

Godfatherism In Nigeria's Politics: A Study Of Obasanjo's Civilian Administration (1999-2007)

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Abstract

The dynamics of godfatherism and its negative consequences in the development process of Nigeria has long been a topical issue. This study explores the details of the practice of godfatherism in Nigeria's politics during the civilian administration of Olusegun Obasanjo. In this regard, the study's aims were: to historicize on Godfatherism dynamics in Nigeria; to examine the causative factors orchestrating godfatherism and its implications in the country among other objectives of the study. The discourse adopted the methodology of qualitative analysis and with its use, discovers that there were several incidences of godfatherism praxis during the Obasanjo's civilian regime. It is on the basis of these that, the study made recommendations.

Keywords: Godfatherism, Nigeria, Politics, Obasanjo's Civilian Administration

Introduction

The world of political and philosophical thinkers for years has continued to be occupied by the issue of the various ways political power is manipulatively controlled by the few in society. These thinkers and philosophers among others as Pareto, Mosca, Marx, Aristotle, Plato etc, not only, analyzed the uneven nature of the distribution of political power in society but demonstrated how power is used or misused by the elite class. For them, this nature of power distribution has resulted in unwarranted political hegemony of other social classes in society by this few elites. According to Albert (2005:1)

An important issue raised by Pareto and Marx in their works in that political elites insulate and isolate themselves from their society and try as much as possible to reproduce themselves from within. They do all within their reach to ensure that non-elites do not join their membership...they reproduce themselves on an individual and selective basis, in a process which Pareto specifically referred to as the circulation of elites. The criteria for such elite recruitment are often parochial and the process is usually done in a manner that does not in any way compromise the traditional integrity of the dominant elite class.

In Nigeria, one of the most dominant features of the Nigerian political arena is the prevalence of the phenomenon of Godfatherism, which constitutes one of the major

basis of political elite class recruitment. Godfatherism as a concept gains its popularity from the film “The Godfather” in which Marlon Brando as the main actor, showcased the phenomenon of a Sicilian Family or Mafia dynasty (the corleones), that maintains control over a drug cartel in the city of New York against all odds.

In this context, the Nigerian Godfather’s political characterization is that, who maintains political control of a given environment, in which willing political godsons or clients are sponsored to political positions, whereby, upon ascension to power are manipulated, and directed whimsically and capriciously by their mentors-the godfathers. It is on the basis of this peculiar feature of the Nigerian political Godfather, that Nnamani (2003) argues that, the phenomenon’s dynamics in Nigeria involves mercenary politics that is oiled, and projected to willy-nilly produce the desired political result for the godfather, using all disposable tactics within his reach. In this caste, Nnamani (2003:79) has accented that:

The archetypal godfather in Nigeria is more than the ruthless Mario Puzo’s Kingpins in the Italian Mafia setting. While the fictional godfather is characterized as “shadowy, dare-devil recluse with near mythical powers of enormous proportions”, which is to attain a further greasing of the ever increasing vast financial empire, the Nigerian type has the added characterization of conceit, avarice, ego, loquacity, pettiness, envy, strife, crudity and confusion.

In the purview of Nigeria’s political development, the operation of godfathers has constituted a major political problem that affects the democratization process of the country. In this wise, theorists as Togbolo (2003) have asserted that it contributes to the excessive electoral violence and political dictatorship that pervades the Nigerian political landscape.

According to the UNDP (1997) Godfatherism is one of the most important factors responsible for electoral malpractices in Nigeria, which pertinently leads to misgovernance, subversion of democracy and political corruption, among others. An example of the operation of the Nigerian styled patron-client Godfather relationship which almost truncated the fledgling democratic dispensation of the Obasanjo regime on June 10th 2003, as reported by Onwumere in Obasi (2012:26), aptly describes the Anambra State scenario as follows:

A self-confessed godfather, Chris Uba employed thugs and the Nigerian police to abduct his godson, Chris Ngige who was the elected governor of Anambra State. Ngige’s sin was his refusal to allow Uba to nominate all political appointees, take the largest share of state allocations, and instantly pay him a sum of N2.5 billion, the claimed cost of installing Ngige as governor.

Against the above background, this paper’s general objective is the examination of this social malaise of political godfatherism during the Obasanjo’s civilian

administration. To explore this objective properly, the following, constitutes the specific objectives of the study:

- ✓ To historicize on the trajectories of the social malaise of Godfatherism in Nigeria.
- ✓ To ascertain specifically, some selected incidences of Godfatherism in the Nigerian politics, during the Obasanjo's civilian administration of 1999-2007.
- ✓ To examine the causative factors orchestrating the phenomenon of Godfatherism during the civilian tenure of Obasanjo's civilian administration; and
- ✓ To identify the implications of the prevalence of Godfatherism in the developmental process of Nigeria.

