nyesom Wike	Rivers	SS	M
Trade/Commerce Investment	Mr. Olusegun Olutoyin Aganga	Lagos	SW	M
Science & Technology	Prof. Ita Okon Basse Ewa	Akwa-Ibom	SS	M
Finance (State)	Dr. Yerima Lawal Ngama	Yobe	NE	M
Transport	Sen. Idris A. Nmar	Gombe	NE	M
Women Affairs	Hajia Zainab Maina	Adamawa	NE	F
Water Resources	Sarah Reng Ocheke	Plateau	NC	F
Youth Development	Alh Inuwa Abudul-Kadir	Sokoto	NW	M
Works	Engr. Mike Onolememen	Edo	SS	M

## THE PROBLEM OF DONATED APPOINTMENTS IN NIGERIA

The consequences of allowing any cabinet to be dominated by other politicians could be disastrous for a President. First, it goes contrary to the principles and practice of Presidential democracy. In Presidentialism, the president is the only elected individual with a nationwide mandate. In the case of Nigeria, this mandate empowers him to take decisions on behalf of every Nigerian with regard to governance. This literally means that all the bucks stop at the President's table. He must be ready to take the credit for good performance and the flaks for anything untoward. To be effective, the President needs a cabinet that fully understands what he wants to achieve, the way he wants to go about it and the time he wants to achieve it. In short, the president needs a cabinet that shares in his vision of development for the country. And he cannot get this cabinet if he allows other people to choose most of his Ministers and cabinet aides for him.

As Yew (2000) puts it in his famous book, *from Third World to First*, choosing people into the cabinet is a very serious business. Writing about his experience in Singapore, Yew states: "I systematically scanned the top echelons of all sectors in Singapore – the professions, commerce, manufacturing, and trade unions..." Not only that, he also got the services of a globally renowned psychologist to help him with psychological tests "designed to define their (Ministers) character profile, intelligence, personal background, and values." Yew (2000) notes further:

*I also checked with corporate leaders of multinational companies (MNCs) how they recruited and promoted their senior people, and decided one of the best systems was that developed by Shell, the Anglo-Dutch oil company. They concentrated on what they termed a person's "currently estimated potential." This was determined by three qualities – a person's power of analysis, imagination, and sense of reality. Together they made*

*up an overarching attribute Shell called “helicopter quality”, the ability to see facts or problems in a larger context and to identify and zoom in on critical details.*

Beyond these techniques and factors, the Singaporean leader also used the services of a panel of assessors, “at least two of whom must know the person being assessed.” Although Yew’s methods may have become a little obsolete today with the development of modern recruitment and assessment methods, there is no need denying the fact that recruitment into a government cabinet needs to adopt a more rigorous process. The putting together of Jonathan’s cabinet obviously did not benefit from this kind of stringent process we are describing here. That perhaps explains why it is obvious that many of the Ministers do not understand the dimensions of his vision or appreciate the degree of passion and commitment required. Some do not even understand the meaning and depth of the President’s “transformation agenda” beyond mere echoing and re-echoing it in their speeches and public statements so much so that the Agenda has been elevated to the level of a mantra meant for looking good in the eyes of the President.

Apart from the lack of deep understanding of the President’s visions, the way and manner the President’s cabinet was assembled do not give adequate hope of superior performance from the Ministers. In fact, much of the criticisms that the President is facing come from the perceived non-performance of some Ministers, which has led to incessant calling for a cabinet reshuffling. The truth is that many of the Ministers were nominated or donated as it were by their principals not because they are competent as to add adequate value to the tasks before the President, but for their own selfish reasons. These include the cornering of contracts and other perks of office as well as positioning for higher elective offices. By mid – 2013, many of the Ministers were distracted from their jobs as Ministers as they plot for elective offices despite the warning of a rather worried President. He is very concerned about their level of performance due to distraction.

