

## **DEMOCRACY AND POLITICS OF GODFATHERISM IN NIGERIA: THE EFFECTS AND WAY FORWARD**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Political godfatherism is one of the factors that embedded democratic setting in Nigeria since first republic. In view of this, this research work is primarily designed to examine democracy and politics of godfatherism in Nigeria with emphasis on its effects and way forward. The study adopts primary and secondary data to analyze some critical issues, like political violence, vote buying, disenfranchisement and some other political and socio-cultural factors that embedded democratic setting in Nigeria since 1999 till current political dispensation engaged by godfathers and godsons. The study further explores the relationship between godfathers and godsons with a particular attention to who become the next strongmen in the area of politics and who retains the status quo. This study examines some key concepts, such as democracy, political violence and political godfatherism. Finally, the study concludes with recommendations in order to ensure good governance and political stability in Nigeria.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Democracy in Nigeria has had a chequered history. From the ‘Wild-Wild West’ experience of the first republic through prolonged autocratic military regimes and the truncated second and third republics to the present democratic dispensation, democracy has suffered debilitating experiences in the country. The perennial travail of democracy is predicated on a number of

factors, including ineffective structures and institutions, the foreboding presence of the military, corruption, money politics and godfatherism (Said & Kehinde, 2007: 95)

However, Godfatherism has become a scary phenomenon in Nigerian politics. As rightly observed by Omotola (2007: 139), Godfatherism in Nigeria, particularly in its current form and character, is distributive. Though it is a longstanding and deeply rooted feature of the cultural values of Nigerian society, where it is purely socio-economic in nature and mutually productive for both parties, its politicization would appear to have contributed to the criminalization of politics. For example, the Hausa have a well-institutionalized system where the godfather is known as “Maigida” (landlord or head of household). Godfathers reign across all spheres of the society: academics, legal, and religion environment.

Therefore, the clamour for democracy in Nigeria is to improve both political and socio-economic situation of the country through massive involvement in the policy making, but reverse is the case as those that attained political power in both legislative and executive arms of government got to the seat of powers through the support of some political ‘godfathers’ in various states cum the center, however, the desire of political godfathers is to hold political and socio-economic powers both at the center cum the component units as mechanisms to politically influence the activities of political office holders, that is, the Governors and some Legislators in terms of appointing people into various positions, such as Ministers/Commissioners, Chairmen of the boards, Secretaries to the various Institutions, DPM and Treasurers of Local Governments as well as allocation of some developmental projects into various localities within the state or center as well.

Consequently, the impact of the godfathers on Nigeria’s general elections was unprecedented. Godfathers are those who have the security connections, extended local links, enormous financial weight to plot and determine the success of a power seeker at any level of a supposedly competitive politics. Although godfatherism has an institutionalized feature in Nigerian politics

over the years, its contemporary manifestations suggest that it has assumed epidemic proportions, becoming one of the greatest threats to democratic consolidation in Nigeria (Omotola, 2007, 135). The recent activities of some Nigerian godfathers could be likened to attributes of mafianism; however, some still see the existence of godfathers as the balancer of power in a democracy. Akinola (2009) believes in the need to have a good-hearted individual (people's hero) at the sole realm of absolute power, a godfather distributes power as he deems, and anoints who rules. But, godfatherism has taken a strange dimension in Nigeria's political environment. It has become a menace pulling down the foundations of masses-driven governance, thereby denying Nigerians the much-deserved dividends of democracy.

Ademola (2004) added that since 1999, when Nigeria joined the comity of democratically governed countries, it has continued to experience an unprecedented rise in political violence ranging from increased crime wave, armed robbery, political assassination, and religious riots as a result of crises loomed between godfathers and some godsons, see the case of godfatherism, which reached its climax during the wanton destruction of lives and properties that witnessed the violent confrontation between a godfather (Chris Uba) and governor of Anambra state (Chris Ngige) and Dr. Olusola Saraki and his godson, late Admiral Mohamed Lawal in 1999-2003 administration in Kwara State which witnessed various political dimensions ranging from the destruction of lives and properties, electoral malpractices/violence, disenfranchisement of many qualified electorates through the engagement of thugs and lastly, the invitation of vote buying system between godfather (Dr. Olusola Saraki) and his godson (Late Admiral Mohamed Lawal) who wanted to become political dictator in the state. In conclusion, there is hardly any state devoid of the existence and influence of godfathers, though the level of such influence varies. In America, the political candidate wiggles around, seeking group and individual endorsements for their candidacy. Also, in other advanced societies, group influence and endorsement could be more valuable than a powerful individual (Akinola, 2009).

