

Godfatherism and Democratic Reconstruction in Nigeria: A Review of Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Abah Emmanuel, Ph.D and Udoikah Joseph Michael Ph.D

Department of Public Administration

Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

Email: josephudoikah@gmail.com

Phone: 08035604739

Abstract	<i>Journal of Policy and Development Studios (JPDS)</i>
<p><i>Much of the contemporary discourse on Nigeria's democracy and politics from 1999 till date has at its centre, the phenomenon of 'godfatherism' in the leadership of political parties, and in running the affairs of our multi-nation-state. As a result of the corruption of the electoral and political processes, governmental structures, electoral politics and state power are skewed towards satisfying the self-regarding interests of the dominant political mentors otherwise known as 'political godfathers'. Relying on their wealth and their political machines, they secure party nomination for candidates of their choice by any means, sponsor their election, including manipulating the electoral process. This paper is intended to examine critically the crisis of political godfatherism in Nigeria and its implications for the future of the nation's democracy. It suggests ways the gods of Nigerian democracy and politics can be checked and confronted if the country is to deepen democracy and strengthen democratic institutions.</i></p>	<p>Vol. 15. Issue 2 (2024) ISSN(p) 0189-5958 ISSN (e) 2814-1091 Home page https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jpds ARTICLE INFO: Keyword: Democracy, godfather (s), godfatherism, politics Article History Received 29th March 2024 Accepted: 15th April 2024 DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jpds.v15i2.1</p>

1. Introduction

Since the advent of the extant Fourth Republic in 1999, there has been a fresh, engaging and typical crisis that has dominated political discourse in the country. It is the crisis of godfatherism and governance. The crisis of the former leads to the crisis of the latter. At the inception of democratic governance in 1999 after many years of military dictatorship, Nigerians had high hopes and were enthusiastic of the development because they saw democracy as a sine qua non for the much needed sustainable development. It is saddening to note that by 2024, over ten (20) years of civilian rule, the hope and expectation of the people had been dashed due to the undue influence exerted on the political and electoral process by a cabalistic class known as "political godfathers", "large givers" or "money bags" (Koszczuk, 1997, Tanenbaum, 1995; Rose-Ackerman, 1999 and udoikah 2021). In particular,

there are states where the notoriety of the godfathers had become a source of great worry for the entire nation, and members of the international community. The states include: Abia; Akwa Ibom; Anambra; Bornu; Cross River; Rivers, Delta; Ebonyi; Edo; Enugu; Imo; Kwara; Lagos; Oyo and Zamfara states among others.

This extant anti-democratic crisis of monumental proportions manifests itself in all kinds of electoral malpractices including imposition of candidates, perpetration of political violence, and other forms of perversion of the democratic process. According to political behaviouralists and sociologists, Nigeria's attempt to democratize from pre-independence general elections in the late 1950s till date, had been haunted by the activities of these elements using the instrumentalities of electoral fraud and violence thereby creating a scenario where major themes associated with genuine liberal and representative democracy are either 'legislated out of existence', 'outlawed' or flagrantly disregarded with impunity. These themes which constitute the essential ingredients of participatory democracy include: freedom; equality; popular sovereignty; participation; the rule of law; representative leadership at all tiers of government; political accountability and transparency; free and fair elections; majority rule; independent and transparent election management body and a guarantee of the fundamental human rights of the citizens (Ikelegbe, 2015). As a matter of facts, political analysts agree that what led to the collapse of the nation's first two republics and the subsequent incursion of the military into mainstream politics was not connected with ethno-religious politics, but with the subversion of the electoral process through vote rigging, ballot stuffing, thuggery and falsification of election results by the political class. This is why at sixty years of nationhood, a random conversation with people across Nigeria reveals a growing sense of disenchantment and disillusionment concerning the three tiers of government, and it is evidently clear that the citizens do not see the value of participatory democracy (Natufe, 2006). They are baffled and overwhelmed by deteriorating political participation and institutions coupled with the failure of the Nigerian state which are all traceable to the godfatherist politics.

In light of the above, some writers have contended that the activities of political godfathers in Nigeria confirm the argument of elitist writers, and elitist politics. However, when the kind of elitist rule in Nigeria is weighed on the scale of Edmund Burke's conception of political party politicking, which is conducted within the purview of national interest, one discovers that Nigeria's case is an aberration. National interest here is used in the sense of "happiness of the greatest number" within the context of the utilitarian theory of democracy as expounded by John Stuart Mills. Within that context, godfathers in politics are supposed to be role models and shining examples for the upcoming young and new-breed politicians to emulate (Coker, 2004) with a view to achieving the national interest.

To this end, this paper is written to deepen our understanding of the concept and its underpinnings with a view to exploring its trajectory in the nation's political history. This has become imperative because before we can contemplate confronting the phenomenon, we need to understand what it is. To understand it and the theoretical underpinnings would either help us to come to terms with it, modify it and its influence or transcend it (Jinadu, 2013).

