

## **REGRESSIVE DEMOCRACY: THE MONSTROUS ROLE OF GODFATHERISM IN NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTARCT**

Godfatherism has become an attribute of modern day Nigeria democracy. With the gradual institutionalization of democracy, godfatherism has taken its toll in the politics of the country, thereby causing disaffection, disharmony, disunity and conflict among various political and interest groups. Its lethargic impact has further heightened political passivism and apartheidism, thus retarding Nigeria's democratic process. Apart from being a game of power play and rivalry, it often engenders political acrimony which tends to divest the people of democratic dividends. Consequently, such features as stagnated development, wanton destruction of lives and property becomes predominant. Nigeria has consistently been rated as one of the most corrupt nations on earth. This corrupt tendency propelled by greed has resulted in Nigerians seeing government as a vehicle for primitive accumulation and self aggrandizement. With these attendant problems associated with politics of godfatherism, Nigeria's socio-economic structure tends to encourage it. However, the third and fourth dispensations (2007-2014) of this fourth republic have witnessed tremendous change in role from 'do or die' style of godfatherism to that of intra party politics. It is this change pattern that necessitated this study.

**Key Words: Democracy, Godfatherism, Paternalism, Political Conflict, Personal Interest, Clientelism**

### **Introduction**

It is an undeniable fact in Nigeria history that godfatherism has been a major setback in the country's democratic experience. The drawbacks, political passivism and apartheidism witnessed across Nigeria today are traceable largely to the activities of godfatherism in the

nation's political system. Thus it has become a political headache that has been difficult to cure. However, it must be noted that godfatherism is not a bad phenomenon per se especially when it is situated around the context of its origin (Christianity). The concept of godfatherism has its origin in Christianity (especially the catholic faith) it implies a situation in which a man is chosen to act as godfather to a Christian child or husband and wife to act as god parents to a Christian child in order for the latter to become God fearing, obedient and law abiding child (Udo,2011).The concept is a Christian relationship that exist between a godfather with a sacred responsibility in the Christian faith to help nurture and train a child (The godson)with the expectation that the godson become a mature and successful adult .The case of Eli the priest and Samuel is a typical example (KJV,1sam.1vs28)4vs1'22) Samuel was under the tutelage of Eli while serving the lord .Eli was nothing but a godfather to Samuel. To Samuel, Eli was a role model, even though the latter's sons refused to follows their father's footsteps, Samuel did. Godfatherism stems from baptism which is one of the sacramental practices of the church. The idea of godfather and godson is more religiously inclined and of moral value to the spiritual growth and development of the godson. At baptism the godson is formally initiated in the church. He is put under the supervision of the godfather who now becomes a role model, guiding the spiritual life of the godson so that he does not go astray from the Christian precepts. Here, godfatherism is used in the positive sense of the word so as to help promote morality and uprightness in the church (Coker, 2004:33-34) which will eventually manifest in the wider society. From this analysis, it is believed that godfathers are God's representative here on earth in the life of godsons (This is the catholic belief). Unfortunately, the true meaning of this sacred bond has been ignorantly and arrogantly twisted. Crime syndicates, discharged jailbirds, politicians, influential members of the society including rich members' political parties now use the term godfather criminally when referring to their relationships with their godsons. It must however be noted that political godfatherism and sponsorship is as old as human race, and when selflessly applied, it helps to advance mankind and the society at large. For instance, Plato, the disciple and godson of Socrates wrote all the works and thoughts of Socrates on ruling, justice and government. So in his Plato's republic, his conceptions of justice, ruler ship and statehood accommodate godfatherism, but not in the perverted sense of the Nigerian situation (Dukor, V AND IX). In essence, therefore, godfatherism becomes a barracoon that shelters the weakest and unknown individuals that has the highest connections. These activities breed conflict, rivalry and power play.

### **Democracy: A Conceptual Narrative**

Democracy as a concept is enmeshed in a plethora of definitions. As common to all social science concepts, scholars have variously examined democracy at different historical epochs (Salawu, Mohammed and Mohammed, 2005:6). It has been attempted by various persons from time to time. Hence, David Held argued that the contending views on democracy 'reflect deeply rooted conflict about whether should mean some kind of popular power in which citizens are directly engaged in self government and self regulation or be conceived as a means of conferring authority on those periodically voted into office' (Held, 1993:6). Etymologically, therefore, democracy means government of the people (Epelle, 2004:29). The Greek Philosopher Cleon, defined it in 422 B.C. as, 'That shall be democratic which shall be of the people, by the people, for the people'. Likewise, Abraham Lincoln of the United States of America in his famous war speech in 1863 described it as, 'government of the people, by the people and for the people' (Epelle, 2005:30; Mahajan, 1988:793-794). This disagreement gave rise to three variants of democracy-Direct or Participatory democracy in which citizens are involved as in ancient times; Liberal or Representative Democracy which views democracy as a system of rule embracing elected officials who undertake to represent the interest and views of citizens within the framework of rule of law; and Marxist tradition, also sometimes referred to peoples democracy (Anifowose and Enemuo, 1999:143). Democracy in ancient Greece meant direct and active participation of the citizens in the affairs of the polis or city state. The citizens were therefore citizens' governor who at one and the same time subjects of political authority and the creators of public rules and regulations (Held, 1993:15). Democracy may be described as a 'system of government under which the people exercise the governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected by themselves' (Appadorai, 1974:137). Democracy can therefore mean that, 'government are established by and with the consent of the people, almost always by the constitution; the people choose their own leaders in free and fair elections; and the government and its leaders must ultimately obey the will of the majority of those who elected them to make laws (Richard, 1986). Despite these definitions, Epelle (2003:41) averred that, 'the long history of the concept does not convert to unanimity in its meaning by political scientists and politicians'. Not surprisingly, Thorson (1962:1) enjoined anyone who undertakes the writing of any essay on democracy to make clear from outset the way in which he plans to approach this vast and complicated subject.