In essence, godfatherism is a threat to the Nigeria's nascent democracy. This makes it imperative in this paper to explore the ugly phenomenon of godfatherism and its effect on democratization in the country.

## **CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS**

### **ON THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY**

Democracy as a concept is one of the most striking features of contemporary politics. There are few people or nation-states nowadays that do not practice democracy and claimed democratic. However, in an attempt to theorize the concept, it should be appreciated that democracy is a very loaded concept which entire essence cannot captured by a single school of thought (Abiola & Olaopa, 2006: 26). To them, democracy is a set of institutions that fulfils at least two essential requirements. First, it must elicit as accurately as possible the opinion of many people as possible on who shall be their representatives and on how the country ought to be governed. This means a minimum universal suffrage, political parties, and organization of fresh voting in acceptable elections at relatively frequent intervals.

Second, it should provide some way of ensuring that those chosen by the public do what the electorate wants them to do or that they can be replaced if they do otherwise even between elections. This simply means that the process of government in a democracy is essentially a dialogue between the rulers and the ruled.

Sergent (1975) viewed democracy with the following options:

1. Citizens involvement in political decision making;
2. Some degree of equality among citizens;
3. Some degree of liberty, freedom granted or retained by citizenry;
4. A system of representation; and
5. An electoral system of majority rule.

In spite of the differences in conceptualization and practices of democracy, Ojo (2006) notes that all its versions, whether liberal or capitalist, socialist and African brand, share the fundamental objective of 'how to govern the society in such a way that power actually belongs to all the people. Similarly, Chafe (1994, 2) contends that democracy means, among others, the involvement of the people in the running of the political, socio-economic and cultural affairs of their society.

Perhaps the most basic idea in democracy is that people are essentially equal, and that thus each person has a right to have a say in who governs and how they do so. Hence, legitimate political power comes from the people, and government, therefore, is legal only when the governed consent.

### **CONCEPTUALISING POLITICAL GODFATHERISM**

Political Godfatherism is one of the concepts that open narrow doors when it comes to deciding who gets what in the political scene. However, for the purpose of this study, the literary meaning and attributes of godfather needs to be emphasized. Literarily Godfathers are seen in Nigeria to be men who have the power personally to determine both who gets nominated to contest elections and who wins an election. According to Audu (2006:8), Godfathers are people of questionable wealth and influences who robbed political parties of their conventional and legitimate functions of presenting clear and coherent programmes on the basis of which the candidates presented by them are chosen by the voters. He observes that ideally, government that is freely and fairly instituted by the people must be accountable to them as the source of its moral authority to rule. However, this is not possible with people of questionable wealth whose major concern is to recover the money spent for installing their candidates in power and thereafter share certain percentage of what comes to the government purse as their share of the economy.

In the argument of Akpan (2004), Godfathers are people that finance political parties activities and individual electoral campaigns as actively throughout investment outlet to be recorded

through frivolous and bloated government contracts, appointment of cronies into choice public offices and other prebendal returns by the beneficiaries. In the same vein, Ibrahim (2006) qualifies Godfathers as individuals who have the ability to deliver the desired outcome in an electoral contest. The emphasis here is that politicians can only achieve political offices with the backing of the so called “Godfathers”. Indeed, godsons become mere surrogates and remain totally subservient to their godfathers.