2. Conceptual review

Democracy

Democracy which came into currency en route the Greek political and philosophical thought has taken a number of forms, both in theory and practice. This accounts for why there are various forms of democracy delineated in the literature. And of the typologies of democracy, liberal democracy is the most popular.

Liberal democracy is in vogue in a political system where there are competitive elections that are fair both substantively and procedurally; and in which the ability of the elected representatives to exercise decision-making power is subject to the rule of law, and usually moderated by a constitution that emphasizes the protection of the rights and freedoms of individuals, and which places constraints on the leaders and on the extent to which the will of the majority can be exercised against the rights of minorities (Wikipedia, 2009; Dahl, Shapiro and Cheibub, 2003; Henaff and Strong, 2001).

Democratic experience in Nigeria had shown that its practice and applicability has been fragile, and this had made it possible for democracy to either be aborted, compromised, destroyed, distorted, hijacked or endangered by powerful and wealthy godfathers. For example, some past Nigerian military dictators in their vigorous pursuit of what can be referred to as the theory of Home-grown Democracy in the 1990s attempted to redefine and domesticate democracy.

Politics

Various attempts have been made to conceptualize 'politics'. These attempts have exposed the deepest and intellectual disagreements in the academic study of politics. This piece is not out to remedy the disagreements. This array of definitions sought to interrogate politics as: 'as the art of the possible'; 'compromise and consensus'; 'the governing of men' or 'the art of government'; 'the struggle for power'; 'public affairs'; 'who gets what, when and how' (and Nnoli's addition of 'and why'); 'the authoritative allocation of values'; 'state power'; 'power and distribution of resources'; the exercise of authority, the making of collective decisions, the allocation of scarce resources, the practice of deception and manipulation; images of trouble, disruption and violence; deceit, manipulation and lies; the production, distribution and use of resources in the course of social existence (Nnoli, 1985, Heywood, 1997).

However, Nnoli's definition of politics that it is "all those activities which are directly or indirectly associated with the seizure of state power, the consolidation of state power, and the use of state power" which is all-encompassing because it covers other five lowest common denominators' of politics and very elitist (Nnoli, 198).

Who is a Godfather?

A godfather is a male-godparent or the head of a mafia crime family or other criminal organization (Geddes and Grosset, 2017). By way of dwelling more on the judo-Christian origin or religious meaning of godfatherism, they went further to state that "a godparent is a person who sponsors a child as at baptism or confirmation, taking responsibility for its faith" (Geddes and Grosset, 2017). In the same vein, the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2001) sees a godfather as "a man who

promises to help a child and to teach him or her Christian values..." Christian godparents could be referred to as religious elite. It was in this light that Farounbi (2003) and Paul-Sewa (2004) sees the godfather as someone who not only can teach, inspire and orientate a protege, but more importantly, he can also make things happen for the protege. This type of godfather offers to the godson or godchildren, leadership, ideas, expertise, wisdom and knowledge that will be of immense importance to their career and carrier (Emordi, Oshodare and Attah-Echa, 2017).

Taking the above religious connotation of godfatherism as a point of departure, political godfathers are supposed to be god-sent, godly, god-fearing, a reservoir for political wisdom and godlike in character and disposition. In political context therefore, godfathers are not only supposed to be seen as sorts of "gods" but "messiahs" that the burden and the verdict of history have made rulers over the rest citizens with a view to leading them to their manifest destiny. They would be leaders 'anointed' with a reservoir of socio-political and economic prowess with concomitant wisdom and knowledge that evolved from, and work with the civil society with a view to: (a.) setting the public agenda as embodied in the common good; (b.) setting the rules and ethos of public conduct mediating the relations between the state and society; (c.) and ensuring that the state reflects the socio-political reality as conceived by themselves and therefore committed to the pursuit of the said 'public good' thus envisioned (Osaghae, 2000).

Suffice it to say that the political godfatherism in Nigeria carries a pejorative connotation of a small band of willful individuals who monopolize power and use it for their own advantage (Wilson, 1996 and Edeh et al,2017). As a result, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) in its report on the 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria sees the term "godfather" in Nigerian politics as a phenomenon in which wealthy and powerful individuals who do not hold public office but mobilize corruption and violence to subvert and control the political process by installing their proteges into office. To this end, Ibrahim (2003) conceptualizes godfathers as men who have the power personally to determine both who gets nominated to contest elections and who wins in a state. A notable numbers of scholars agree with Ibrahim. They contend that godfathers are powerful individuals who determine 'who gets what, when and how' in the corridors of power (Suberu, 2000; Paul-Sewa, 2004; Adeoye 2009; Ibrahim 2003 and Edeh et al, 2017).