Besides the low level of performance related to political distraction, there is also incompetence as a result of not being qualified for the position a Minister occupies. Some of the Ministers are clearly inadequate for their offices based on their education, experience and disposition. This explains why the Senate has always preferred a situation where the President attaches designations to the list of Ministerial nominees sent to the Upper Chamber by the President. There is, of course, the weather-beaten argument in public administration between generalists and specialists. The fact remains that some aspects of life and government require specialized attention and skills. This specialization was not taken into serious consideration in the constitution of President Jonathan’s cabinet. One of the major advantages of a presidential system is undermined when appointive positions are occupied by those who cannot professionally add value to governance. There appears to be an attempt to make up for this in the President’s decision to have a “Coordinating Minister of the Economy.” This, however, seems to have created a problem of its own. When



analyzing coordination of government implementation process with regard to the civil service, Adamolekun (2013) states that:

*The majority of civil service transformation strategies are championed by the head of government or a senior member of government designated by him/her. It is crucial to have a designated champion at the apex of Government. Then, the different clusters of reform interventions (most often referred to as Components) also have champions who join the lead champion to constitute the leadership of the transformation implementation Unit. It should be run by a small number of officials who could be joined by outside experts to assist in ensuring effective implementation of the transformation strategy. The lesson of good practice in successful implementation of civil (public) service transformation strategies is that the implementation Unit should be located in the office of the Head of Government.... The Unit should also bear overall responsibility for monitoring, evaluation and reporting of activities carried out under the strategy.*

In his magnanimity and legendary humility, not only has the President made his Ministers of Finance, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo – Iweala, the Coordinating Minister of the Economy, she appears to have been given a *Carte blanche*, making the public wonder the extent of the president's delegated authority! This in a way appears to mean that person with such prerogative, can trample on his/her boss at will. There is also the question of loyalty when the President accepts Ministers donated to him by Governors, godfathers and other party chieftains. Given the high-stake nature of Nigeria politics and the fact that Goodluck Jonathan is not in perfect control of his political party as his predecessors, one would at least expect the President to have in his cabinet people who would be loyal to him come rain and sunshine. The way the Ministers are donated suggests that their primary loyalty would be to the Governor, godfather or party chieftain that nominated them rather than the President who gave them the job. There are some Ministers who could make an about-turn to ditch their Governors for the President, in the final analysis there is no reason why the President should take such a risk.

Another striking features of the Jonathan's cabinet is the pattern in which some ministries appear to have been allocated to some States. What the Constitution state is for a Minister to be appointed from each State and not that a particular ministry should be allocated to a certain State for that matter. There have been instances where a Minister from a State is removed and the position will be left vacant waiting for the State involved to fill the vacant ministry once again. For instance, when Professor Bart Nnaji the former Minister of power was removed from office by President Jonathan, the position was left vacant until Professor Chinedu Nebo, also from Enugu State, was appointed as Minister of power, as if not only is the ministry reserved for Enugu State but also that only Enugu people are qualified

to handle the ministry. This kind of restriction and discrimination may create a serious problem of performance as the President limits for himself the possibility of finding more capable hands from other States. Regarding gender equity, Jonathan's cabinet has a fair representation of women in the federal cabinet. While this represents continuity with Obasanjo's practice regarding gender, it is certainly in fulfillment of one of Jonathan's campaign promises which at present makes the womenfolk see him as worthy of their trust. For the first time in the history of Nigeria, there are as many as thirteen women Ministers, in line with the 13% quota the President promised the women in his cabinet during the electioneering. Apparently influenced by Dame Jonathan who pursues women's interests aggressively, husband and wife have focused on the electoral dividends. It is noteworthy that not only are the women well represented in numbers, they are equally assigned to key ministries.

As noted previously, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala is the Minister of Finance as well as the Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Alison-Madueke is the Minister of Petroleum, Stella Odua is in charge of Aviation, Ms. Ama Pepple is Minister of Lands and Housing, Hadiza Mailafa is the Minister of Environment, Ruqayyat Alkali is Minister of Education, Sarah Ochekepe is for Water Resources, Viola Onwuliri is Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Jumoke Akinjide is Minister of State for the FCT, Omobola Johnson is Minister of the newly created Ministry of Communication and Technology, Erelu Olusola Obada is Minister of State for Defence, Hajia Zainab Ibrahim Kuchi is Minister of State for Niger Delta Affairs and, of course, the Minister of Women Affairs is a woman, Hajiya Zainab Maina.

While many analysts applaud the fair representation of women in the cabinet, however, not a few have raised the question of creating a balance between gender equity and competence. Thus some questions relating to the suitability of some of the women to the positions they were appointed to have been raised. Well, the same questions can be raised in relation to some of the male Ministers as well.