Not only that, Omotola (2007) is of the view that godfathers are those who have the security connections, extended local links, enormous financial weight, and so on, to plot and determine the success or otherwise of a power seeker at any level of a supposedly competitive politics. The complex processes of doing this from ‘womb to tomb’ is famously known as ‘godfatherism’ (Omotola, 2007:35)

In the final analysis, political godfatherism is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. It has historical link to the era of the country’s first republic. And it has been an ugly system that had disrupted democratization process in Nigeria. In view of this, the next section gives a historical account of politics of Godfatherism in Nigeria.

## **THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL GODFATHERISM IN NIGERIA**

The political godfather phenomenon is not new in Nigeria. It started during the First Republic when the foremost nationalists of the country (Zik, Awo, Tafawa-Balewa, etc) influenced and controlled political activities in Nigeria. However, there are lots of differences between the ideological godfatherism of the First Republic and the crude form.

Quoting Ibrahim Jibrin **Gambo** (2007), Bernard traced the origin of godfatherism in electoral politics to the city of Chicago in the United States of America in the pre-world war II era, “when the heads of criminal gangs sponsored politicians in elections, manipulated the results to get them elected and, in turn, received protection and contracts from their political godsons”.

However, the advent of godfatherism in the Nigerian partisan politics dates back to the First Republic when leaders of the three main political parties [Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), Action Group (AG) and National Congress of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC)] carefully and meticulously cultivated godsons that they were convinced would advance the well being of the citizens. According to Gambo, Sir Ahmadu Bello of the NPC, Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe of the NCNC and Chief Obafemi Awolowo of the AG were motivated to do so and not to use godsons as surrogates to promote parochial interests, but to promote the developmental aspirations of the people.

Unlike the present crop of political godfathers, the first generation godfathers were essentially benevolent and progressive because they did not abuse their status as godfathers by imposing frivolous demands on their godsons as it is the case today. They served as a huge reservoir of wisdom and experience to be consulted on the business of governance. Indeed, in a relative sense, the first republic political godfathers were drawn by community sense of interest in seeking to influence the electorates to vote for some candidates of their choice. It was enough satisfaction for them that they wielded tremendous influence in the society and this inevitably generated a groundswell of goodwill and reverence for them, as their views on political issues were scarcely contested in their respective regions of the country.

### **MANIFESTAION OF POLITICS OF GODFATHERISM IN NIGERIA**

Godfathers play important role in democratic sustenance in Nigerian politicking since 1953 during the era of self government up to the fourth republic where uninterrupted democracy is experienced from 1999 to 2011. As indicated earlier, the power and influence of the godfather is enhanced by political connections at the highest tier of government. Where this is absent the individual can only operate as a mentor, benefactor or financier. He must avoid a brush with the law because it will be visited with heavy penalty. Considering Kwara State from 1979, Dr. Olusola Saraki operated as a financier or benefactor to Alhaji Adamu Attah the Governor of Kwara State. The relationship turned sour and he withdrew the support. Dr Olusola Saraki then

shifted his support to Chief Cornelius Adebayo who was in the Unity Party of Nigeria although he(Saraki) remained in the National Party of Nigeria. Chief Cornelius Adebayo went ahead to win the gubernatorial election in Kwara in 1983. Dr Olusola Saraki was clearly the deciding factor in the election as he had proved that whichever candidate he backed could win the election irrespective of party affiliation (Ayoade, 2008:124). In furtherance to this, Dr. Olusola Saraki, the strongman of Kwara politics also succeeded in taking over power from late Mohammed Lawal in 2003 to install his son Dr. Abubakar Bukola Saraki as Executive Governor of Kwara State from 2003 to 2011. However, at the tail of his son's administration, *Baba* Saraki wanted Gbemisola Saraki to take over the power from her brother under the platform of PDP but to no avail, the situation could not help *Baba* Saraki to achieve this objective in the Kwara State ruling party and this led to the rift between father and son to part ways in the control of PDP. Therefore, Governor Saraki who has been in firm control of the PDP structure in Kwara while his father was forced to move to Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), a less popular political party, where Gbemisola Saraki gained the party gubernatorial flag bearer through politics of consensus among party members to enable her replace the brother as governor in year 2011.