Nigerian political godfather has been likened to the unquestionable colonial chief who doubles as the petty-legislator, administrator, judge, policeman, and an all in all official (Mamdani, 2019). In the same vein, they can be seen as the "Dangerous Bigmen" with undemocratic characters, whose track records show nothing but corruption, waste, violence, human right abuses, misplaced priorities and a pathological commitment to the recycling of mediocrity (Ihonvbere, 2019). The godfather wields power that includes arson, intimidation, warning, flogging and sometimes assassination (Ogbonmwan, 2015). It is interesting to note that for a godfather to be successful or to exert the influence that can affect the electoral process, he must have all or nearly all, of the following attributes: (a.) have political connections (b.) security connections (c.) a private security outfit (d.) a reputation for unorthodox behaviour (sometimes anti-social), and (e.) money or access to money (Ayoade, 2008). Succinctly put, a godfather is like a guardian without a guard.

There are various kinds and typologies of godfathers disentangled in the literature. From the experience in the first, second, the aborted third republics, and even in the current fourth republic two kinds of

godfathers can be delineated; namely: the benevolent political godfather, and the parasitic political godfather. The benevolent godfather guides the godson (s) to succeed politically, and is usually charismatic in nature and character. Even though the godfather may want to recoup what he had "invested" in pursuing the political ascendancy of the godson, such endeavour would not be to the detriment of the state (Ogbonmwan, 2015). The definition of a godfather by Adeoye (2009) as a mentor, boss, kingmaker and principal supports this kind.

On the other hand, the parasitic godfather is ferocious, 'Machiavellian' and vacillating in character. He is out to pauperize the state and milk it dry, and can best be described as an evil building block for bribery and corruption, retrogression, under development, mediocrity, political violence, backwardness and perpetual poverty of the people (Ogbonmwan, 2015). Suffice it to say that a plethora of godfathers that pervade our political system are the parasitic and unproductive type.

Godfatherism

The concept of godfatherism gathered quick momentum on arrival into the political and academic firmaments of Nigeria. The term 'godfatherism' in Nigerian politics carries a pejorative connotation of a small band of willful individuals who monopolize power and use it for their own advantage (Wilson, 1996). In this light, the phenomenon is viewed as an ideology that is constructed on the belief that certain individuals possess considerable means to unilaterally determine who gets a party's ticket to run for an election and who wins in the electoral contest (Omisore, 2009). This is corroborated by the definition of Bassey and Enetak (2008) which equates godfatherism with the power and influence of people who are politically relevant in deciding who gets nominated to contest elections and who eventually wins the election. Again, this definition had been alluded to by Gambo (2017) in his conception. Godfatherism in its simple form according to Adeoye (2009) is a term used to describe the relationship between a godfather and godson, where the godson is the beneficiary and recipient of the legacy of a godfather. This seemingly positive perspective of godfatherism is synonymous with intermediary, mentoring, benevolence, support and sponsorship of various kinds.

From the perspective of this study, political godfatherism, is a system that is in vogue when the ruling elites that wield enormous influence in the Nigerian political system create a political path, and determine who should tread on it either by whipping up the conception of Harold Lasswell about the meaning of politics ('who gets what', 'when, how and why') or by towing the line of Niccolo Machiavelli on brutal politicking using the 'do or die' approach (the end justifies the means). Such godfathers are deified by their followers and seen as those that are by creation destined to lead the society to its state of Eldorado.

The activities of Nigerian Political Godfathers

The story of godfatherism in contemporary Nigerian politics in general and some parts of the country in particular is a fundamental statement about the state of democracy in the country (Ibrahim, 2003). However, it is imperative to unravel the manipulating strategies, modus operandi, and factors necessitating the triumph and consolidation of godfatherism in Nigeria (Adeoye, 2009). As a matter of facts, godfatherism has been implicated in electoral crisis (rigging, violence and other election-related crisis) the crisis of governance in Nigeria, Some of the states where the phenomenon had reared its

ugly head are: Anambra, Bornu, Delta, Edo, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, Kwara, Plateau, Ogun and Oyo states. Some of the activities of Nigeria's political godfathers are worth mentioning here:

Enthronement of Political Rascality and Normless Politics

The godfathers engage politics from a criminal and norm-less perspective. The resultant political process is the kind characterized by alienation of the citizenry. The rules of the game enunciated in the electoral governance principle (such as Electoral Act and the Constitution) are utterly disregarded with 'do or die' as guiding political philosophy.

By the same token, godfathers' activities in politics have been aptly described as "political rascality" (Ihonvbere, 2004). This political rascality had been captured by some political analysts and former military dictators in their attempt to transit to civil rule. For example, it was Prof. Humphrey Nwosu, then National Electoral Commission (NEC) Chairman in the aborted Third Republic (midwife by former military dictator, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida) that hinted on elitist perception of power and its consequences on the Nigerian political landscape after several political organizations that applied to be registered as political parties were not registered. He contends that: Power seekers in Nigeria... see politics as an avenue for making money, a sort of open sesame to wealth. To be in power is to control state resources that are often converted to personal use (Edoh 2019; Zakari 2019)

Such a prevailing elitist political rascality and norm-less politicking has led to the manipulation of the political process and political institutions which in the end leads to defective foundation on which solid democratic structure can neither be constructed nor sustained (Yaqub, 2019). This has been the bane of solid democratic take off in Nigeria.