**Political Conflict:** Conflicts are taken to be inherent aspect in human relations, whether at the group, national or international levels (Oche, 2005). Conflict pervades human society. It occurs within and between individuals and groups, between individuals, the state and also within the states. It relates to antagonism between persons, groups and organisations. It denotes an interaction of opposition, hostility and counteraction. At a more serious level, it denotes a relationship of struggle, muscle flexing, show of strength and clash. There is no gainsaying the fact that one of the major problems that transformed to a menacing threat to the survival of democracy in Nigeria is the spate of violence witnessed in different parts of the country (Sambo, 2005). Similarly, political conflict implies a contradiction arising from differences in interest, ideologies, prescriptions and tendencies. These contradictions exist in all segments of the society-individuals, groups, institutions and nations as well as in interpersonal and international relations. It is therefore an integral part of the society which could be brought about by a myriad of factors (Adeogun, 2006). Lowis Coser sees political conflict as a struggle over values or claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralise, injure or eliminate their rivals. This definition falls in tandem with the view expressed by Donohue and Kolt (1992:3) that conflict involves situations in which differences are expressed by interdependent peoples in the process of achieving their needs. From the above, it is clear that political conflict is a situation of incompatible interest between individuals or group of persons. Therefore it is an inevitable outcome of human interactions which could be positive or negative in its impact. However, this would depend on how it is managed. If poorly managed, it assumes a crisis dimension. On his part, Karl Marx' interpretation of the laws of change ties conflict with societal progress which represents a more enlightened and progressive perception of conflict. According to Marxian constitution, progress occurs through conflict and struggle between opposing forces and, hence, admixture of theses and antitheses produces syntheses (Imobighe, 2013:20). The aspect of this argument is that development is commensurate with political conflict. That is, for development to take place there must be conflict. It can therefore be agreed that political conflict arises due to man's struggle to acquire the limited resources available at any given time to ensure self or societal development.

**Paternalism:** It is a concept derived from the word *pater* and it means *father*. Its original meaning connotes a type of behaviour by a superior towards an inferior resembling that of a

male parent to his child-in most cases, a son. It exists in various forms and in different cultures. It is known as godfatherism in Nigeria but in India the patron-client relationship is called *jayman-kamin* relationship. The jayman is the patron figure and the Kamin is the client. The two are not of equal status. The jayman is of a higher caste and performs numerous services for his client. The superior or boss is a kind of gatekeeper who has access to rewards and necessities that can be obtained...through him, and hence, he can demand more than just adequate performance. Paternalism thrives in economic, political, intellectual, religious and marital contexts. Its two main functions are: the transmission of goods and services across gaps between generations and status levels; and the provision of means of access to resources to persons ordinarily excluded from such means (Bennet, 1968:472-473). Patron-clientele networks may be seen as strategies for the maintenance or aggrandisement of power on the part of the patrons and of coping and survival on the part of the clients. Since patronage was a means of protecting the weak and politically powerful, its mechanism will be pronounced where the weak are disproportionately weak, the strong disproportionately strong, and formal, alternative mechanism for protecting citizens-laws, court systems, police, procedural rules of the game remain embryonic, can be manipulated or perhaps imbued with little or no legitimacy (Waterbury, 1997:333-336). Ekiyor (2004:25) argued that 'the client owes it a duty to protect the interest of his boss and to perform certain specific issues that had been demanded by the patron. The relationship has gone beyond that of a father and son. It is both political and commercial'. Accordingly, Oshuntokun (2002) observed that, 'the political relationship under successive government in Nigeria is a reflection of the new international economic order, which facilitates the pursuit of regime change by avaricious godfathers whose major preoccupation is to perpetuate their hegemonic political influence for personal interest and aggrandisement'. Similarly, Aregbesola (2004) opined that, 'political godfatherism is a relationship existing between a godfather and the protégé, which is wholly in monetary terms. "I bankroll your electioneering campaign and you pay me back some expected sum of money with other expected government patronage while in an elected office. This is a witty, necrotic, manifestation of the deadly deeds of a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the superstructures of the society-political, legal, culture and social".

A critical look at the statements above reveals that the reward of godfatherism seems to be more personalised from north to east and west to south of the country. The godfather who relies solely on politics for survival subjects the godson to his hegemonic political influence.