Consequently, the legislative elections conducted on the 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2011 indicated that the PDP party leader in Kwara State has succeeded in taking over the political power from his father because his party, PDP claimed all Senatorial seats and all house of Reps without sharing the position with other parties and this served as emergence of new political godfather in Kwara state. In addition to this assertion, Dr. Bukola Saraki backed Alhaji Fatai Ahmed as PDP gubernatorial candidate and urged other contestants from central and northern senatorial districts to step down for the contesters from southern senatorial district to pave way for his Godson at the primary level which eventually actualized his objective in installation of Alhaji Fatai Ahmed.

In Ogun, son of former governor Olusegun Osoba, Olumide is also in fray. The younger Osoba is the standard bearer of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) for the House of Representatives



slot in Odeda/Abeokuta North/Obafemi Owode federal constituency. Considering his father's pedigree in politics and the growing influence of the party in Ogun, the young Osoba was able to achieve his political ambition to Abuja as a result of his father's influence, the father therefore stood as political godfather to his son to serve as member of the Green Chamber with the 7<sup>th</sup> legislative council.

Senator Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello, a veterinary doctor and a daughter of former President Olusegun Obasanjo started her political career as commissioner for health under Governor Gbenga Daniel from 2003-2007. She was promoted to become a Senator in 2007 where she served as chairman, Senate Committee on Health. Her father being the Chairman of PDP's Board of Trustees wanted his daughter to enjoy second term in the Senate. During this process, there were factions in the party at the state level to the extent that separate primaries were conducted by the two factions. But later on, Obasanjo's faction enjoyed judicial pronouncement which compelled INEC to recognize Iyabo as the candidate for Ogun Central Senatorial District and other members of his group to received party tickets to various positions both at state cum federal constituencies. The factional crisis which was between Obasanjo and his Godson, Daniel on who would be the next state godfather. Obasanjo supported Olurin as party governorship flag bearer while Governor Daniel picked Isiaka as his own godson for the position. This led to clash between the two godfathers and both later lost to the opposition party, ACN, during the 2011 National Assembly and Gubernatorial elections (The Nation, April 11, 2011; 12).

In Abia State, there were serious doubts over who was really in charge. While some vowed it was former Governor Orji Kalu, others said the incumbent Theodore Orji had taken over. But the results of the National Assembly and Gubernatorial elections of the 2011 confirmed the incumbent Governor as the new kingpin in the state politics. All PDP candidates won convincingly in the race for the National Assembly. The former governor who contested for a senatorial seat also lost to the serving senator, Uche Chukwumerije. The PPA chieftain, who ruled the state for eight years and installed the incumbent against all odds, could not deliver a

seat for the party. With the recent experience, there is no doubt that Ochondo, as the Governor is fondly called, is now the new strongman of Abia politics. This is despite the fact that he defected from PPA to APGA and now PDP. He has proven that wherever he goes, Abia voters will follow him (The Nation Thursday, April 14, 2011; 2).

Another example of the significance of political connections is the Anambra case where Chris Uba installed Dr. Chris Ngige as Governor for only one term as he had signed an agreement saying “I SHALL NOT seek re-election or stand for nomination to recontest the gubernatorial seat of Anambra State for a second term” (Ayoade, 2008: 126 cited in Adeyemo, 2004:18). Prior to the election, Dr. Ngige also signed a covenant of relationship on March 28, 2003 in which he pledged to continue to do the biddings of Chris Uba. In addition, on May 5, 2003 he was also alleged to have signed three undated letters of resignation as PDP Candidate, Governor elect, and Governor respectively (Adeyemo, 2004:18). Thus if he reneged on his pledge the appropriate letter would be dated and submitted as a letter of resignation. Chris Uba was alleged to have put in place a collegial administration in the name of a caucus. And on May 19, 2003 the Caucus decided (Adeyemo, 2004:16 and 17). Chris Ngige was alleged to have reneged on his promises within six weeks of his inauguration as Governor. Consequently he was abducted by the Police on July 10, 2003 and was saved by a telephone call that he made from where he was kept. Ngige was alleged to have resigned as Governor on July 10, 2003 using the presigned letter of resignation of May 5, 2003 (Ayoade, 2008: 126 cited in Agbo, 2004a:18) That attempt to remove him from office failed and it was followed in November 2003 by a four-day riot resulting in the wanton destruction of public property. The mercenaries were allegedly paid N10,000 each per day for four days of the operation. The massive arson of public property in the State was organized to discredit Dr. Ngige (Agbo, 2004b: 32-33). In fact, in a release, the Uba camp claimed that the action was taken to “let the world know that we have taken charge to implant a new government” and thus enjoined everyone to join the crusade because “Ngige is going today” (Agbo, 2004a:23). It is believed that the Godfather can make and unmake. In this vein, Dan Ulasi, a believer in Chris Uba, is quoted as saying