In an attempt to achieve the above stated objectives, the study adopted the methodology of the qualitative approach in which the sources of data were essentially from secondary sources. These sourced data and their analysis involved review of extant literature from textbooks, journals, newspapers articles, delivered speeches, seminars, conferences and internet materials among others. This adopted qualitative analytical method assisted this study in careful examination of details bordering on the dynamics of Godfatherism politics in Nigeria. In otherwords, the social phenomenon of Godfatherism and all its manifestation in Nigeria in the context of why, and how and not just the what, where and when were intensively investigated and analyzed. In support of the use of this adopted methodology, Hyden in Animasawun (2008:5) opines that:

It is better to use qualitative method in researching African politics for reasons that border on unreliable national statistics... and the lack of conditions ideal for scientific sampling.

Concept Clarification

Godfatherism: The phenomenon of godfatherism is derived from "godfather" which is used interchangeably with political merchant, kingmaker, boss, mentor and principal, Adeoye (2009:269). A godfather is someone who has built unimaginable respect and followers (voters) in the community and possesses a well-organized political platform, that could secure victory for candidates of his choice. Godfatherism, which is the patron-client (god-father-god-son) relationship, an exchange relationship between roles, may be defined Scot (1972:92) as a:

Special case of dyadic (two persons) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socio-economic status (patron or god-father) uses his/her own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits or both for a person of lower status (client or god-son) who for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services to the patron.

Politics of godfathers involves the 'anointing' of a godson who is expected to win an election by using the influence, wealth, political structure and political experience of the godfather. In return, the godson reciprocates by loyalty and regular consultations with the godfather. Accordingly, Odumakin (2009:32) posits that:

Godfatherism is a distortion of value in politics to the extent that it transfers allegiance from the system to an individual, who for raw ambition or depravity, decides to take the place of God in the life of the oath takers (godsons)". Godfathers are powerful individuals who determine 'who, what, when and how' in the corridors of power.

However, the feature of godfatherism (patron-client politics) does not remain constant. It is based on an imbalance of power, existing in the context of face-to-face personal relationship, incorporation of wide range of socio-political and economic forms of exchange, display of kick-backs and consideration of cost-benefit theory and availability of vote-giver and vote acceptor.

Theoretical Discourse

The elite theory is adopted as the theoretical umbrella for this discourse. The theory was made popular by its major proponents such as Vilfredo Pareto (1935) Gaetano Mosca (1939), Wright Mills (1956) and Geraint parry (1969) etc. In this theory, elites are observed as the few powerful people in society, who have and wield a lot of influence in the political, economic and social realm. In this study, the theory is considered apt because it explains the formation, preferences and values of the governing few elites which dominate the governed. According to Okereke (2003):37), Mosca is quoted to have argued that:

In all societies from societies that are very meagerly developed and have barely attained the dawning of civilization, down to the most advanced and powerful societies-two classes of people appear-a class that rules and a class that is ruled. The first class, always the less numerous, performs all political functions, monopolizes power and enjoys the advantages that power brings, whereas the second, the more numerous class, is directed and controlled by the first, in a manner that is now more or less legal, now more or less arbitrary and violent.

However, this theory possesses several tenets. To Okereke (2008), the basic tenets include that:

- Society is divided into the few who have power using it to allocate values among the many, who do not.
- Elites are drawn disproportionately from the masses
- The movement of non-elites to elite positions must be slow and continuous to avoid revolution.
- Elites share consensus on behalf of the values of the social system.
- Active elites are subject to relatively little direct influence from apathetic masses.

The theory elaborates on how the few governing elites in society capriciously divert state resources meant for the masses for their selfish interest. However, the values

and preferences of the elites include; godfatherism, materialism, pre-bendalism, ostentatious life amongst others. To Adeoye (2009:272),

There is high tendency for the emergence of patron-client politics in an elitist democracy, where the society is hierarchically patterned like a pyramid.

For the theory, powerful political elites stand at the top and wield power in their different domain. In our context, the power flows from these godfathers and they determine the power structure below them in the form of patron-client, prebendalistic practices.

The striking values of the theory in its application to this study, is that it provides the basis for governance. Also, it dominates and determines the course and direction of national development, especially in developing countries like Nigeria. It determines and provides guidelines for policy-making and justification for actions taken. Furthermore, it gives indication of what the society is really like, its true nature and character both for elites and the masses. Situated in the context of our discourse properly, the theory is quite relevant to comprehending the dynamics of patron-client political relationships, as manifested in the godfather phenomenon in Nigeria.