Bassey and Emetak conceptualise godfatherism thus, ‘the power and influence of people who are politically relevant in deciding who gets nominated to contest elections and who eventually wins the election’. ‘Godfathers are highly politically mobile and can sway political support to the political party and/or candidate behind which they throw their political weight’ (Chukwuemeka, 2012). The feature of godfatherism is about the relationship which exists between two or more unequal entities. In this relationship, one occupies a position of power or influence. One of the entity plays the piper and dictates the tune more or less on a constant basis while the other dances (Ukhun, 2004:82). Speaking on the importance of money in politics which obviously godfathers provide, Omede (2004) posited that, ‘ money is needed in politics, elections, managing party activities such as political campaigns, party elections, sponsorship of candidates, compensation of party agents, advertisements and so on. However, money can also be used in politics to bribe voters and electoral officials as well as sponsorship of political aspirants with a view to siphoning public fund if they won. The illegal use of money in politics depends on the whims and caprices of the godfathers who are key players in the pursuit of the career in the country. Thus godfatherism has become a factor in Nigeria politics such that no politician can achieve success without the backing of a godfather (Mandani, 1996; Oshuntokun, 2002; Omede, 2004). Sketching the historical development of godfatherism in Nigerian politics since independence, Thovoethin (2004:79) came to the conclusion that, ‘godfatherism has become a hydra-headed monster for Nigeria’s democracy’. Similarly, Ekiyor (2004:27-28) submitted that patron-client paternalism has turned itself into an institution and has become an aberration to the practice of democracy in Nigeria’. It can be gleaned from the above that politics in Nigeria has adopted a peculiar character with a life of its own.

### **Godfatherism and Political Conflict: A Historical Analysis**

Godfatherism in the political science parlance first appeared in relation to the activities of kingpins of criminal underworld prior to the Second World War in the city of Chicago (Yahaya, 2007). Over time, it became a popular lexicon of politics like mafianism which describes a formidable power bloc with enormous influence like the Kaduna Mafia (Bala and Tyden, 1987). Mafians are strong socio-economic and political elites with shared political values and interest within an organised structure headed by a political godfather. The activities of godfathers make politics attractive to criminals as noted by Collier (2010). This is because of the use of violence which denies the emergent regimes any form of legitimacy

because they emerge as regime without any social contract with the people (Kew, 2010). This is because godfatherism perceives winning elections as the ultimate end of democracy (Animasawun, 2013). Collier (2010) identifies guns, wars and coups as technologies of political violence in the third world countries. In Nigeria, godfatherism remains one of the ills in the political process since 1999. This is because it has configured public office like an eatery which only the godfather gives the ticket to whoever he likes and once any beneficiary disobeys him, he gets him or her out of the eatery (Adebanwi, 2010). Instances include Saraki vs. Lawal in Kwara state; Offor vs. Mbadinuju; Uba vs. Ngige both in Anambra state; Kachalla vs Alimodu Sheriff in Borno state and Ladoja vs Adedibu in Oyo state. In all these instances, the godfathers ensured that the disobedient godsons lost election for second term in office and got some of them impeached. This patronage politics has made godfatherism phenomenal and parasitic in Nigeria's fourth republic with severe implication for participation, political security, democratic consolidation and peace (Animasawun, 2013; Atere and Akinwale 2006; Thovoethin, 2004; Adeyemi-Suenu, 2004) Olu Awofeso aptly captured this concept, 'godfatherism and money politics are two indispensable attributes of modern politics which could either foster democratic stability or inhibit democratic ethos, depending on how they are practiced in a particular society. Yet the two phenomenon are interwovenly related in such manner that the former dictates the pattern of the latter in a polity predominantly characterised by financial inducement' (2006:1). Godfatherism therefore is one very potent weapon that can be used to destabilise a country because of its ability to combine within its fold all the primordial elements of instability.

### **Theoretical Consideration**

Victor Vroom's expectancy theory, also called Valence-expectancy theory (Agbonifoh, et al 2005:214) can be used to explain the action of political godfathers in the country. According to him, individuals are motivated to perform certain actions to achieve certain goals if they know or expect that such actions will help them attain the desired goals. Seen in this light, it means that a political godfather will be ready to place his material and political resources at the behest of a neophyte seeking public office in so far as he expects or believe that such 'benevolence' will yield economic dividends if the latter wins the general election (Epelle, 2007:5-6). The theory can be summarised as: **FORCE=Valence x expectancy** (where force is the strength of a person's motivation; valence is the strength of an individual's preference for a particular outcome; and expectancy is the probability that a particular action will lead to

a desired outcome) has been widely acknowledged for its recognition of the role of individual differences cum preferences in the process of human motivation. Though the theory has been roundly criticised for being too difficult to apply in practice due to its complexity and doubts as to whether individuals perform this multiple calculations before performing any action (Koontz et al, 1980:641; Baridam, 1993:62), yet it brings to the fore the fact that individuals come into politics with different needs which they want satisfied while some see it as an opportunity to offer selfless service to the community, others see it as an investment that must yield dividends. The latter is the context in which Nigeria godfathers see politics. Any attempt by the godson to renege on earlier agreements is often met with an orgy of violence, thuggery, arson and assassination, thus replicating the Hobbesian state of nature. Unfortunately, as with every confrontation among ruling elites, the ultimate losers are the Nigerian masses whose resources is being plundered and frittered away in the course of the egoistic war. The combatants, notably the godfathers, most times comes out unscathed as top party bigwigs will always wade in to either placate the feuding parties or more rightly massage the ego of the mafia. A few examples will be drawn to show that despite their negative influence in the country's politics, godfatherism is a concept that may have tacitly acquired official legitimacy in Nigeria's body politic.