*If you read what the Minister of Works said about Obasanjo and his first term (sic). The President realized that he came through a source and you will see that it would appear the source managed his government for the first four years and the President pretended to be a fool because he knew that people spent a lot of money to make him President from prison (Adeyemo 2004:21 quoted in Ayoade, 2008 ).*

The Anambra case demonstrated the importance of political connections to the survival of the Godfather himself. Andy Uba, the senior brother of Chris Uba, the Godfather was a Special Adviser to the President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, while Ugochukwu Uba is a Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Before the advent of the Ubas in the political firmament of Anambra, Chief Emeka Offor who is said to be close to the Presidency on account of his large donation to the Presidential campaign in 1999 bestrode the State as godfather of the governor, Chinwoke Mbadinuju (Adebanjo 2001:34). Mbadinuju the Governor himself confessed to the fact that Offor contributed N4m to his campaign and on that account nominated the Commissioner for Finance and the Commissioner for Works (Adebanjo 2001:36). Just like Uba, Offor also insisted that Mbadinuju would not return as Governor of the state in 2003 (Adebanjo 2001:32). And through a combination of factors beyond the scope of this paper he lost the nomination for the office giving room for the Uba- Ngige show.

The legal battle for the removal of Ngige as Governor however continued until the Supreme Court invalidated his election and Mr. Peter Obi, who actually won the election, became Governor. The Anambra case demonstrated the significance of political connections. Chris Uba had confessed to an electoral crime but got away with it. The troika of the Uba brothers still dominate the politics of Anambra because they have political and security connections as well as the finance for the project.

Oyo State is not the case of a benefactor because Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu did not invest the colossal sum that the project required. Senator Rasheed Ladoja who eventually became the Governor of the State was alleged to have supplied the funds for the project. But Alhaji Adedibu is a man of tremendous political clout and courage. He has nurtured and maintained a formidable grassroots support and he is an astute mobilizer. He has very strong political and security connections as well as access to funds when needed to oil his political machine. He claimed to have deployed all those resources to secure the election of Senator Rasheed Ladoja. He is therefore quoted as saying:

*“I installed him there when people opposed him” (Oguchi2005:2). Speaking like Louis XIV of France, he said “I am the politics in Oyo State and I am the issue to discuss by all and sundry (Oguchi 2005:2).*

He fell out with Ladoja, because according to him, he failed to honour all agreements entered into before his election and for keeping the former Chairman of the Oyo State National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) Alhaji Lateef Akinsola (Tokyo) in Agodi Prison for 29 months. Furthermore, he asserted that before Ladoja's election he controlled the political machine. He claimed that after the election, Ladoja “withdrew the machinery (sic) to himself and refused to give them appointment or to compensate them. This is now “the time for me to withdraw all the machinery (sic) from him and compensate them...” (Oguchi 2005 quoted in Ayoade, 2008).

Alhaji Adedibu deployed the eighteen members of the House of Assembly who supported him to institute the impeachment of Ladoja. These legislators were camped in D'Rovans Hotel, Ibadan. Since they did not constitute two thirds of the thirty-two member legislature, they suspended five of the fourteen members including the Speaker who supported Governor Ladoja. They then claimed that they (18) constituted two thirds of the remaining 27 members of the legislature!! Many people saw the impeachment process as opaque and the Supreme Court upturned it after eleven months. Alhaji Adedibu had support from President Obasanjo as he himself boasted: “It is

not that Obasanjo is supporting me blindly. He has reasons to support me. He has waded into the crisis several times... There was a time when Obasanjo prostrated for me about six times” (Oguchi 2005:1).