Binding of Godsons or Proteges

A dangerous dimension of godfathers' activities is the binding of their godsons or godchildren by getting them to take certain archaic, unscientific and anti-social oaths that are even repugnant to modern civilization. For example, Mr. Chris Uba, the acclaimed godfather of Anambra State politics was said to have taken his godson, Dr. Chris Ngige to Ogwugwu Shrine at Okija town in the state to swear to an oath that he would do the bidding of his godfather while in office as governor. The reason this became widely publicized was because Dr. Ngige had to voice out what transpired between him and his godfather before he became governor, because he was forcefully removed as governor for renegeing on the oath taken at the Okija Shrine. The implication is that there are other numerous cases that are not known because there are no problems between them.

The second way the godfather binds the godson arising from Dr. Ngige's case is the writing of a signed but undated letter of resignation that is video-taped. In addition to that is the filming of a resignation announcement made by the godson. Both the resignation letter and announcement are usually prepared before the election, to the extent that if the godson fails to dance to the whims and caprices of their godfather after being elected, the godfather is able to simply issue the resignation letter and videotape to remove him from office (Ibrahim, 2003). This was what happened in Anambra when it was widely reported that the state governor had resigned his position.

In some cases too, godsons carry the briefcases and become errand boys before their godfathers anoint them for political office because they believe that you cannot rely on the people to win democratic

elections (Ibrahim, 2003). This reliance on the godfather for "electoral victory" by the godson may have made Mr. Uba to declare in a moment of intense self-satisfaction following the outcome of the 2003 general election that: "I am The greatest godfather in Nigeria because this is the first time an individual single-handedly put in position every politician in the state " (cited in Ibrahim, 2003).

Creation of Parallel Party Structure

Another activity of the godfather is the creation of a parallel party structure. This is done when the godson fails to do the bidding of the godfather (s) in the area of appointments and management of the resources of the state. As a consequence, the godfather creates a parallel party structure to that of the government to fan the embers of disaffection against the government which manifests in form of a blitz of blackmails against the godson in government, marshalling out an array of political warfare machinery and other forms of pressure (Nnamani, 2003; Ome, 2004). This happened in Edo state between Chief Anenih, political godfather to Governor Igbinedion whose tenure was from 1999 to 2007. Political godfathers have also been implicated in similar cases in Anambra State between Chief Emeka Offor and Governor Chinwoke Mbadinuju (1999 - 2003), and between Mr. Uba and Governor Chris Ngige (2003 -2015); Bornu state between Alhaji Ali Modu Sheriff and then Governor Mala Kachalla (1999 - 2003); Kwara State between Alhaji Olusola Saraki and then Governor Mohammed Lawal (1999 - 2003); Oyo State between Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu and Governor Rarhid Ladoja (2003 -2007); Akwa Ibom State between Godswill Akpabio and Deacon Udom Emmanuel (2014-2019) and Rivers state between Nyesom Wike Fubara(2022-2023) and Ebonyi state between David Umahi and Ogbonna Nwifuru (2015 till date) to mention but a few.

Diversion of Public Funds

Another area where the activity of the godfather is glaring is the diversion of public funds for personal gains. Usually, such diverted and siphoned funds are stashed away in foreign accounts accentuating capital flight. It has been argued that this diversion and personalization of public funds is responsible for lack of infrastructural transformation of our society since it promotes run-away development which in turn weakens state's capacity to deliver the goods of good governance. It is saddening to note that the stolen funds are used to acquire numerous cars, build mansions and for hiring countless police and private security escorts and guards (Ihonvbere, 2004; Nnoli, 1985 and Edeh etal 2017)..

Falsification of Election Results

The godfathers also determine the outcome of elections even before the elections are conducted. As a matter of facts, deciding and choosing is at the whims and caprices of the managers and controllers of the state who in most cases can allocate rather than count votes or even in situations when votes are counted, the figures can be falsified; and that individuals who did not even contest elections can be issued with victory certificates and given strategic positions in governance (Iyayi, 2004; Okoye, 2017). The nullification of election results earlier declared by INEC and the subsequent righting of electoral wrongs by the judiciary in most part of the country is an attestation to that fact. Results earlier declared by INEC in the 2007 Governorship elections in Edo and Ondo states were found to be falsified by the election management body in favour of the PDP. In the just concluded 2023 election, the case in Rivers state and other states of the federation further attest to this and the current conflict between the former Governor of Rivers state and his successor..

In the past elections especially the 2003 election, Anambra State where Dr. Ngige of the PDP was removed and the All Grand Progressive Alliance (APGA) candidate in the 2003 election, Peter Obi was installed as the rightful winner of the election. Others include that of Edo state where Prof Osariemen Osunbor of the PDP was removed and the Action Congress (AC) and Labour Party candidate, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole installed.