#### **NIGERIA'S BRAND OF GODFATHERISM: A HISTORICAL NOTE**

The first republic (1960-1966) operated a constitution that affirmed regional difference and provided a strong institutional base for group sentiment and ethnicism. The political arrangement was regionally based, ethnic and local issues became highly politicised. Each region was administered by ethnically oriented political parties that vowed to protect the people's interest and had nothing to do with other regions, as Bode Thomas puts it, 'each linguistic group in Nigeria should have a high degree of autonomy as possible in the conduct of its internal affairs' (Joseph, 1999:33). This situation further entrenched ethnicity and led to regional and sub-regional agitations in the country. The political crisis that engulfed the Western region was one of the factors that precipitated the fall of the first republic and the introduction of military rule in the country (Adeogun, 2006:87-88). The relationship between the godfather and godson during this period was symbiotic. Both of them needed each other. The godfather is interested in this relationship because it gives him the opportunity to perpetuate its views and ideas within the society or polity. They were always bothered about

the continuity of their views and ideas. So they select a protégé who they can assist, with the guarantee that their ideas and views will be perpetuated in a kind of corporate immortality. In most cases, the protégé and godfather shares the same lifestyle and educational background. The protégé more often than not is the always the brightest newcomer, who is most likely to be the pleasant or the most willing to learn. The godfather will describe him as the best in everything and will do so publicly (Farounbi, 2003).

In the parlance of partisan politics, godfathers offers to their protégés, leadership, ideas, expertise, knowledge and wisdom which were of immense importance to the latter. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Sarduna Ahmadu Bello, Mallam Aminu Kano, falls within this example while Abubakar Rimi, Jim Nwobodo, Sam Mbakwe, Lateef Jakande, Balarabe Musa, Anthony Enahoro, were eminent protégé who also became godfathers in their own right (Thovoethin, 2004:63). Their relationship were based on issues, and the desire to perpetuate a philosophy of governance and a style for development. These protégés acquired knowledge, wisdom, skills, and experience from their godfathers. Using this image and goodwill of these great men, the protégés won elections to become the succeeding generation of leaders of the people. Their relationship was not dependent on money for the purchase of people's votes, manipulation of electoral process or electoral fraud. In fact, in all relationship between the godfathers and protégés, the protégés were younger and the godfathers were more intelligent (Farounbi, 2003). However, the earlier recorded conflict between political godfather and godson in Nigeria was between Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Chief Ladoke Akintola. While the former was the leader of Action Group and Head of opposition in the Federal House of Representatives following the 1959 general elections, the latter was the deputy leader of the party and premier of the Western Region. According to Mackintosh (1966) and Olaleye (1985), the rift occurred due to Awolowo's overbearing attitude and insistence on being consulted before any fundamental policy decision is taken by the regional government-this is despite the fact that as opposition leader in the central legislature based in Lagos, it will mean that important decisions that were time bound will have to be sacrificed while waiting for him. As expected, Akintola resented this, and for daring to choose this path, was branded traitor, supplanter and perfidy personified by his boss. At the party convention in Jos in 1962, Awolowo used his patriarchal advantage to dismiss his deputy from the party post, a situation that led Akintola's faction to break away (Epelle, 2007:8; Adele, 2005:125). The National Council of Nigerian Citizens

could not escape from the godfatherism principle. Azikiwe godfatherism in the party led to the expulsion of leaders including Eyo Ita, most of whom later formed the United National Independent Party. Similarly, the Northern People's Congress could not be exonerated from this kind of politics as most of those that the party wanted to stay within the party were retained while a number of party members were expelled including Aminu Kano and Saadu Zungur (Adele, 2005:126). As the crisis and infighting among political parties and within regions persisted, with the feeling of insecurity in the country, the military has reasons to burgle in.

The second Republic (1979-1983), Alhaji Adamu Attah ahd ridden on the indomitable political machine of the Lion of Kwara politics, Dr. Olusola Saraki, then Senate Leader. When Attah fell out of favour, and the failure of Saraki to block Attah's nomination for a second term as governor in 1983, he used his vast political structure and financial war chest to ensure victory for Chief Cornelius Adebayo, the gubernatorial candidate of Unity party of Nigeria. Again in 1992, during the aborted third republic, Dr. Saraki bankrolled and installed in office Alhaji Shaaba Lafiagi as governor of Kwara state. The patro client relationship did not last long, even though the regime was shortlived due to Abacha's military invasion in 1993; cracks started appearing in the wall (Edo Express, 2006; Lawal, 2005).

