

Post-Election Peace Building
and Democratic Consolidation
in Nigeria

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Godfatherism in Nigerian Politics: It's Implication on Post-Election Peace Building in Nigeria

John Tor Tsuwa and Martin Ugbudu

Introduction

People today have an urge - an impatient urge to participate in the events and process that shape their lives. And that impatience brings many dangers and opportunities. It can dissolve into anarchy, ethnic violence or social disintegration. But if properly nurtured in a responsive national and global framework, it can also become a source of tremendous vitality and innovation for the creation of new and more just societies (UNDP 1993:1)

The above quote emphasize that limited political participation can contribute to the emergence of violent conflicts in the society. A democratic polity, we are well aware imbues in the people the right to demand that political power be rested to those who create it and to whom it belongs and private ownership of political power be abolished (Ugbudu, 2012). A democratic government derives its legitimacy from the people and it is based on the people. It is a form of government in which the will of the majority is supreme in both the process of forming and running the government. A system of government that guarantees the rights and freedom of the individual in various aspects of political life, equality among citizens, justice in the relations between the people and the government as well as full participation of the people in choosing those in government (Nnoli,2003:143).

Democracy as understood above is government by consent and is anchored on popular participation where the will of the people prevail. However, in Nigeria, nay in Africa, it has been observed that popular will is a threat to some interests (Ake, 1993). Consequently, 'democratic values and institutions have become luxuries that the leaders cannot afford (Nnoli, 2003:163). The leaders therefore resort to naked force and other unwholesome practices thus vitiating the democratic culture. In Nigeria for instance in the 2015 general elections in the country, the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) observed that:

the electoral process was undermined by the conduct of the primaries of the political parties since 'Godfathers' foisted their preferred candidates on the parties through undemocratic process...(Cited in Aniche, 2015:12).

This is contrary to the spirit of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 which underscores that the internal workings of the political parties must adhere to democratic principles. The aftermath of this trend is that politics in Nigeria has exhibited more crisis than cohesion (Aniche, 2005). The concomitant effect of imposition of candidates to wit; factionalization, cross-carpeting and defection have ignited post-election conflicts with dire consequences on democratic consolidation in Nigeria. This study therefore examines the phenomenon of godfatherism in Nigerian politics with the aim that an understanding of the activities of godfathers in partisan politics in the country will serve as a prism to identify the drivers of conflict in the polity and proffer solutions that will bring enduring peace and stability.

Godfatherism, Post-Election Peace Building.

The concept **godfatherism** is synonymous with mentoring or sponsoring. In ordinary parlance goodfatherism connotes a situation in which an influential person in the society sponsors a candidate for a political office on the understanding that the office holder will owe allegiance and be subservient to him. Kolawale (Aderonke & Awosika, 2013:71) see godfatherism 'as an institution

of political kingmaking through which certain political office holders of tenuous political clout come into power' and the relationship is based on political surrogacy. They further maintain that it involves financial and moral assistance where the godfather is the major donor and the godson is the primary receiver. Similarly, Nnamani (Onwuzurigbo, 2012:28.) defines godfatherism as

An impervious guardian figure who provide the lifeline and direction to the godson, perceived to live a life of total submission, subservience and protection of the oracular personality located in the large, material frame of affluence and decisiveness, that is, not ruthless...strictly, the godfather is simply a self-seeking individual out there to use the government for his own purpose.

The underlying factor in the above definitions is that godfathers are influential individuals in the society that determine who occupy political power in the society. The practice involves the anointing of a godson who is expected to win the election and there after protect the economic and political interest of the godfather. In most cases it involves a pre-election agreement between the godson and the godfather to the effect that the incoming government will take instructions from the political godfather without hesitation (Ibeanu, 2007). Sometimes, it involves swearing to an oath before a witchdoctor that no major decision of the government can be taken except the godfather is consulted. This Uyi (2010) argues, the patron makes sure that all the money which they have spent is paid in full with interest. Usually the godfather has unlimited right to nominate candidates for appointment and demand for inflated contracts.

Godfatherism is socio-economically rooted. Ibeanu (2007) argues that it is organically tied to the character of peripheral capitalist accumulation and the tenuous socio-economic base of the local classes that organize it. In tandem with this position, Eze (2006) points out that the motive of the godfathers is to maximize power and wealth. Godfatherism is for personal interest and aggrandizement. Hence, they deplore unwholesome tactics to achieve their target since the end justifies the means. While godfatherism is seen as a global issue where some influential

business moguls bankroll the electoral expenses of anointed candidates, its origin in Nigerian politics is traced back to the pre-independence era where the few educated elites sponsored nationalist activities (Aderonke & Awosika, 2013). Later on, it became institutionalized in Nigerian politics in 1960 when the leaders of the three regional political parties the Northern People's Congress (NPC), the Action Group (AG) and the National Congress for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) started sponsoring surrogates for political offices to advance sectional interests (Aderonke & Awosika, 2013). However, Ibeanu (2007) on the other hand has traced the origin of godfatherism in Nigerian politics to the Federal Character principle embedded in the Nigerian Constitution since 1979.