Historical Overview of Godfatherism in Nigeria

A salient feature of politics in Nigeria is the practice of Godfatherism. Historically, the operationalization and the attendant dynamics of political godfatherism in Nigeria predates the political independence of Nigeria. This is because, the social and political features of pre-colonial Nigeria has always resembled the phenomena of what Richards (1999) defines as prebendalism, clientelism and patron-client transactional relationship.

In his description of this pre-colonial patron-client prebendal relationships in Nigeria, Albert (2005:85) did aver that:

The word “godfather” appears in parenthesis in many western political studies. The situation is different in Nigeria. The patron-client relationships that popularized the term in Nigerian politics have cultural roots among many Nigerian peoples. It is not a totally new experience in the sociology of the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbos, for the people to have one or other type of “godfather”. For example, the word “godfather” has a local equivalence in Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo languages and these words have been in use since the pre-colonial era.

Further to the explication of the operation of patron-client godfather issues in pre-colonial Nigeria, an avalanche of social theorists have undertaken seminal works on the subject. Some of these are Abner (1965), Polly (1966), Claude (1971) Paul (1980) and Toyin (1985). In a succinct overview of their detailed analysis of prebendal pre-colonial social organization in Nigeria, it is stated that in the Hausa vocabulary, the concept *Maigida* which literally means landlord or Head of House hold involves not only the literal meaning but encapsulates factors as economic and political brokerage services

to a client involving transactional commissions and advantages attached. In the Igbo use of words, *Nnam-Ukwu* (my master) and *Odibo* (the servant) involves transactional relationship between the master and the servant which includes among others prebendal patron-client characteristics. In the Yoruba language, the concept of *Baba Kekere* (the small father) *Baba Isale* (father of the underworld) and *Baba Nigbejo* (a great help in times of trouble) are all references to community patrons that citizens of lesser status attach to, for physical, social, political and economic security in times of need. All these patron-client transactional relationships are heavily imbued with economic, social and political returns from the clients to the patrons.

For Richards (1999) the pre-colonial patron-client prebendal cultural worlds of Nigerians were easily carried over to the colonial and post colonial political arrangements in Nigeria. Albert (2005:87) in agreeing with this claim asserts that:

The founding fathers of party politics in Nigeria were god fathers of a sort. They were preceded by the first generational Nigerian elites to establish contact with the European in the late 1800s. The leading figures were the traditional rulers who later became the hub of the indirect rule policy of the British in the country.

As the colonial administration was coming to an end in the 1950's, with nationalist activities holding sway, the few educated elite of just about six percent of the Nigerian population (James Coleman 1963) became the vanguard for the struggle for independence. Political parties that were regionally based were formed in the categories of Northern People's Congress (NPC) for the North, the Action Group (AG) for the Yoruba South West and the NCNC for the Igbo areas of Eastern Nigeria. Albert (2005:87) in reporting on the political patrons of this period did maintain that:

The political godfathers of this era included the then Sarduna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, who led the NPC, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who led the AG, and Nnamdi Azikiwe of the NCN leader. The other elder statesmen that fell into this category in Nigerian politics include Mallam Aminu Kano and Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim. These political leaders, up to the point of their death, dictated who could occupy political offices in the geo-political regions they led. They were clearing houses for political opportunities.

The above stated political patrons of the three major regions of Nigeria produced enormous political godsons in the later political dispensation who occupied various political positions. Some of these are: Sir Ahmadu Bello's political godsons known in Nigeria as the "Kaduna Mafia", the Chief Awolowo's political godsons known in the South West as the "Afenifere" (those who wish others well) among whom are Chief Bola Ige, Alhaji Lateef Jakande and Chief Bisi Onabanjo (all former state governors, 1979-1983) and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe's political godsons in the Eastern Igbo areas of Nigeria like Chief Jim Nwobodo and Chief Sam Mbakwe (all former governors of states). All

these godsons of the first generation godfathers later became godfathers in subsequent Nigerian politics as will be seen later in this study.

Incidences of Godfatherism in Selected States in Nigeria (1999-2007)

Godfatherism, which is a phenomenon that allows political heavy-weights unlimited powers to dominate the political scene, influence the victory of candidates (the godson/daughters) and dictate the direction of policies and programmes, remained a major element of the political culture of Nigeria from 1999-2007. In the treatise on the civilian regime of Obasanjo and its relationship with godfatherism in Nigeria, myriad of social commentators are agreed on the nature of it. Among these are Soyinka (2004) and Adeoye (2009) among others. For Soyinka (2004):

The greatest disservice President Obasanjo has done to the nation was to have promoted the cult of godfatherism, its illegalities, its naked violence and its corruption.