### **Institutionalisation of Godfatherism in Nigeria's Fourth Republic**

#### **The First and Second Dispensation, 1999-2011**

This period witnessed a lot of political intrigues, infringements, lawlessness, enslavement and assassinations. It can be likened to the period reminiscent of the 'Hobbesian state of nature'. Following the sudden death of Abacha on June 8, 1998, the transition programme for the fourth Republic began under the military leadership of General Abdusalam Abubakar who spearheaded the arrangement for a multi party system. The major party that wrestled power were, Alliance for Democracy (AD), All People's Party (APP), People's Democratic Party (PDP). The PDP produced Obasanjo who was sworn in on May 29, 1999 as the civilian president of Nigeria's fourth republic. However, since the inception of this republic, series of protracted ethno religious and political crisis have claimed many lives and properties. These problems emanated from irrational behaviour of the political elites, politics of division and politics devoid of political ideology. All these combined created politics of assassination, decampment and public protests. Specifically, the 2003 general elections were marred by

political manipulation due to the inordinate ambition of the emergent political class that was desperate to secure and retain political power (Anifowose, 1982; Akume, 2004; Dazema, 2004). These situations contradicted the expectations that both the rich and poor political parties should have equal electoral opportunity to win elections. In contrast, political offices were reserved for the highest bidders. However, persons who are getting rich by the sweat of their labour are generally not interested in elective political offices, especially if they have to burn their hard earned wealth to achieve such offices. On the other-hand those who are stupendously rich and subsequently become interested in elective political offices, usually make their money through unprincipled behaviour in the dirty, dark alleys of the political process. Such persons can buy political offices but lack the proper actions, sound and correct principles of personal character to lead the country to where it should aspire (Lasswell, 1951; Lipset, 1995; Kegley and Witkopf, 2002).

During the 2003 general elections, moneybags instead of political ideology, directed political actions in political parties and also influenced the political actions of many politicians. As a result the presidential candidate of the two major political parties, APP and PDP reportedly clinched their party tickets by stuffing the car booths of their party delegates with Ghana must go bags full of money meant for political manipulations (Musa, 2003). In addition, many donations were made to the PDP at a fund raising party for the re-election of Obasanjo and Atiku. Aliko Dangote and Emeka Offor donated #1billion, all Federal Ministers #10million each while the twenty one state Governors controlled by PDP contributed a total of #120million. In all, #2billion was realised (Dazema, 2004; Guardian, 2003; Weekly Trust, 2003). The question that comes to mind is, what is such huge amount of money meant for in a country with a proportion of people vegetating below poverty line of 1\$ per day? (Atere and Akinwale, 2006:143).

It is this kind of donations that give godfathers leeway to perpetuate their hegemonic tendencies, ideas and satanic principles on the people. In the runoff to 2007 elections, Obasanjo faced the prospect of being a lame duck in the last year in office; the constitution limited a presidency to two terms. There was a potential that as a former president he might be held accountable for his actions as a chief of state by a subsequent government that he did not control. He would no longer enjoy the protection conferred on a sitting president of constitutional immunity from civil and criminal prosecution and president Obasanjo's entourage at Aso Villa would be out in the cold. These were new challenges for the Nigerian

body politic and were the context in which plans A and B emerged (Campbell, 2013: 81-82). His plan A which was the third term agenda, an inordinate ambition that never materialised, turned virtually all states in Nigeria to chaos, and the country almost in anarchy. Being the first president of this republic, coupled with his antecedents of violence, it was not long before the issue of godfatherism rear its ugly head in almost all geographical zones of the country. It is to some of these states where godfatherism played a major role in impacting negatively, we now consider.

Several literatures on effects of godfatherism has been centered on Anambra, Oyo and Kwara states which at a time were regarded as hotbeds of these menace due to violence that engulfed these areas during this period. In Borno state, is one of the few godfathers who dared to contest for an elective position. Alhaji Mallam Kachala became the APP governor in 1999 courtesy of the political structure and financial muscle of senator Al Modu Sheriff. When their relationship fell apart, Mallam Kachala was denied the party ticket for his second term bid. The sour relationship was as a result of Kachala's continuous unilateral decisions in terms of state allocation, appointment to political offices, his supercilious carriage and non-consultation with those who made him and his desire to control the party's machinery which posed serious threat to Sheriff's political ambition. Sheriff decided to test the gubernatorial turf himself in 2003 while his godson moved to AD to actualise his second term ambition but lost to his former beloved father (Edo Express, 2006; Tell, 2001:22-23).

In Enugu state, Chief Jim Nwobodo was the political godfather. In 1999, he brought a relatively unknown Dr. Chimaroke Nnamani, a medical doctor who had sojourned in the United State, to contest the governorship of the state. Nnamani widely believed had no money of his own, rode on the fame, renown and money of his godfather to power and kicked away the ladder. He made his own money, built his structure and cultivated a new army of loyalists. The problem between the two borders on the issue of state appointment. While the godfather asked for sixty percent, the godson said it was too much. Jim Nwobodo asked for a refund and interest on what he spent on the governor's election while the governor said he cannot use state resources to serve him. He then referred to the godfather as a greedy man. The battle line was drawn. The mayhem and deaths that visited the state during the titanic struggle for pre-eminence prior to the second term bid of the governor in 2003 was fit for the terminator movie series (Tell, 2006; Edo Express, 2006).