Be that as it may, it has been pointed out that the practice of godfatherism in Nigerian politics is antithetical to the tenets of democracy; it precipitates violence in politics and is responsible for corrupt leadership as well as post-election conflicts in some states which portends danger to democratic consolidation in Nigeria (Edigin, 2010, Familusi, 2012).

Peace-building refers to process aimed at bringing enduring peace in the society. The concept was first introduced to the UN by former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his 1992 report "An Agenda for Peace" as action to identify and support structures, which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict. Over the years efforts have been made to elaborate on this definition. The UNDP (1992) for instance see Peacebuilding as a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development.

These definitions emphasize that peace building aims to prevent conflict from emerging through the creation of mechanisms that enhance co-operation and dialogue. It also aims at addressing the root cause and effect of conflict through reconciliation. It should be noted that peace-building programmes build confidence in peace agreements and transitional processes,

and contribute to restoring social contracts between the state and the people (Maier, 2003). He maintains that Peace-building programmes also include activities that facilitate inclusive participation in political processes, strengthening access to justice and human security as well as addressing perceived inequalities, marginalization or grievances. This tends to create incentives for non-violent behavior, reduce fear amongst the general population and initiates the process of instilling trust in institutions and the larger peace process (Maier, 2003).

From the foregoing, post-election peace building therefore refers to a process that is aimed at establishing enduring peace after elections. It refers to bridge building between disputing groups after the result of elections. Elections generally are a means of pursuing or retaining political power in which social differences are highlighted by candidates and parties campaigning for popular support and this process can also provide entry points for violence and conflicts because of the competition embedded in the winner-loser dichotomy (Korth, 2010). He further points out that if the electoral process is flawed and the underlying political conditions are not conducive to create unity among stake-holders there is bound to be post-election conflicts. In order to mitigate post-election related violence, there is need therefore to have a good understanding of the drivers of the conflict architecture and their interests and the potential cause of violence.

The underlying factor here is that a democratic polity thrives on the rule by the people as opposed to dictatorship and aristocracy. The system is anchored on popular participation facilitated by political and civil freedoms. A key way to enhance post-election peace therefore is to allow for meaningful competition for political power and broad participation in the selection of leaders and policies. A situation where popular will is suppressed by a few rich, there is the tendency to degenerate to civil violence and post-election conflicts.

Theoretical framework

This study adopts Mosca's elite theory as its theoretical framework. The basic assumption of the theory is that every political system

is divided into two strata, namely the ruling minority and the ruled majority (Obi, Nwachukwu&Obiora, 2008).

Gaetano Mosca 1938, avers that the first class, always the less numerous performs all political functions, monopolizes political power and enjoys the advantages that power brings, whereas the second, the more numerous class, is directed and controlled by the first in a manner that is now more or less legal, now or less arbitrary and violent.

In Nigeria, it has been pointed out that since access to power guarantees access to wealth accumulation in the rentier economy, power has become something to be defended at all cost or seized illegally by violent means rather than a process of peaceful and democratic transfer (Obi, 2002). What obtains is that power is privatized by force by the political elite whose interests are served by and who see no prospect of survival outside connections of the state (Obi, 2002). The political arena is therefore 'garrisoned' to protect and satisfy the narrow interest of the elite and they are always bent to suppress the general will by trying to determine who gets what and when in the state. They political elite arrogate to themselves the role of godfathers by determining who wins election in their area of influence. They usurp the wish of the people and foist their errand boys who do their bidding while occupying public office. This Oddih (2007) maintains explain why electoral fraud and malpractices are the order of the day in the country's electoral process. The political elite, who parade themselves as Godfathers are usually wealthy and influential individuals and this explains why desperate politicians usually seek after them for sponsorship and endorsement. The implication of this is that the country has not made any appreciable progress in transparent governance because godfathers usually create setback that stifles broad participation and hinders democratic growth in Nigeria (Edigin, 2010).