Instrumentality for Political Slavery and Oppression

For a political system to enhance social engineering, the choice ingredient of the electoral process should be strengthened. But suffice it to say that in the Nigerian political system, godfatherism has become an instrument of political slavery, oppression and the use of positions, power and influence for personal aggrandizement to the detriment of the citizenry (Coker, 2004). After capturing power, the state becomes an instrument of domination, exploitation and marginalization rather than the bastion of human rights, gender equality, social justice, environmental protection, eradication of poverty, and the sanctity of the rule of law; and at any level of government, they use state power to visit violence, pain, and poverty on the masses; and in the localities, they simply become leaders in the "local axis of evil" created to reproduce an existing unjust system (Ihonvbere, 2004).

Money politics

The godfathers play money politics because in Nigerian extant politics money appears to be the denominator of party formation and party activities. Since the issue of ideology is relegated to the background in party formation and politicking, political parties in Nigeria are often founded by exceptionally rich individuals and wealth determines the strength of opinions of party members. Suffice it to say that many of them had earlier corruptly-enriched themselves as participants in previous governments or as contractors to government. It is important to note that political aspirants are compelled to purchase party nomination form and pay other bills duly approved by the political party including fees imposed by the election management body (INEC). These actions are supported by currents Electoral Act 2006 and 2022. For example, candidate who indicated interest in contesting for political offices in the just concluded 2023 elections under the platform of the All Progressive Congress (APC) were billed by the political party as stated below:

- (i) President - N100 million
- (ii) Senate – N50 million
- (iii) House of Representatives – N20million
- (iv) Governor – N20 million
- (v) House of Assembly – N5million etc

It has been empirically ascertained that aspirants and candidates who do not have the financial muscles to prosecute their electioneering campaigns either withdraw from the race, or seek financial support from the godfathers often under conditions that enslave them to their sponsors. And, in consideration of the enormous opportunities for self-enrichment through the instrumentality of state power, such aspirants yield to the whims and caprices of their sponsors. The resultant outcome is that men and women who do not have money but have ideas on how the state should be ordered and the modus operandi can never have a chance of contesting and winning a free and fair election. In that context,

Edeh and Udoikah (2017) remarks: "...godfathers have in the most brazen manner hijacked the political machinery at all levels. A situation in which Nnamani (2003) describes political godfathers as 'sole proprietors' of access to state fortune' and 'a merchant set out to acquire the state as a client'.

Recruitment of Unemployed Youth as Political thugs for political and electoral violence

One of the problems of the Nigerian state today is the democratization of violence, and since the state had lost its essential attribute of monopoly of violence, (a process in which the godfathers themselves had been implicated) the godfathers cash in on that to use their ill-gotten wealth to hire and equip unemployed youth with latest weapons which they use as political thugs to maim, terrorize and kill those who oppose them in the game of politics (Ogbonmwan, 2015). This "army" of youth includes undergraduates from Nigerian tertiary institutions. This is responsible for the upsurge in political violence, kidnapping, armed robbery and other forms of crimes in the country. This incident has been alluded to the Machiavellian politics with the slogan, 'the end justifies the means' (Adeoye, 2009).

Substitution of Party Flagbearers

One of the activities of the godfathers is the substitution of already elected party flagbearers with those that are more loyal to the oligarchic godfathers or those who have more money to throw around. In the run-off to the 2015 and 2023 general elections, according to Sonoye and Nduka (2017) and Udoikah (2023), candidates or elected flag bearers who emerged after rigorous primaries were substituted with aspirants who in most cases never took part in the intra-party selection process. The ruling All Progressive Congress was worse hit by the scourge as more than 10 percent of candidates originally elected to fly the party's flag at the February 2023 polls were substituted for one reason or the other by the National Headquarters of the Party (Okoye, 2022). For example, AIG Udom Ekpo Udom who emerged as the 2023 APC senatorial candidate after the primaries in Akwa Ibom State North West senatorial district was substituted with Senator Godswill Akpabio by the party. The scenario was the same in Ebonyi south, Bauchi North and other senatorial districts.

Also, the Imo State elected PDP governorship candidate in 2007 election, Senator Ifeanyi Ararume was replaced with Engr. Charles Ugwu because the PDP executives both at the State and National levels did not want him. Senator Ararume took the matter to competent courts of law (Federal High Court, Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court) and won but the PDP came out to say after the Supreme Court judgement that it was not feeding a candidate for the election. The list is long! This is possible according to Awowede (2003) "because elections are not won through hard-fought electioneering but through rigging". To this end, Aregbesola (2004) argues that Nigerian voters should be bold to reject imposition of candidates on them especially during primary elections of political parties by these godfathers.

A Review of the Constitution

There is a broad consensus among Nigerians that the imperative of re-compacting the state can be achieved through the review of the constitution to make it truly a people's constitution with provisions for an electoral process that can guarantee that election results reflect the voters' choice. A constitution that reflects an: expression of the will of a nation, the reflection of its history, fears, concerns, aspirations, visions and indeed, the soul of the nation "not merely a set of rules and laws regulating

society and government", nor a mere social contract or even a ground-norm (IDEA, 2000). Such constitutional review should be anchored on a new doctrine of democratic legitimacy since the process of state reconstruction calls for a creative engagement of academics, non-governmental organizations, the media, trade unions, youth groups and other mass "organizations in any move to reconstruct power and politics in favour of the people (IDEA, 2000). An approach that emphasizes popular participation, national dialogue, inclusivity, transparency, wide-spread education and mobilization, civil education and the involvement of the people, their constituencies and at all levels of constitution-making; all aimed at the re-composition of the state.