In 1999, Alimodu Sheriff was said to have financed the Borno State gubernatorial election. His candidate won the election and was Governor of Borno State from 1999-2003. But the relationship between him and his benefactor was not cordial. Consequently in 2003 the benefactor himself decided to contest the election against his godson, Alhaji Mala Kchala, and he claimed the victory. The benefactor, Alimodu Sheriff in the last ANPP primaries was able to back the candidature of Alhaji Gubio as the next ANPP’s governorship flag bearer while his brother was chosen as running mate for the 2011/2015 general elections but man proposes God disposes , two of them were shot dead by unknown “*boko haram*” members. Alimodu Sheriff himself contested for the position of Senator again in the last general elections but he was crushed by PDP candidate. Though he is still maintaining the position of godfather in the state because he was the one that installed Alhaji Shettima Kasim, the current governor into the system despite the fact that he lost his desired position to an opposition party.

### **THE EFFECT OF GODFATHERISM IN NIGERIAN POLITICS**

Since 1999 when Nigeria regained her legitimate political power from military administrator under the auspices of General Abdulsalam many cases of political violence from north and south poles of the country have become the order of the day which characterized the efforts of political godfathers and some godsons in various states. Among the effect of political godfathers are:

**Massive destruction of lives and properties:** In the beginning and post elections of April, 2011 in Nigeria, there were many cases of massive destruction of lives and properties as a result of the instructions given by the godfathers to their supporters in various state of the federation. In Kano State, some unspecified number of people died, non-indigenes fled Kano as the violence spread. Despite the indefinite curfew imposed on the city to douse tension, non-natives still live in fear

of attacks, several places of worship were burnt down by youths. Thousands of non-natives were seeking refuge in military and police barracks, sleeping in the open, without essential facilities (The Nation Wednesday, April 20, 2011; 7).

Bauchi state is also a place of crises where many lives and properties were lost, five Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) offices were burnt and property worth of millions of naira destroyed in five local governments, more than 500 lap-top computers and 13 generators were burnt and windows and doors were stolen by hoodlums after post presidential poll in the State. Also many lives of leaders of tomorrow “corps members” were claimed by some groups of people before and aftermath of the presidential election in Bauchi, Niger, Kogi and some other states.

**Turning young citizens to Hooligans cum thugs:** In the just concluded 2011 April polls, cases of suspected thugs were reported in some states. In Kwara state, the state police arrested 23 persons suspected to be political thugs during the 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2011 election. In his remarks, the police commissioner, Mr. Mamman Tsafe stated that a political party imported thugs from Lagos to disrupt the election in the state. Also, an Ilorin magistrate court in Kwara state remanded 14 supporters of ACN in prison custody for alleged public disturbance. The accused were arraigned on a four-count charge of criminal conspiracy inciting disturbance, mischief and causing injury contrary to sections 97, 114, 327, and 246 of penal code. The charge sheet said Otunba Bode Oyedepo of No. 16 Adebayo Avenue Oro, told the police how he was attacked at Iludun-Oro with his fellow PDP members by thugs allegedly sent by ACN senatorial candidate for Kwara south. Anu Ibiwoye. Oyedepo further explained that the thugs allegedly came in vehicle and attacked them with bottles and guns (The Nation Monday, April, 2011: 3).

**Proliferation of arms and ammunitions:** The clash between factions in the Oyo State branch of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) claimed many lives and left several others injured and some properties reportedly damaged in Ibadan, the state capital. The slain

victim, identified as Dele Ayegbo, was said to be a member of the faction loyal to the reinstated chairman, Lateef Akinsola Olorunkun (Tokyo). The conflict was sparked off by a struggle by the Tokyo faction to take over some motor-parks hitherto controlled by the other faction who had taken over reign since the relationship between him and the former governor, Adebayo Alao-Akala, got strained.