However, Adeoye (2009:270) in discussing the dynamics of godfatherism in Nigeria during Obasanjo's civilian regime did argue that:

It got so bad under the watchful eyes of Obasanjo-led government that godfathers assumed different names: gangsters, mafia and criminal. The worse manifestations of godfatherism in Nigerian history came to life under President Obasanjo's democratic rule for one simple reason, he promoted and allowed it. Some of the godfathers truly possessed all the characteristics of mafianism, many of them behaving like *Al Capone* in a criminal world; but these set of godfathers perpetuated their criminality in enduring political environment.

It is then in the context of the above, that this paper analyzes the Nigerian godfatherism mechanism in some selected states in Nigeria between 1999 to 2007 under the administration of Olusegun Obasanjo.

Anambra State: According to Bello (2011) Anambra's political history can be described as awesome, weird and unique depending on the aspect one turns to. It is a state with a long list of 'firsts' in the Nigerian history that dubbed its sobriquet "the light of the nation". The state is popularly known for godfather politics; hence, the case of Anambra State is most spectacular.

Mbadinuju was sworn in as civilian governor of Anambra State, after many years of military rule. "Between 1999 and 2003, the fight was between Emeka Offor (Godfather) and the Governor of the state Chinwoke Mbadinuju (godson), who refused to dance to the tune of the godfather. In this respect, Omisore (2009:5) admits that:

Governor Chinwoke Mbadinuju was supported by Chief Emeka Offor to win election in 1999, and throughout his tenure as governor, he expended more energy and time struggling to free the resources of the state from the predatory grips of his godfather, and the struggle was so much that the critical issues of governance were ignored. The conflict between the governor and his estranged

godfather got so pronounced that it crippled the machinery of governance in Anambra State, and the repercussion was gross deficit of democratic dividends recorded by the state government and which led to Mbadinaju losing re-election into office in 2003.

This led Mbadinuju to dump the PDP for Alliance for Democracy (AD) and his subsequent loss of election in 2003. Mbadinuju claimed that he was excluded from the governorship contest in 2003 despite winning the PDP primaries because Chris Uba and President Olusegun Obasanjo opposed his candidature. (Wikipedia, 2012).

The dust raised by these two (2) political bigwigs was yet to settle when two (2) other actors emerged; Chris Uba and Chris Ngige. Uba was the godfather responsible for the “installation” of Ngige and the majority of other politicians in the state who succeeded in being ‘elected’ to other various positions. In announcing his grandiose godfatherism rating in the state in particular and Nigeria in general in the 2003 election, Chris Uba (2003:11) did state:

I am the greatest of all godfathers in Nigeria, because this is the first time, one single individual has single-handedly put in position every politician in a state, the State Governor and his deputy, the 3 Senators to represent the State at the National Assembly, 10 out of 11 members of the Federal House of Representatives and twenty-nine State House of Assembly members. I also have the power to remove any of them who does not perform up to my expectations anytime I like.

Based on the foregoing, Hussaini (2012:1) states:

The former (Uba) is a multi-millionaire who invests in politics and reaps dividends from his political investment.

In total acceptance of Uba’s patron-client arrangement, Hunjenukon (2011) did affirm that Ngige went as far as pledging his loyalty to Uba at Okija Shrine, where he agreed to some prepositions. Based on the pledge, Uba bankrolled the gubernatorial election to the tune of three billion naira. Commenting further on this Omisore (2009:3) notes that:

On reflection, Governor Ngige refused the honour to agreement and fought back to save the resources of the state for the common good of the people. Chief Uba allegedly demanded for N3 billion from Ngige as compensation for the cost of financing the governor’s election which Ngige declined to honour. It is no wonder that, what was supposed to be a cold war became public with the abduction of Ngige and his purported resignation.

To break the Camel’s back, Uba publicly confessed that he rigged the election that saw Ngige into office as governor and the election was consequently invalidated by the Court of Appeal. (Omisore, 2009:3). Hence, Ngige was defeated at the election

petition tribunal for rigging the gubernatorial polls by the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) candidate, Mr. Peter Obi. As Osumali (2010:56) states:

In fact, the July 10, 2003 political gangsterism against Governor Ngige in Anambra State with the aid of police led by AIG Raphael Ige is clearly a new development in the patron-client relation in Nigerian politics.