Genuine electoral reform should be an irreducible part of this constitutional review with a view to expunging those aspects of the extant electoral law that are inconsistent with free and fair election or enduring democracy.

The Role of the Civil Society

The Nigerian political system needs to be salvaged from the gods of democracy and politics, and the civil society has a crucial role to play in achieving this role. According to Osaghae (2000) the intercourse of transformation between the state and the civil society is a continuous and on-going process since the state evolves from within the civil society and the civil society is in turn the source of legitimacy for the state. The role of the civil society in the process is four-fold: (a.) to set the public agenda as embodied in the common good (b.) to set the rules and ethos of public condition and governance; (c.) to mediate relations between state and society - harmonizing the organizing principles of the state with those of the society; and (d.) to ensure that the state reflects the social reality and is committed to the pursuit of the public good, which is unlikely with the guarantee of freedom (Osaghae, 2000).

A Re-orientation and Re-socialization of the Citizenry

In reshaping political power and practice, a return to the recognition - primarily through education - of the individual as the core of any community is indispensable; which excludes the enshrinement of the old atomistic individualism (Samatar, 1985). On the contrary, it suggests the development of the social individual; an individual who awakens to his/her historical and constitutional responsibility, by way of introspection and self-definition, and through the labour and joy of partaking in covenantal and communitarian politics. This is the essence of citizenship (Samatar, 1985). This underscores the need for a radical re-socialization of the youths of Nigeria through qualitative education (Okoye, 2017). This should go on simultaneously with a radical transformation of the Nigerian economy in ways that would make it constructively diversified, productive and people-driven. Democracy is not a gift. It is won through struggles by democrats and institutionalized through their vision and unwavering democratization. Therefore, what is needed is the total re-orientation of the Nigerian society from authoritarian culture to embrace the norms and values of democracy through a process of massive education of the citizenry (IDEA, 2000).

Mass action and Citizenship Combativeness

With the benefit of hindsight, the limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those who they oppress (Douglass, 1882; Douglass, 2003; Oyeyemi, 2016). The Nigerian masses can pull a

revolutionary surprise against the cabalistic godfathers just as the demos revolution against oppressive aristocratic Athenian city-state elite if they fail to allow the will of the people to prevail. One way the masses can mobilize and combat the godfathers is through "Mandate Protection". This refers to coordinated efforts aimed at thwarting attempts to overturn the outcome of a competitive election or sabotaging attempts to steal the people's mandate by means of ballot snatching, ballot stuffing and falsification of results. This could be achieved through emphasizing one man, one vote, and organizing the local people to defend their votes through other protective means, sometimes through the instrumentality of vigilante groups.

In this regard, Nigerians should denounce and resist the godfathers through popular mass actions as we had witnessed in Philippines under Ferdinand Marcos, in Rumania under Nicolai Ceausescu, in Thailand over former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and his stooge premier, and most currently in Senegal under Bassirou Diomaye Faya. It is crucial to note that such a revolutionary rise of the people without dedicated human forces behind it is doomed to vaporize into the realm of rhetoric and wishful thinking (Samatar. 1985). In that regard, Shively (1997) poignantly asserts that 'in a democracy, it is hoped not only that people will obey the laws and be enthusiastic citizens but that they will also, and at the same time, be critical citizens.

A renewal of public Sphere

The godfathers are gradually eroding the 'public sphere' which is essentially the framework of democracy replacing it with the 'private sphere' (Habermas 1986-; Giddens, 2008 and and Edeh Et al 2017)). Therefore, another way the godfathers could be confronted is through the renewal of 'public sphere' through the reform of democratic procedures and the more consistent involvement of community agencies and groups (Giddens, 2008) with emphasis on the strict culture of accountability, both vertical and horizontal which will help to reduce parasites on the state resources (Odion-Akhaine, Chizea and Oriakhi, 2017). Publicly rejecting these influences that have destroyed our country must be the first step towards redemption and rebuilding (Anakwenze, 2004). For example, Professor Chinua Achebe, a world-renowned Author and Writer, publicly rejected the medal bestowed on him by President Olusegun Obasanjo on the grounds that the president himself was in part responsible for the mess in his home-state of Anambara. Achebe said:

I have watched particularly the chaos in my own state of Anambra where a small clique of renegades, openly boasting its connections in high places, seems determined to turn my homeland into a bankrupt and lawless fiefdom. I am appalled by the brazenness of this clique and the silence, if not connivance, of the Presidency (cited by Anakwenze, 2004).