The urge to take over the parks was reinforced by the de-proscription of the union by the last regime, as well as the emergence of new government in the state, which was believed to have a soft spot for Tokyo's faction. The invading faction stormed the Iwo-Ife axis of the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway motor parks shooting sporadically to scare the occupants. Several people were reportedly injured while scores of vehicles were damaged during the shooting that lasted for over one hour. The injured, it was learnt, included commuters at the parks, who were trying to escape from the scene having seen the dangerous weapons wielded by the factions of the drivers' union. Traders around the parks and shop owners at the Iwo-Road interchange, Monatan Junction, Lagos Expressway parks and Ojoo way were forced to abandon their wears as they scampered for safety from the booming gun (Next, Tuesday, May 31, 2011).

**Disfranchisement of citizens to exercise their political right:** Two weeks to the general elections, there are doubts over plans for a credible exercise in Oyo state. Reason: voters' registers in 27 local government areas have been tampered with by members of PDP in collusion with INEC officials, four suspects were arrested Saturday evening 19<sup>th</sup> march, 2011 in a hotel in old Bodija, Ibadan, the state capital, while allegedly tampering with registration materials in some local governments. INEC materials, including six laptops and voters' registers, were found on the suspect (The Nation, March 21, 2011: 1-2).

Adesina, the ACN leader in Oyo accused the PDP governorship candidate, and godfather as well, Chief Adebayo Alao Akala, of sponsoring the illegality. He further alleged that Adakeja, the

INEC Residential Electoral Commissioner in Oyo was in an unholy alliance with the governor to subvert democracy.

Taraba state is another focusing area where the report of disenfranchisement was exercised by political godfather of Governor Danbaba Suntai of PDP, Danbaba was accused by ACN of unconstitutionally using the security apparatus to intimidate and arrest political opponents. The party alleged that soldiers arrested and detained 30 of its supporters ahead of April polls The Nation, March 21, 2011: 6).

In Kogi state, the ACN described the national assembly as shameful in all many parts of the state. The party called for the cancellation of some results in some polling units in the central senatorial district, especially Abuja/ Ozuja, there were cases of multiple voting, alterations, falsification and disorderliness (The Nation Tuesday, April 12, 2011).

**Politicized employment in the state cum the center:** The appointment of political office holders and some civil servants today is purely political. The godfathers of a particular state as well as center usually task their godsons on the kind of people to be employed in their cabinet even though the person may not be up-to-the task in terms of experience or ability to deliver. He ought to be employed since directive is comes from the godfather. However, if godson reacts to the directive of his godfather negatively it leads to political violence. See the case of lower house (House of Representatives) in Nigeria, the emergence of 2011/2015 speaker of the House that led to the destruction of zoning arrangement drawn by PDP as both former president Olusegun Obasanjo imposed Hon. Muraina (PDP) from Oyo and president Goodluck Jonathan in collaboration with his wife Dame Patience under the policy of affirmative action and 35% involvement of women in government presented Mulikat (PDP) from Oyo but the work of godfathers in these policies failed as the honourable members decided to install Honourable Aminu Tambuwal of PDP from Sokoto by majority votes of 252 as against 90 votes cast for Honourable Mulikat. As a result of this, the PDP executives still do not recognize the current



speaker as the winner, no congratulatory message has ever been sent to him rather they continue preaching zoning arrangement.

**Promotes high level of poverty:** Most of the political godfathers engage inhabitants of a state with high level of poverty. In my state as an example, the then political godfathers, like Dr. Olusola Saraki and late Governor Muhammed Lawal and the current strongman of PDP in Kwara state, Dr. Bukola Saraki have distributed raw food, cooked food, clothes and money for so many able and disabled individuals to buy their votes during elections.