Furthermore, to Dike (2004), “Obasanjo’s silence indicates that he is either in support of those working to destabilize the state, or that he is not interested in solving the political crisis in Anambra state and the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria.

Kano State: Kano State was created on May 27, 1967 and located in North-Western Nigeria. The capital of Kano State is Kano. Kano State is regarded as Northern Nigeria’s commercial centre, (hence, the sobriquet- Centre of Commerce’). According to the 2006 census figures from Nigeria, Kano State had a population totaling 9,383,682”. To Darma (2006:1):

Kano State is the most politically prominent state in Nigeria, because its population guarantees it, a higher proportion at the national level. Its political history has also been lively.

For Zanna (2007) the current godfather politics was evidenced in Kano in the person of Olusegun Obasanjo, Abubakar Rimi and Rabiu Kwankwaso amongst others. Abubakar Rimi has been a political figure “since his debut into politics in the first republic, when he was elected a member of the House of Representatives, courtesy of Late Aminu Kano’s “goodwill”. In continuation, Zanna (2007) contends that as at 1979, Rimi was among the fanatical supporters of Aminu Kano just as he emerged as governor of Kano on the platform of the PRP. Apparently due to his radical stance on matters of governance and politicking, Rimi fell apart with Aminu Kano, close to the 1983 polls and later joined PDP as one of the 34 founding members-christened G34.

In 1999 at the beginning of Obasanjo’s civilian regime, Zanna (2007) admits that “Kano for the first time found its place in mainstream national politics largely because of the consensus of the two Kano political gladiators Abubakar Rimi leader of the leftist wing and Aminu Wali leader of the rightist wing of the behemoth PDP. Dr. Rabiu Kwankwaso who was aligned to the Yar Adua (Padama) group emerged as the Governor of Kano State under the PDP, largely because those who call the shots in Abuja were not willing to accept a loyalist of Rimi (Abdullahi Umar Ganduje) as the governor. Thereafter, Rimi’s faction was compensated with the Deputy Governor while the Aminu Wali was betrayed and denied the slot of the secretary to the state government.

Having fallen out of Governor Kwankwaso’s favours and unable to wrestle the party’s governorship ticket in 2003 from Kwankwaso, Rimi decided to use all his political war arsenals at his disposal to fight and finish Kwankwaso. Rimi’s return to the PDP, set Kano PDP for the revival and birth of fresh crisis (as) the battle for the control of the party between him and Kwankwaso was a do or die affair”. (Zanna, 2007). Based on this conflict between Kwankwaso and Rimi, Kwankwaso was defeated at the polls by a new entrant into partisan politics and class teacher, Ibrahim Shekarau though later

compensated by his own godfather (President Obasanjo) with minister of defense under Obasanjo's administration. In his analysis of Rimi's godfatherism, Ujudud (2007:1) remarks as follows:

Rimi was described as "a constant denominator in Kano's politics to the extent that when he sneezes, the state and the nation cache cold.

One major contribution Rimi brought to Kano politics is the instituting of a big crack in the leadership and followership of politicians in the state. On this, Rafindadi (2012:1) in his opinion reports that:

Rimi is now using politics as a merchandize and in addition, using thuggery and intimidation to achieve his selfish and parochial ends.

Regrettably, Rimi died on April 4, 2010. Also, Dr. Kwankwaso was re-elected as Kano State governor on 27 April 2011 and sworn in on 29 May 2011 for a second term in office.

Oyo State: 'Oyo' is derived from the name of the seat of government of the old Oyo Empire, of the pre-colonial era. Oyo State was one of the states carved out of the former Western State of Nigeria with Ogun and Ondo on 3rd February, 1976, by the Generals Murtala Mohammed/Obasanjo led Military Government. In 1991, in another state creation exercise the former Oyo state was split into two-the present Oyo State and Osun State, by the General Babangida Government. (Wikipedia, 2012)

In Omisor's account (2009:4) godfather politics was evidenced in Oyo State where:

The reputed strongman of Ibadan politics, Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu, played the godfather to Alhaji Lam Adesina in 1999. Shortly after he was sworn-in, Governor Adesina refused to honour his financial pledge to Adedibu and slugged it out with his godfather. Consequently, he was denied a second term of office in 2003 in which power was handed over to Rashidi Lodoja by Adedibu.