Godfatherism in Nigerian Politics

The issue of godfatherism in Nigerian politics as earlier noted dates back to the First Republic when leaders of the regional political parties 'meticulously cultivated godsons and sponsored them for

elective posts to advance the well-being of the citizens (Aderonke&Awosika, 2013). In Tivland for instance, J.S Tarka the leader of the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) brought Alhaji Ibrahim Imam, a non-Tiv from Maiduguri who was expelled from his own town on political grounds and gave him automatic ticket under the UMBC to contest for the Northern House of Assembly which he won (Anifowose, 1982).

However, the activities of political godfathers were not pronounced as it is today. Also, the impact of their activities on politics and governance were not pronounced as it is felt with the advent of the present democratic dispensation which started in 1999. The pervasiveness of the activities of godfathers and godsons in Nigerian politics since the inception of the present democratic era have been chronicled by Eze, (2006) and Aisekhaomon&Alozie, (2006). In Taraba state, for instance, the emergence of Jolly Nyame as the gubernatorial flag bearer of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) was solely the handiwork of godfathers. Eze (2006) reports that in the PDP gubernatorial primaries that were conducted in the state, Jolly Nyame came fourth behind Baba Adi, Abubakar Barde, and Ambassador Idris Waziri. However, the Barde House of January 6, 1999 spearheaded by some party stalwarts in the PDP overturned the votes of the people and picked Jolly Nyame as its flag bearer in the state.

Eze, (2006) pointed out that soon after the governor was sworn in, impeachment proceedings were brought against him by the PDP masterminded by the political godfathers that brought him to power. Nyame was accused of non-performance, destruction of party hierarchy and favouritism of non-indigenes. These problems actually emanated from the fact that he reneged on the agreement he entered into with political godfathers in the state.

In Enugu state, Governor Chimaroke Nnamani of the PDP was sponsored by the former governor of the old Anambra state Chief Jim Nwobodo to get the ticket. Aisekhaomon&Alozie (2006) reveal that Jim Nwobodo sponsored the electioneering campaign of Nnamani to the tune of N20 million. According to Nwobodo, 'every public commentator in Nigeria knows that the present governor of Enugu state got elected because I endorsed him,

financed his election campaign and personally campaigned for him all over Enugu state; Nnamani is the beneficiary of the enormous goodwill I enjoy from the people of Enugu' (Asiekhomon & Alozie, 2006:16). However, soon after Nnamani was sworn in, the relationship between the two became frosty. The governor turned down the gentleman's agreement reached before him and his political godfather Chief Jim Nwobodo which required that since the governorship position was zoned to Enugu East; the deputy from Enugu North, the secretary to the state government should come from Enugu West. In addition to this, some political offices and contracts were to be shared between the godson and the godfather. This sour relationship affected peace and industrial harmony in the state. The state was saddled with series of industrial unrest which was alleged to be masterminded by Nwobodo because of the refusal of the governor to allow him direct access to the state's finances.

In Anambra state since the return to democracy in 1999, political godfathers have held the state to a standstill for quite some time. It started with the Offor- Mbadinuju saga and then the Uba- Ngige faceoff. Ibeanu (2007) recounts that Chinwoke Mbadinuju rode to power on the shoulders of Chief Emeka Offor a business tycoon who sponsored his election as well as majority of the members of the state House of Assembly with the understanding that political offices, contracts and the state's allocation from the federal purse will be shared by both the godson and the godfather. But soon after assumption of office, Governor Mbadinuju fell out of favour with his political godfather Chief Emeka Offor. The misunderstanding between the godfather and the godson triggered political crises in the state which affected the performance of the administration. Primary and secondary schools for instance, were shut down for 13 months. Intra-party crisis which evolved out of this misunderstanding made the governor to dump PDP for the Alliance for Democracy (AD) on whose platform he contested for election but he lost.

Governor Chris Ngige that took over from Mbadinuju in Anambra state also got himself embroiled in the godfather-godson imbroglio. Chief Chris Uba who bankrolled the campaign

of Governor Ngige of the PDP in Anambra state learnt his lessons from the experiences of his predecessor. To secure his investments in the campaign, he got Chris Ngige to swear an oath at the Okija Shrine to allow his political godfather Chris Uba unhindered access to the state's monthly allocation. Also contracts as well as political appointments were to be shared between the two (Ibeanu, 2007). As usual, when Governor Ngige came to power he reneged on the agreement he signed with his political godfather this led to series of crisis in the state. Several attempts were made to impeach the governor culminating to his abduction and his subsequent rescue by the police. The aftermath of the crisis was the invasion of the state by thugs who burnt down government buildings in both Awka the state capital and Onitsha the commercial hub of the state.