The Media

The revolutionizing role of the media of communication (electronic and print media) in confronting the gods of our democracy and politics cannot be overemphasized. It is disheartening to note that the media in Nigeria today is dominated by commercial interests, and ipso facto, they do not provide a focus for democratic debate and discussion. The Fourth Estate of the realm should be at the forefront of developing, open dialogue and discussion in the democratic process. The media as a powerful force in the support of democracy can help put pressure on the godfathers to loosen their grip on the political process and space (Giddens, 2008), and help deepen democratic order in the country.

Formation of Ideology-based Political parties and the discouragement of Money Politics

As a way of check-making negative godfatherism, political parties should be formed, organized and registered on the basis of ideology and well-thought-out manifestoes. This is because an ideology supporter and sympathizer (in case of sympathy votes) religiously believe in an ideology which gives direction and forms the basis for intra-party unity and cohesion (Epelle, 2006). This according to scholars would lead to discouragement of money politics and the encouragement of the politics of debate, ideas and competing programmes; the defence of the interests of the people and the accomplishment of public purpose, and the only way the people can be protected from the ravenous appetite of political godfathers and money-bags (Osagie, 2006).

Punishment for Erring Godfathers and their lieutenants

Those identified as the masterminds, sponsors, supporters and benefactors of electoral fraud by whatever name, which we refer here as "gods of Nigerian democracy and politics", should be investigated and if found guilty, should be made to face the full wrath of the law.

By the same token, elected officials must recognize their constitutional jurisdiction and the superiority of their public elected offices vis-a-vis their dictates of their respective political parties, must possess and demonstrate excellent leadership qualities and credentials for the offices they occupy (Natufe, 2006). This has become imperative because the question of leadership determines the rudiments of good governance, as the quality of leadership determines the incorruptibility, accountability and transparency of the government (Natufe, 2006).

3. Conclusion

It is true that political godfatherism is as old as democracy itself in Nigeria but in its present form, the phenomenon epitomizes corruption and criminality in electoral politics and governance. This scenario engenders political alienation and social exclusion. If this development is allowed to continue, the country's dream and aspiration to be among the 20 leading economies of the world by 2050 will be a mirage and Nigeria will still be running on the same spot, experiencing a lot of motion without movement (Ake, 1981).

This is why the fight against godfatherist politics has become imperative because democracy is not a gift that can be gotten on a platter of gold. Genuine and enduring democracy everywhere is won through struggles by democrats and the civil society, and it is institutionalized through their vision and unwavering democratization. Nigerians who are concerned with deepening democracy and strengthening the capacity of democratic institutions, including strengthening the capacity of the Nigerian state to deliver the goods of good governance, confronting the gods of our polity is a war that must be fought, and must be won.

References

- Adeoye, O. A. (2009) "Godfatherism and The Future of Nigerian Democracy", *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 3 (6):268-279
- Ajayi, F. (2006) "Nigerian Political Godfatherism: In The World of Baale Molete" retrieved from www.nigeriaorld.com accessed on January 6.
- Ake, C. (1981) *A Political Economy of Africa*, England: Longman.
- Anakwenze, N. (2004) "Political Godfatherism, Electoral Politics and Governance in Nigeria", a paper presented on October 31, on behalf of Enyimba N. A., a pan-Igbo think-tank, during the Convention of Anambra State Association, Oklahoma, USA retrieved from www.kwenu.com/lectures/anakwenze_godfatherism.htm accessed Friday, 19 April, 2023
- Aregbesola, R. (2004) "Anambra State Imbroglio: Political and Socio-Economic Implication of the Crisis", A Speech Delivered at the National Association of Political Science Students (NAPSS), Lagos State University (LASU) Chapter's Lecture, February 17.
- Awowede, O. (2003) "Godfather Gangsters", *Insider Weekly*, July 28.
- Ayoade, J. A. A. (2018) "Godfather Politics in Nigeria" in Adetula, A. O. (ed.) *Money and Politics in Nigeria*, Abuja: International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES)
- Bassey, U. and Enetak, E. (2018) "Godfatherism and Good Governance in Nigeria: An Appraisal of Nigeria's Fourth Republic", *Journal of Social and Policy Issues*, 5, (3): 120-123
- Dahl, R. A., Shapiro, I. and Cheibub, J. A. (2013) *The Democracy Sourcebook*, MIT Press, [Google Books link](#)
- Douglass, F. (1882) *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: His Early Life as a Slave, His Escape from Bondage and His Complete History*, Dover Value Editions, Courier Dover Publications (2003) retrieved from www.en.wikipedia/wiki/Frederick_Douglass accessed Sunday, April 18, 2023
- Emordi, E. C, Oshodare, O. T. and Attah-Echa, N. (2017) "The Godfather Complex in Nigerian Politics: The Case of Anambra State, 2003-2015" *The Constitution, a Journal of Constitutional Development*, Vol. 7, No. 2, June
- Enahoro, E. (2009) "Political Tsunami In Edo: AC 'Buries' PDF, 6 Council Chairmen.
- Epelle, A. (2006) *Basic Forms and Organisation of Government: A Comparative Perspective*, Benin City: Bello Publishers
- Geddes and Grosset Genovese, M. A. and Streb, M. J. (2014) *Polls and Politics: The Dilemmas of Democracy*, New York: State University of New York Press