In similar manner, on installing Lodoja as governor of Oyo state in 2003, it did not take long before trouble between Lodoja and Adedibu emerged. According to Hunjenkon (2011:3), "the battle line in Oyo state was drawn again between Lamidi Adedibu, the kingpin of Ibadan politics with his estranged godson and governor of the state, Rashidi Ladoja. Adedibu claimed that he invested financial resources in "installing" the governor, with an agreement that the governor will be a lame chief executive, taking orders from him and to subject public resources, to his private whims and caprices. In this regard, Ojewale (2003:3) sees Adedibu as

The only godfather, that has caused a gaffe. He was reported to have submitted 11 names for appointment as commissioners, out of the 13 positions for the state.

However, Ladoja reneged and refused to play according to the rules of the game. To Omisore (2009:4), Ladoja bluntly refused to accede to the frivolous demands of his godfather shortly after he got into office'. This culminated into the mayhem witnessed in Ibadan after 2003 elections till January 2006. In this widely publicized crisis, many lives and properties were lost; the State House of Assembly was also polarized along the two (2) divides and which led to the suspension of fourteen (14) members out of thirty-two (32) members Assembly.

Subsequently, Ladoja was impeached in January 2006 "by the state legislature that Adedibu allegedly coaxed to boot the governor out of office". Omisore (2009:3). This was to pave way for his deputy, Alao Akala, another willing godson, who is eager to serve the godfather better. However, Omisore (2009:3) noted that:

Until Adedibu died on June 11, 2008, Ladoja's successor, Governor Alao Akala, dared not break his agreement with the strong man of Ibadan politics.

However, the status quo was maintained till December 7th 2006 final ruling of the apex court (Supreme Court) that his removal was illegal and was reinstated after eleven (11) months out of office. His coming back to the office was faced with serious resistance from his former godfather's (Adedibu) camp, which led to break down in law and order at the state capital Ibadan for few days, living many innocent citizens with various kind of injuries.

Taking a cue from the analysis of godfatherism in the three states of Nigeria as seen above, there is no gainsaying that Olusegun Obasanjo, former military general albeit ex-president promoted the legacy of godfather politics during his civilian regime. This is because, he was a product of godfatherism and was (and still) a mentor to many political clients. Also, there was no stringent measure adopted for punishing perpetrators during his civilian administration, which strongly demonstrated his complicity on the issue.

Causes/Factors That Sustain Godfatherism in Nigeria

The phenomenon of godfatherism in Nigeria has continued unabated because of so many factors. These factors include:

- 1) **Corruption:** Though amorphous, corruption in its popular conception is defined as the exploitation of public position, resources, and power for private gain. (Nye, 1967; Dobel, 1978; Dobel (1978) defined corruption as "the betrayal of public trust for individual or group gain". Corruption as a phenomenon, is a global problem, and exists in varying degrees in different countries. Agbu (2003). In Nigeria corruption now appears to have become a permanent feature of the Nigerian polity. The Nigerian Godfathers today are thriving on ill-gotten wealth acquired under questionable circumstances that are secured through surreptitious patron-client transaction relationships. Majority of them are fraudsters, drug barons, government contractors, and the likes. An example is "Governor Mbadinuju (who) made the people of Anambra State to experience various aspects of misgovernance through inability to deliver democracy dividends. The education system was a mess, social life and basic amenities were not met for the people of the state, the street of Onitsha was littered with rubbish and abject neglect, Madinuju did not put these problems to

heart, rather he concentrated on his “political godfather”. Emeka Offor and others. These Governor Mbadiniju’s godfathers were the beneficiaries of juicy contracts and pay backs that ran into billions of Naira. Wikipaedia (2012). Due to high-level of corruption in the country, the godfathers can bribe their way to any level...and institutions as the police and electoral institutions and officials etc.

- 2) **Illiteracy:** It has become axiomatic that illiteracy is one of the major factors sustaining godfatherism in Nigeria. Hence, to UNDP (2011), in Nigeria, the literacy rate of the total population is 57.1% (Male; 67.3% and Female; 47.3%). The implication is that there is high percentage of Nigerian citizens, who are stark illiterates, and can neither read nor write. This is because of poverty, poor infrastructural facilities, cultural beliefs and biased traditions amongst others. However, capitalizing on their ignorance; the godfathers inculcate their values into these people, recruit them, arm them with arms and ammunitions and protect them to carry out their violent act.
- 3) **Poverty:** Poverty is the deprivation of basic necessities that determine the quality of life, including food, clothing, shelter and safe drinking water. This canker worm in Nigeria called poverty exposes the citizens to various kinds of danger including recruiting them as political thugs and foot soldiers by godfathers. The incidence of poverty has a strong influence in the emergence of those who see themselves as “owners” of government where citizens are incapable of taking care of their basic need. Nnamani (2003:8). Kale in Subair (2012), opined that “poverty rate in Nigeria might have risen to 71.5 percent, 61.9 percent and 62.8 percent using the relative, absolute and dollar per day measures respectively”.