In Edo state, Chief Tony Anenih, popularly called the oracle of Nigeria's politics or Mr. fix it was the godfather. It is believed that as then Bendel state chairman of the National Party of Nigeria, NPN, in 1983, facilitated the election of Dr. Ogbemudia as the governor of the state, while as leader of Social Democratic Party in 1991, played a decisive role in the election of Chief Odigie Oyeogun, now APC National chairman, as state governor. There is no gainsaying the fact that the election of Lucky Igbinedion as governor barely six months after defecting from APP was primarily the handiwork of Anenih, aided by Dr. Ogbemudia and the governor's biological father, Chief Osawaru Igbinedion. The three musketeers who played a consortium of godfather role between 1998 and 2003 finally atomised into two unequal factions, with Anenih and Ogbemudia pairing up while Chief Igbinedion aligned naturally with his son, the governor. Trouble started in 2003 after the re-election of Lucky Igbinedion who travelled to London for a rest and asked PDP's leadership to nominate commissioners to be sworn in upon his return. After the list has been drawn, the governor's father tore the list upon seeing Anenih's son in the list as education commissioner. He rewrote the entire list made up of his loyalists on the ground that Anenih cannot monopolise federal appointments zoned to the state and then make input into the state appointments. It was the last list that the governor inaugurated. This drew the battle line as alliances and allegiances were made. Threats, intimidations, arson, complaints of assassination, suspension and expulsion from the party, act of sponsored brigandage and institution of private armies became rampant (Edo Express, 2006). It was not surprising when in the election of 2007; Edolites voted out the PDP, as it is always said, 'a house divided against itself cannot stand'.

The earlier crisis in Anambra state was between Sir Emeka Offor, the godfather and Chimwoke Mbadinuju, the godson. The situation was worsened by the governor's inability to pay civil servants; teachers were owed over a year salary. This led to strike action for a very long time, consequently, schools remained shut. As a result of this, the Anambra state chapter of the Nigerian Bar Association, NBA, became critical of the governor and gave him ultimatum to pay salary arrears or resign. In the process of agitation, the NBA chairman, Chief Barnabas Igwe was assassinated along with his wife. Lawlessness, violence and orgies of extra-judicial killings became the culture of the state. All these the governor saw as too much to bear as he wanted to please his godfather. In order to realise his second term ambition, he decamped to the AD in 2003 and lost woefully by coming out last among the entire contestants (Edo Express, 2006; Tell, 2001).

Anambra state represents a very special case of godfatherism menace in Nigeria. It was a story of one godfather out, and another in. This time, it was Chief Chris Uba, godfather, Dr. Chris Nwabueze Ngige, godson. It seems as if the state was doomed for godfather/godson engineered crisis. Chief Chris Uba, a business mogul with lucre expectations from politics, added panacea and content to political godfatherism by supplementing Ngige's election with a full complement of 22 out of the 24 members of the state house of assembly. Before railroading Ngige into government house in 2003, Uba ensured that the former signed a resignation letter in addition to a sworn oath of loyalty at the dreaded okija shrine in the state. No sooner had Ngige got into the saddle that the once frolicking relationship became frosty as governor Ngige refused doling out the Agreed three billion naira monthly largesse to Chief Uba, and refused the godfather nomination of secretary to state government and six commissioners. When Chris Uba could not bear the insolence, there was crisis, intrigues and bad blood, resulting in daylight abduction of a sitting governor by a crack team of policemen led by Assistant Inspector of Police, Mr. Raphael Ige (now late) who was afterwards summarily dismissed. It was a dark cloud that fell on the state. What followed was orgy of violence as many buildings, including the Anambra Broadcasting Corporation were burnt while many lives were lost. As expected, the ruling PDP toed the line of the godfather, by rewarding him with a party position as member of the party's Board of Trustees while the godson was left in the lurch. This was after they had both been expelled from the party. What a volte face! (Epelle, 2007:11-12; Thovoethin, 2004:65-66; Adeyemi-Suenu, 2004:78).

In Oyo state, Chief Lamidi Adedibu (now late) was the strongman of Ibadan politics. He was popularly called the garrison commander and the acclaimed godfather of Ibadan politics. His stronghold on the state's politics is believed to be predicated on his unfathomable wealth, attachment to the corridors of power, particularly at the federal level, and large army of fanatical and violent prone foot soldiers. He played a vital role in the election of Chief Kolakpo Ishola of the SDP in 1991, who thereafter attempted to pull some strings by wanting to be his own man that is to be self opinionated and became impervious to promptings from the Molete warlord. In this fourth republic, he succeeded in installing his godson, Senator Rashidi Ladoja as Oyo state governor in 2003. As a political jobber, he depended solely on rents from his scion for self reproduction and when this was not coming in the exponential manner he had expected, coupled with the governor's dropping of ten of his men in a cabinet reshuffle, he fell back on his vast political clout and attempted using it to whip his

treacherous godson into line. Unfortunately, this threat did not work as the latter snubbed him. Not even the attempt by then president Obasanjo, a staunch supporter of godfatherism and political violence, could make Ladoja keep to his oath of allegiance to his godfather.