Another feature of the Jonathan's cabinet is the apparent low ratio of technocrats to the regular politicians in the ministerial cabinet. The technocrats include Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Akinwunmi Adesina, Omobola Johnson, Ama Pepple, Onyebuchi Chukwu, Olusegun Aganga, and Olugbenga Ashiru. This was probably due to the calculation that while some of them have the capacity to contribute professionally to the realization of the policy goals of President Jonathan, they lack electoral values, as they are not sufficiently connected to the grassroots as to be able to promote the partisan political interests of the President in the States they represent. They are also seen as "gate-crashers" by core members of the political class who see pure technocrats in Ministerial positions as aberration which frustrates the benefits of zoning political offices among members of the ruling party. This is quite understandable. As Ayoade (2013) observes:

*Zoning was intended to usher in an inclusive government in a multi-society. The Nigeria experience has shown that it easily*

*becomes a charter of employment and a canonization of bourgeois privileges. The intra-bourgeois dynamics does not necessarily even produce people who are representative of the zones or States. It is not uncommon that candidates rejected at the polls are appointed to positions to represent constituencies that rejected them.*

Ayoade's contention is buttressed by the practice of appointing Ministers from the President's Party in States where he won less than 25% of the votes. Such Ministers cannot be said to truly represent such States but is there an easy solution given the dynamics of Nigeria's party politics and the complexity of the contending interests in Nigeria?

There is identity crisis among many of President Jonathan's ministers in spite of his very liberal disposition. For, far from an imperial Presidency (Schlesinger, 1973), an institution which has cut itself off from constitutional checks and balances to which a predecessor of his could be equated to some extent, yet watching some of Jonathan's Ministers is a drama in servility. It is difficult to know the source of this tendency as an observer who had been an aide in the Presidency for almost a decade remarked during the 2013 Democracy Day (May 29) that the era was the best to be a Minister. It was a subtle reference to the scope of latitude that the Ministers had for actions and inactions.

Scholars and observer generally would encounter some difficulties establishing the basis of what appears to be crisis of identity in some Ministers who demonstrate low self-esteem and confidence. While the team parades some excellent individuals that could serve creditably in any cabinet, it is undeniable that a good number of the Ministers are provincial people coming to national political limelight as it were for the first time. Some of these Ministers probably never imagined that they would be playing at the big stage as Federal Ministers. So, there seems to be an inner conflict between who the Ministers think they really are and what they indeed have become. This conflict seemingly breeds self-diffidence, which can be noticed in their speeches most times muddled with the name of the President sometimes appearing over ten times in few pages! Self-confidence is one attribute in the chain of factors which enhance service delivery in a Presidential system. This is an area that should be of concern to the president himself especially as the Ministers are supposed to help him run an effective government Yew (2000) understands the situation perfectly once again when he notes:

*Whenever I had a lesser Minister in charge, I invariably had to push and prod him, and later to review problems and clear road-blocks for him. The end result was never what could have been achieved. When I had the right man in charge, a burden was off my shoulders. I needed only to make clear the objectives to be achieved, the time frame within which he must try to do it, and he would find a way to get it done.*

Yew always knew when his Ministers were not performing well and had to push and prod. With the promised change or reshuffle, Nigerians would very soon be able to say the same of President Jonathan or perhaps mock him for lack of “competence”.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In a Presidential system, the President is the only public officer who is elected with a nationwide mandate to govern. He is both the Head of Government and Head of State. In order to equip him to handle this power effectively, his cabinet members are supposed to be his personal appointees. This ensures not only their total loyalty to him but also guarantees his absolute responsibility for their performance. Their failures are always blamed on the President. The system cannot afford the excuse of blaming cabinet failures on such others like godfathers, party stalwarts, governors, and so on. By delegating his power of cabinet appointment to others, the President weakens one of the critical factors designed to enable presidentialism achieve governmental effectiveness. Therefore, President Jonathan should be encouraged to move in three directions that enhance the effectiveness of his cabinet:

- i. The President should rely more on expertise and competence by lifting square peg into square holes. No modern government would appoint a Special Adviser who is not a specialist and well grounded in the area of engagement, a Biochemist as a Minister of foreign Affairs, or an Islamic Scholar to be in charge of modern educational system. Going for a talent search will be beneficial here.
- ii. He should recruit for specified portfolios rather than make neutral recruitment and then come to fit them into portfolios.
- iii. Involving others in the President’s cabinet recruitment process can only be justified as an exercise to bring expertise to bear on the recruitment. It should never be regarded as an act of favour to those involved. The latter is injurious to the public interest because it weakens the President’s control on his cabinet and diminishes governmental effectiveness in a presidential system.

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