To Ovasuyi et al (2011:198),

Poverty has gone to a very high level, so much so that, it is now a matter of do or die for Nigerians to acquire political power”. Politics in Nigeria has become so lucrative that people are ready to do anything to be involved in it, as it is the quickest source of wealth, and this has brought about leadership crisis in the country.

This has led so many Nigerian youths mortgaging their future for peanuts from these godfathers, while the children of these so call godfathers are busy studying in state-of the art institutions abroad.

- 4) **Incessant Desire for Power:** The zeal of getting to position of authority by all means is another factor that is making this phenomenon of Godfatherism in Nigeria more popular. According to Nnamani (2003:7),

The quest for power, which mortgages the interests of the governed, is a direct evidence of endemic corruption and godfathers would naturally emerge because of the vulnerability of such disposition of power seekers.

Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Their overzealous inclination to control, to dominate and to rule motivates them (the political clients and their protégées) to use any means, thereby, lending credence to Machiaevelli’s principle

which states thus: “the end justifies the means”. This makes our potential leaders to go into any agreement with their godfathers, so as to clinch to power against the wishes of the electorates.

5) Unemployment: It is a situation where people who are willing and able to work are out of jobs. The rate of unemployment of Nigerian graduates and other categories of the youth has also boosted the phenomenon of godfatherism. Brains that are meant to be utilized for the development of the nation are being employed by politicians, most of whom are godfathers to one political office holder or the other. To Ogbomwan (2005:1),

School leavers and university graduates are therefore made jobless and this has provided a fertile ground for recruiting foot soldiers that will do the evil bidding of these godfathers.

They exchange their future and that of their unborn children for mere amala, tuwo and akpu offered by these godfathers as was done by the strongman of Ibadan politics.

Godfatherism and the Development Process in Nigeria

Development is the process of economic, social, political and cultural change engineered in a given society by the effort of all stakeholders, both internal and external (communities, government, private sector, civil society, etc) with a view to improving the conditions of life of the population. However, in the political realm, the impacts of godfatherism on Nigeria’s development are discussed below:

1) Bad Governance: Governance is regarded as a nebulous, ambiguous and vague word. Asogwa (2008:204), defined governance as “the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority to manage a nation’s affairs”. To him, it embraces all the methods-good and bad that societies use to distribute power and manage public resources and problems. Bad governance is a type of governance which is not anchored on transparency, rule of law, due process, equity and justice. In Nigeria’s political development, governance is seen as ductless and unstable. Barrack Obama recently, in Accra, Ghana did state that: “Development depends upon good governance”. Harris (2009). It has now become a fact that in Nigeria, self-seeking politicians have continued to misgovern the nation to their own selfish interest, and have since independence of the nation made development elusive to the generality of the populace. To Ovasuyi et al (2011:197)

Our political office holders in true sense/reality do not hold their allegiance to the people nor to the constitution of our great country, but rather their loyalty and allegiance are to their godfathers and the various shrines that they swore to before assuming their respective offices and this affected the nation negatively.

There is no gainsaying the fact that, these godfathers and their godsons who profess to be representing the generality of the Nigerian people have in one way or the other manipulates selfishly, the national resources. Hence, there is failure of government to

provide the people with all the basic necessities which will enhance their standard of living.

2) Election Crisis and Political Violence: Election is the process through which the people select those who will represent them in government. It is an open secret in Nigeria that the godfathers recruit the teeming unemployed youths and arm them with arms and ammunitions in order to carry out violence during elections. This is because they see it as a zero-sum game in which the winner takes it all. Throughout the history of Nigerian elections, free and fair election has constantly eluded the Nigeria's politics. This is because of political violence orchestrated by the actors of godfatherism. As Anifowose (1999) in Obasi (2012:24) puts it:

Political violence is the use or threat of physical act carried out by an individual or individuals within a political system against another individual or individuals and/or property with the interest to cause injury or death to persons and/or damage or destruction to property, that....have political significance.

According to the UNDP (1997), Ayoada (2006) and Adeoye (2009) godfatherism is one of the causative factors responsible for electoral malpractices and violence in Nigeria. The seriousness of the problem here is better appreciated when the fact is that there are many godfathers contesting for recognition at every election. Hence, Bello (2011:2) notes that:

President Olusegun Obasanjo has been the chief instigator of the barbarization of the electoral process and the weakening, if not the destruction, of democratic tenets in the last eight years. He is the mastermind of this violation of the people's voice and vote.