All these and other trivial issues triggered off the crisis that disrupted the smooth running of government in the state. In all these, Ladoja was accused of reneging on the agreed revenue sharing formula. He became self opinionated and set up his own structures and armies across the state. The old wily fox of Molete was always one step ahead, skilfully gathering arsenal for a final onslaught. Adedibu explained thus, ‘he (Ladoja) was collecting sixty five million naira as security vote every month. You know that governors don’t account for security vote. He was to give me fifteen million naira of that every month. He reneged. Later it was reduced to ten million. Yet he did not give me’ (Adebamigbe, 2007:23). By the time the crisis engendered by their disagreement had simmered down, Ladoja had been consumed through unconstitutional impeachment by the tiger he mounted in 2003 (Epelle, 2007:12-13; Edo Express, 2006; Tell, 2006; Ladoja, 2006; Yusuf, 2006; Obafemi, 2006; Akintude, 2006). Though he later regained his seat after one year of being in the doldrums, courtesy of a landmark Supreme Court judgement, he has learnt his lessons not to toil, tinker or antagonise a Nigerian political godfather.

#### **Nigeria’s Fourth Republic: Gradual Institutionalisation of Acceptable Democracy (2011-2014)**

The concept of democracy in Nigeria has been bastardised to the extent that virtually everything or system could be called democratic. No wonder it is now an all comer’s game. This is a problem. Little wonder, Plato and Aristotole were not inspired to honour it. Oluwole states that they saw it as, ‘a levelling doctrine, an embodiment of injustice because the democratic process fails to give full recognition to the fact that man is unequal in a number of significant respect and hence, cannot be equal in everything (Oluwole, 1922:108). This in many respect fall in tandem with the general elections of 2003 and 2007 which was crisis prone, chaotic and violent ridden. However, the 2011 general election and other post 2011 elections witnessed a shift from the old order, as there was a massive voter turnout and relative peace, though there were allegations of rigging and pockets of skirmishes in some areas, yet the litigations that characterised previous elections were almost absent. According to one source, ‘appointment of a more credible leadership for the Independent National

Electoral Commission, INEC; its internal reforms to address the challenges of electoral integrity, compilation of voters register and more interventions adopted by the government and INEC culminated in the relative success that was achieved during the 2011 general elections’ (Orji and Uzodi, 2012:27).

The general election of 2011, particularly the presidential election of April 16, was the fourth in the series of presidential elections conducted since the return to civil rule in 1999. Unlike previous elections which were characterised by fraud and flaws, the 2011 election is regarded as largely credible and well organised (EU EOM, 2011). However, post election violence, in which many people were killed, many more displaced and valuable properties destroyed, robbed the shine off the electoral process (Orji and Uzodi, 2012:33). It is imperative to state here that according to study, the violence that befell the aftermath of the 2011 presidential election has nothing to do with the process leading to the election or the actual election itself but that the violence was characterised by two major factors:

#### **Use of inflammatory language arising from PDP zoning arrangement**

Three days after the National Assembly elections, Spokesman for the vice president alleged that, ‘some people have been going around warning that any Muslim that votes PDP or any other party outside the Congress for Progressive Change, CPC, is not a genuine Muslim and will be punished for that’ (Omokri, 2011). The issue of zoning triggered some of the most inflammatory statements by northern politicians by the name, Concerned Members of the PDP, in the run up to the elections. It states that, ‘we are extremely worried that our party’s failure to deliver justice in this matter (power shift to the north) may ignite a series of events, the scope and magnitude of which we can neither proximate nor contain (Abdallah, 2010; Obia, 2010).

Similarly, Nigeria ex-military president, Ibrahim Babangida reportedly said that, ‘jettisoning zoning endangers not only the prospects of orderly transition in the country, but also its progress towards evolving into a single individual nation’ (Alechenu, 2011). Lawal Kaita, former governor of Kaduna State was quoted as saying that the north would force Jonathan out of office. His words, ‘anything short of a northern president is tantamount to stealing our presidency. Jonathan has to go and he will go. Even if he uses the incumbency power to get his nomination on the platform of the PDP, he would be frustrated out (if Jonathan emerges as president next year). The north is determined, if that happens, to make the country

ungovernable for president Jonathan or any other southerner who finds his way to the seat of power on the platform of PDP against the principle of the party's zoning policy' (Jason, 2011; Nigerian Tribune, 2010).

These statements sparked off series of post-election violence that tended to rub off the good intentions of government and INEC led by Professor Jega, on the need and desire for credible elections in Nigeria.