The list is endless, in Imo state, Governor Achike Udenwa got his second term in office in 2003 through the goodwill and support of Senator Arthur Nzeribe. So after election Senator Nzeribe assumed the role of a godfather determining who gets what in the new cabinet (Aisekhaomon & Alozie, 2006). But midway into the governor's second tenure, the relationship between the governor and his sponsor got severed. The governor was accused of sponsoring thugs who burnt down the constituency office of Senator Nzeribe in Imo state. Nzeribe on the other hand was accused to have sponsored men of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission to investigate the governor for diversion of Local Government funds in the state.

In Kwara state, the saraki dynasty determines who gets what in the state. In 1999 Senator Olusola Saraki sponsored Governor Mohammed Lawal to become the governor of the state which he won. However, after been sworn in the godson decided to chart his course away from what he agreed with the godfather (Aderonke & Awosika, 2013). The misunderstanding between the godson and the godfather made the governor to lose his second term bid and in the process Senator Olusola Saraki made his son Gbenga the governor of the state. He equally sponsored his daughter Kemi to the Senate in 2003.

In Edo state, the trio of Chief Tony Anenih, Chief Gabriel Igbinedion and Brigadier General Ogbemudia stand tall in Edo politics. For an aspirant to occupy a political office under the PDP in the state, he needs the blessing of these prominent personalities. While in Lagos state, Bola Ahmed Tinubu determines who occupies a particular political post in the state. Governor RajiFashola came to occupy the governorship seat of Lagos state out of his Tinubu's goodwill as well as the present APC led governor of the state, Governor Akin Ambode.

The foregoing analysis shows that godfathers have usurped the power of the people to decide who rules in the state. The nomination process is hardly democratic as the votes are not allowed to count. To deepen democracy and ensure stability in the polity there is dire need to free the polity from the clutches of political contractors and power mongers.

Godfatherism and Post-election Conflicts in Nigeria

The root cause of the discredited elections in Nigeria it has been observed stems from the issue of compromised primary elections where candidates are imposed on the electorates (Tenuche, 2011). This impinges on the political stability of the country and affects democratic consolidation. A notable impact of godfatherism on the polity is that it engenders factionalization and cross-carpeting. In the build up to the 2015 general elections in Nigeria for instance, the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the PDP met with the PDP governors and gave the incumbent president Goodluck Jonathan automatic ticket for the presidential race without following the due process. The party said it had printed only one form for the president and no contestant was allowed to compete with the incumbent (Idris&Kabir, 2015). This undemocratic procedure deepened crisis in the party and led to mass exodus of the party supporters. Some aggrieved members of the party like the governors of Rivers state RotimiAmeachi, Adamawa state, MurtalaNyako, Sokoto state, AliyuWamako ; Kwara state, Abdultatah Ahmed and Kano state, Rabiukwankwaso left the party and formed the New PDP (Yorums, 2015). They eventually defected to the All Progressive

Congress and since then the party has continued to experience internal wrangling. Even some elected members of the National Assembly particularly in the House of Representatives defected to the APC.

The practice of godfatherism in Nigerian politics also creates legitimacy crisis and fosters rigging in the polity. The usurpation of the general will and the imposition of the whims of godfathers usually cause disaffection among the people which tends to threaten the electoral fortunes of the political party. What happens is that in anticipation that the electorates may cast protest votes; thugs are usually hired and paid to abet rigging. Nzekwe and Idoko (Nwori&Ndaba, 2010:53) aver that elections in Nigeria could be rigged through physical intimidation by hired thugs who storm polling booths with dangerous weapons to chase away opponents and manipulate election results in favour of those anointed by godfathers. Sometimes identified political opponents are targeted to be eliminated by these hired thugs since the end justifies the means. This accounts for why elections become a battle field in Nigeria.

The activities of Godfathers in Nigerian politics also precipitate violence and post-election litigation in the country. In most cases when the preferred candidate by the masses which is expressed through results at the party primaries is changed like what happened in Delta state where Chief Christopher Anirah that won the party primaries for the House of Representatives seat for the Sapele/Okpe/Owvie Federal Constituency was substituted by the party leadership who informed the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) that the candidate died. This was a blatant short change of the wish of the people that is capable to ignite spontaneous reaction by the supporters of the candidate. Under such circumstances people are bound totake the law into their hands through violent demonstrations. Sometimes roads are blocked; party offices and public buildings destroyed with several lives lost. In January 2, 2011 for example, the PDP party primaries were heralded with unrest in Lafia, as aggrieved party supporters protested against party leadership and threw stones at the Information Minister in Nasarawa-Eggon (Peace and Security

Working Group 2015). On the 4 February 2011, it was reported that the police foiled an attempted assassination attempt by Nasarawa politicians on the PDP director of organization and mobilization due to a dispute over the party's finalized list of candidates (Peace and Security Working Group, 2015).