3) Subversion of Democracy: The purpose of democracy is for free and fair participation of the masses in the political process. However, it has become accepted that godfatherism is a pathology to Nigeria's fledgling democracy. Public opinion does not count; rather, the masses are governed whimsically and capriciously by the elites. An example is the subversion of democracy in Anambra State during the June 10th 2003 political imbroglio between Chris uba (the godfather) and Chris Ngige, (the then governor of Anambra State) in which the governor was kidnapped for some many days Onwumere (2007). Also, the crisis has merely been solved when the self declared "strongman of Ibadan politics", Adedibu formally declared an unconventional war against his godson, Ladoja, governor of Oyo State. Ifowodo (2007). In his commend on this ugly side of godfatherism, Fagge (1985) commented in a poem that:

Godfatherism; a menace to democracy like a tick on a cow or the weed to the crops, Like HIV virus in a bloodstream with a weak defense mechanism, it kills our hard-earned democracy and militates against its progress.

In support of the above claim by Fagge (1985) the phenomenon of Godfatherism has been allowed to dominate the political scene in Nigeria and the electorate has been

denied the right of the value of his vote in the market democracy. Hence, Nigeria's democracy has been subverted for the values and preferences of the elites.

4) Political Corruption: Corruption is a common term at the local, national and international level. To Asogwa (2008), political corruption is a symptom of something gone wrong in the management of the state. Politically, corruption entails the extortion and misuse of public goods for the utilization of a few.

In Nigeria, it is incontestable that corruption has assumed a ludicrous dimension. The Nigerian situation aptly fits into what Myrdal described in Amuwo (2005), as the "folklore of corruption". To Ogundiya (2010:235), the consequences of political corruption are patently manifested in:

Cyclical crisis of legitimacy, fragile party structure, institutional decay, chronic economic problem and underdevelopment and above all, general democratic volatility

Godfatherism has undoubtedly fuelled Nigeria's corruption epidemic as politicians use every means available to them, legal or illegal to win political positions. Some western diplomats estimated that Nigeria lost a minimum average of \$4 billion to \$8 billion per year to corruption over the eight years of the Obasanjo administration (HRW, 2007).

The point was made earlier that the relationship between the godfather and godson is instrumental: the godfather assures the latter of electoral success and the godson uses his political power after winning the election to advance the social, economic and political influence of his mentor. This explains why politics in Nigeria is usually a contest of power between godfathers. They come out with all the tricks that could help to give their candidates victory. The tricks include multiple voting, exchanging official ballot boxes with unofficial ones already filled with voting papers, stealing electoral boxes, chasing voters away from constituencies where their candidates are likely to have few votes, killing and wounding political opponents, bribery, etc. in the socio-economic realm, godfatherism impacts on development through various way as high crime rate and economic instability among others.

The Way Forward

The theoretical postulation and context of this study is based on the fact that elite politics and its concomitant godfatherism is one of the factors orchestrating political, social and economic crises in Nigeria. It is on the basis of this study's contextual diagnosis of the problems associated with the operation of godfatherism in Nigeria that the following panaceas are adumbrated below:

- There is the urgent need for strict adherence to the rule of law in Nigeria. This should be done through adequate application of the tenets of the rule of law in which every citizens of the country is equal before the law. The current sacred cow status of godfathers should be stopped.
- The electoral laws in Nigeria should be reformed to limit the funding of political parties and their candidates by individuals and corporate organizations. This is the way forward in abrogating the phenomenon of godfatherism. Godfathers in Nigeria operate

easily in the current praxis of unlimited individual and corporate funding of electoral activities. This should be done through meticulous supervision of party and electioneering finances in the country.

- The government should revitalize Nigeria's weak economy in order to create employment for youths, who carry out the evil biddings of godfathers and their godsons for mere peanut. This should be implemented through sundry employment programmes as the NDE among others.
- The government should establish and strengthen sovereign institutions free from external control, to act as watchdog to public office holders. This will help to ensure transparency and accountability, and concomitantly minimize the abuse of power. For example, the activities of EFCC (Economic Financial Crimes Commission) and ICPC (Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Crime) should be stepped up in this regard.

Conclusion

Nigeria today stands a great nation among the comity of Nations. In spite of this endowed greatness, it is an observed fact that the dynamics of godfatherism in the country has negatively affected its socio-political and economic development. These activities of the godfathers are in no way desirable for the sustainable political and socio-economic development of Nigeria, and therefore require amelioration or outright elimination. It is on this process of godfather amelioration in the Nigerian polity that this study's advanced panacea is suggested for subsequent implementation.

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