- Giddens, A. (2008), *Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Habermas, J, (1986-8) *The Theory of Communicative Action*, 2 Vols., Cambridge: Polity
- Ibrahim, J. (2003) "The Rise of Nigeria's Godfathers", BBC Focus On Africa Magazine Monday, 10 November
- Ihonvbere, J. O. (2000) *Towards New Constitutionalism in Africa*, London: Centre for Democracy and Development, A CDD Occasional Paper Series No. 4
- Ihonvbere, J. O. (2004) "The Obasanjo Second Term in Office: Reinventing and Repositioning Nigeria for Growth, Stability and Democracy," *West Africa Review*: Issue 6 available at www.westaficareview.com/issue6/ihonvbere.html retrieved 08/04/09
- Ikelegbe, A. O. (ed.) (2015) *Introduction to Politics*, Benin City: Imprint Services International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA),
- Ishiekwene, A. (2017) "An Encounter With Obasanjo Over Anambra" retrieved from wwbiafraland.cQm accessed 4/06/2017
- Iyayi, F. (2004) "The Conduct of Elections and Electoral Practices in Nigeria", being A Paper delivered at the NBA Conference in Abuja on 24th August.
- Natufe, O. I. (2006) "Governance and Politics", a lecture delivered at the Staff and Graduate Seminar of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria, November 21
- Nnoli, O. (1985) *Introduction to Politics*, Enugu: Fourth Dimension Press
- Odion-Akhaine, S. Chizea, B. and Oriakhi, F. (2017) "The Political Economy of Godfatherism in Nigeria" *The Constitution, A Journal of Constitutional Development*, 7(2)1-10.
- Ogbonmwan, S. E. (2015) "The Nigerian Political Godfather: Edo State as a Case Study", A Paper presented at the 3rd Annual Edo Global Organization Conference, Budapest, Hungary, October 14-16.
- Ogbulafor, V. (2003) "The Increasing Rate of the Godfather Syndrome" *The Guardian*, July 17,
- Okoye, I. (2017) "Political Godfatherism, Electoral Politics and Governance in Nigeria", a paper presented at the 65th Annual Conference of the MPSA held in Chicago, USA between April 12-15 retrieved from ww.y.allacademic.com//meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/ accessed on Wednesday, September 02, 2021.
- Ome, E.M. (2014) "Godfatherism and Executive Interface in our Justice System" *Godfatherism in Nigeria's Politics in ESSENCE, an Interdisciplinary International Journal of Concerned African Philosophers*. 52-55
- Omisore, B. O. (2019), *Godfatherism in Nigerian Politics and The Impact on National Development*. Retrieved www.articlesjjeaven.corn/articles
- Onyeoziri, F. C. (2019) "Alternative Policy Options for Managing the National Question in Nigeria" (with Selected Bibliography by P. O. O. Momah) Ibadan: John Archers (Publishers) Ltd for

Programme on Ethnic and Federal Studies (PEFS), Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan

Osaghae, E. E. (2000) "Rescuing The Post-Colonial State of Africa: A Re-conceptualization of the Role of Civil Society", *The International Journal of African Studies* 2(1)37-56)

Osagie, E. (2006) "Edo Political Agenda", A keynote address delivered at the Edo Symposium organized by Edokpamakhin at NTA Benin, Benin City, on April 21-22,

Oyeyemi, R. (2016) "Godfatherism, The People and Democracy", retrieved from <http://www.nigeria.gov.ng/11-agesquare^om/artjces/remi-oyeyemi-godfatherism-the-people-and-democracy-17.html> accessed, March 2019

Paul-Sewa, T. (2004) "Godfatherism and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria: Issues and Perspectives" in *Godfatherism in Nigeria's Politics in ESSENCE, an Interdisciplinary International Journal of Concerned African Philosophers*, 1(1)60-71.

Sonoye, O. and Nduka, A. (2017) "A State of Rehearsals" retrieved from www.africananews.com accessed 3/14/2017

Suberu, R. T. (2000) "Governance and the Ethnic Factor", in G. Hyden, Okoth-Ogendo, and B. Olowu (eds.), *African Perspectives on Governance, Asmara-Ethiopia and Trenton-New Jersey: Africa World Press*.

Yaqub, N. (2019) "Political Parties in the Transition Process. Asmara Ethiopia

Zakari, Z. F. (2006) "Party Politics and Manifestations of Elitism" in H. A. Saliu, J. F. Olorunfemi, U. Lateef, and S. B. Oludoyi (eds.) *Democracy and Development in Nigeria: Conceptual Issues and Democratic Practice*, 1, Ilorin: Concept Publications, Faculty of Business and Social Sciences, University of Ilorin 52-153