**Desire by the opposition and some Northern Politicians to get Power back to the region:**

Report emerged that some Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) supporters threatened hell if their preferred candidate was not declared winner of the election (Ibrahim, 2011:19). Muhammadu Buhari, the CPC candidate was alleged to have told his supporters that the 2011 elections, like the previous ones would be rigged. He advised them, 'you should never leave polling centres until votes are counted and the winner declared and you should lynch anybody that tries to tinker with the votes' (Aminu, 2011). Earlier he threatened that, 'the fate of this country will be decided by the people in April...Anybody who stands in the way of the people will be crushed by the people' (Shiklam, 2011). Later he advised, 'with what is happening in North Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf States, I think the message is getting across to the politicians, especially the ruling party that they either behave themselves or the ordinary people will take over...Elections must be free and fair, that is the bottom line. If people choose bad legislators, let them freely change them. But if they can't, what is happening in some parts of Africa and Middle East is bound to happen.' (Tattersall, 2011)

Immediately the result of the presidential election was announced, violence erupted in the north according to expectations and prophecy of the northern politicians. They may not be directly involved in the violence but the statements made by them was the backlash effect that the nation witnessed. Street urchins, known as almajiris, who move about carrying plates begging for food, turned their attention to carrying bombs. The result is the emergence of Boko Haram that is threatening the peace of the country. All post 2011 elections conducted in Nigeria showed clearly that the country has moved from do or die kind of politics to a more robust and participatory elections devoid of all forms of godfatherism that is conducted without fear of violence. The July 14, 2012 governorship election in Edo state was more peaceful than ever and won by an opposition party, ACN now APC; the October 10, 2012 governorship election in Ondo state also won by another opposition party, the Labour party

was largely free and fair; the July 21, 2014 governorship election in Ekiti state won by the ruling PDP and the August 9, 2014 governorship election in Osun state won by the opposition APC, were reportedly peaceful and showed clearly that Nigeria's democracy is emerging strongly. The absence of violence and any other form of crisis in these election, showed a sharp departure from the violence ridden and crisis prone elections of godfatherism which has bedevilled the country in time past.

### **Concluding Comments: Curbing the Menace of Godfatherism**

The paper argued that the activities of godfatherism have caused retrogression in Nigeria's democracy, thereby inhibiting democratic ethos, stability and dividend of democracy. The violent politics experienced in the country in time past was due to godfather syndrome of imposition which is manifested on Election Day as they must win election at all cost so that their investment can be recouped. Godfathers depend solely on rent which is profit from the investment on their godsons, and any attempts by the latter to renege on the agreements have been met with stiff resistance from the godfather and his army of foot soldiers. This situation has led to several deaths and destruction of properties in states like Anambra, Oyo, Kwara, and Borno known for violent godfathers. This situation is fuelled by the illiteracy and joblessness of many godfathers who had nothing to do other than spending their ill gotten wealth and almost depleting resources and their thugs to install their godsons, who in-turn pay royalty for such 'benevolence'. This is rather made difficult because of the support the godfather gets from the top echelon of the party and the presidency. This situation has denied the populace the much desired dividends of democracy.

To curtail this trend, the entire electoral system has to be re-examined with the aim of de-emphasising money in the political landscape of Nigeria. To this end, monetary donations made by individuals or groups to political parties should be done publicly, screened and their sources checked by relevant institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC. Also, such fund should be properly accounted for and adequate punishment prescribed for embezzlement. Similar punishment should be extended to individuals that loot public treasury in whatever guise. In addition, such individual should not be allowed to hold any public office for a maximum period of time. Besides, people of proven integrity and high level of acceptability by the society should be allowed to contest election as Independent Candidates without being necessarily nominated by a political party.

More importantly, efforts should be geared towards drastic reduction, if not elimination of all forms of electoral malpractices. INEC and the judiciary should be made free from any form of influence from the executive, ruling and opposition parties, and influential individuals in the society. The police should also be adequately trained and equipped to combat any attempt at rigging elections. Elections should be conducted early enough to give room for disputed election results to be resolved before the supposed winner is sworn in.

Various stakeholders like the civil society should also play their role in the sustenance of Nigeria's democracy by standing against all forms of anti-democratic elements such as the issue of godfatherism. There should be attitudinal change and re-orientation of politicians to change their styles, perceptions, language, approach and mindset to politics as a way of chasing violence away from the body polity. There should be outright avoidance of imposition of candidates, enacting laws banning political thuggery and strong institution to punish the same. Politicians should cultivate the spirit of tolerance and accommodation as well as avoiding electoral manipulations and ensuring that genuine election results are upheld. All educational levels, starting from primary school to tertiary should develop and integrate political consciousness studies into the school curricula in order to educate all categories of students concerning the significance of public opinion and the powers of electorate under democracy. Since godfathers and violence are a result of people wanting power by all means, there should be policies aimed at banning those that entered into such unholy alliance from the party and politics of the country. All the instrumentalities of popular participation and electorate mandates should be institutionalised. Finally, the electorates should be able to assert their political sovereignty by demonstrating the political will to ensure that those that were popularly elected gain access to political authority. This will increase the chances of survival and growth of Nigeria's democracy.

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