**Enhanced disrespect of the rule of laws:** The Nigerian styled Patron-Client relationship nearly truncated Nigerian puerile democracy on June 10th, 2003. A self-confessed godfather, Uba employed thugs and 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's allocation, and instantly pay him a sum of N2.5 billion; the claimed cost of installing Ngige as governor (Onwumere, 2007). Their loyalists embarked in a battle of 'iron' and 'steel'. The State became a war zone, innocent lives were lost, houses were set ablaze, and Anambra state became ungovernable for weeks. It was not a case of two fighting, but a desperate godfather (Uba and his 'troops') consuming everything at their reach when it became clear that his investment was going down the drain. The only solution the federal government proffered was the threat to declare a state of emergency in the state.

**Production of an unresponsive leadership:** Former speaker of House of Representatives, Mr. Dimeji Bankole gained the position of leadership through some political godfathers within the PDP after the allegation passed by the house over the financial misappropriation engaged by Hon. Patricia Etteh. Dimeji Bankole who headed 6<sup>th</sup> National House of Assembly (Lower House) was also arrested by anti- corruption crusade (EFCC) due to the fact that he engaged in financial impropriety of about N10billion loan that was shared among the principal officers' increment. Other principal officers' increment shows that the minority whip, deputy minority leader and

deputy minority whip that have been receiving N36million per quarter received an increment of N14million to make up N50million each while the rest of members got an increment of N14 million on usual N28million per quarter (Vanguard 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2011, p.5). In conclusion, this an indication that bad leaders will emerge if individual attained the power through political godfathers.

**Manipulation of public policies:** Most of Nigerian policies are usually bent by political godfathers to enable them fix in their candidates to the corridor of power. In the recent time, the House of Representatives has declared Honourable Patricia Etteh as innocent. Also in Ogun state, as a result of political erratic existing between Obasanjo and Daniel which led to the creation of two factions in the party (PDP) at the state level, the two aspirants emerged for the governorship race. Daniel's faction was able to see the sympathy of INEC as the INEC representatives witnessed the conduct of party's primaries at recognized venue for the exercise conduct while Obasanjo's faction was declared by court as winner at primary level in spite of the fact that non of INEC representatives witness the conduct, but, due to the strongman Obasanjo in Nigerian politics, his function was able to see the light of the day by the court in order to pave way for them in the General Elections.

## CONCLUSION

From all indications, godfatherism is a major debacle to political stability in any given society because it involves the employment of all illegal means to achieve their political objectives during registration of voters and conduct of both primaries and general elections in the state cum the center. The godfathers are usually involved in the snatching of ballot boxes and papers, killing of the opposition aspirants, falsification of election results, motivating the godsons to embezzle public fund, hijacking public securities to intimidate electorates in various polling units all over the nation-state and using their political influence to bend the public policies.

## **WAY FORWARD/RECOMMENDATIONS**

To put an end to political crisis created by political godfathers in Nigeria, the following factors as identified by Bernard, (2009) must be considered as first priority so that all illegal acts will be minimized;

- i. Political awareness campaigns should be put in place to put an end to political murders.
- ii. Elective posts in Nigeria should be made unattractive. The idea of paying jumbo salaries and allowances to elected public servants should be stopped.
- iii. Money, self-centredness and selfish influence should be de-emphasized in partisan politics through vigorous public enlightenment about the fundamental human rights of both the political aspirants and the electorates.
- iv. The electoral law should lay emphasis on proper conduct of primary elections in order to enhance the rights of the electorates in the choice of their candidates or representatives.
- v. Selection of candidates for elections or declaring candidates “unopposed” should be outlawed and random plebiscite should be introduced by the INEC in the respective constituencies to ascertain the popularity or acceptance of candidates chosen by political parties through primaries.
- vi. Alternatively, the INEC should request for and duly treat preliminary public petitions against candidates chosen at the primaries.
- vii. A provision should be made for independent candidature in the electoral law in order to cut the wings of political godfathers.
- viii. Misuse of the powers of incumbency should be curbed by appointing interim government in place of incumbent President, Governor and Local Government Chairmen shortly before the next elections. This will curb the practice whereby the aforementioned public office holders preside over the elections in which they are contestants and collude with godfathers to rig elections in their own favour with their paraphernalia of office.
- ix. Electronic voting should be adopted for all elections in the country in order to minimize electoral fraud.

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