Where a candidate chooses to be law abiding, he appeals to the supporters to be calm so that he or she could seek redress through the law courts. In fact most of the post-election litigations we have in the courts today are fallout of the activities of godfathers in the country. In Rivers state for instance, in 2007 the gubernatorial primaries of the PDP were conducted in the state and RotimiAmechi emerged victorious in the primaries but godfathers in the party particularly the outgoing state governor substituted RotimiAmechi's name and submitted that of Celestine Omehia to INEC as the PDP candidate for Rivers state which he contested and won. However, Amechi took the case to the court and finally the Supreme Court ordered that RotimiAmechi be sworn in as governor of Rivers state on the premise that his substitution was not in compliance with Section 24(2) of the Electoral Act, 2006.

Most post-election litigation cases in the 2015 elections in Nigeria emanated from the undemocratic nomination process facilitated by the activities of godfathers. In Benue state, the gubernatorial primaries of the APC were not conducted. Samuel Ortom the candidate of the APC, who earlier contested on the platform of the PDP and lost the party primaries to TerhememTarzoor of the PDP got his ticket in the APC under a consensus arrangement masterminded by Senator George Akume who is widely seen as the governor's godfather in the state. This consensus arrangement ignited series of court cases. Hon. Emmanuel Jime a co-contestant for the APC gubernatorial ticket dissatisfied with this arrangement took the party to court as well as its flag bearer that APC did not conduct primaries in the state. In short the national leadership of the party had to wade in before the case was withdrawn from the court. Meanwhile the gubernatorial candidate of the PDP TerhememTarzoor who lost the election in Benue state instituted a court case against his

opponent that he was not a candidate for the election as he was not validly nominated by his party. However the Supreme Court threw out the case for lack of merit that he does not have substantial interest to interfere in the affairs of another party. A similar scenario took place in Taraba state between Darius Ishaku of the PDP who won the election and his rival Aisha Alhassan. It should be noted that the crisis generated by the activities of godfathers tend to overheat the polity and cause unnecessary distraction to the office holder.

The practice of godfatherism in politics too has strings attached to it which impairs leadership performance and retards development in the state. As earlier noted, godfatherism involves a written agreement between the godfather and the godson. When such agreements are been honoured such as concessioning appointments and contracts to the godfather it retards the development of the state. In Oyo state for example, the state governor Rashheed Ladoja was sponsored to office on the platform of the PDP by Lamidi Adedibu with a condition that the governor will at the end of every month remit at least N15 million to his godfather from his monthly N55 million security vote (Aisekhaomon & Alozie, 2006). When he attempted to resist these monthly returns he was booted out of office. Imagine N15 million is enough to build a three classroom block for both primary and secondary schools. This goes into an individual's pocket and it should be noted that most of the abandoned contracts in the country today are those awarded to godfathers who collect the mobilization fee and abandon the projects without executing it. The net effect is that the people are denied of social amenities like potable water, good roads, functional electricity and industries which are supposed to create job opportunities for the people. The concomitant effect of this is mass disenchantment, escalation of insecurity and political apathy which affect democratic consolidation.

Godfatherism in Nigerian politics also affects the credibility of elections as well as heighten political crisis in the country. The rejection of election results by most candidates and political parties in Nigeria today emanates from the imposition of candidates on

the electorates by the godfathers. The godfathers who are the architects of this usurpation act like mafia groups; they perpetrate criminal acts with their thugs thus disrupting the electoral process (Aderonke & Awosika, 2013). Hence, elections have been characterized by different types of fraud which range from ballot stuffing; intimidation of voters. The nullification of election results in Edo, Ekiti and Ondo states by the election tribunals in 2007 which were initially declared to have been won by the PDP to the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and the later to the Labour Party (LP) attest to this. It should be noted that conflicts arising from disputed elections were largely responsible for the military take-over of 1966 and 1983 in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The practice of godfatherism is an imposition on the people. It is undemocratic as it pre-empts the people from exercising their right to freely choose the people to govern them. The aftermath of this is that it triggers political violence, aggravates intra-party conflicts and impairs the credibility of elections in the country. To enhance the credibility of elections and minimize post-election conflicts in Nigeria there is a dire need to make the nomination process open and transparent. The option A4 system should be adopted at party primaries. It is a system whereby nominations for party primaries usually start at the ward level, the local government level, state and federal level as the case may be. The voters usually queue behind the candidates in the open and are counted. In the process the candidate that scores the highest number of votes proceeds and others are eliminated. This process is open and participatory and it reduces the tendency of being manipulated which often ignites election and post-election conflicts.

Also, the independent National Electoral Commission should be armed with the powers to reject candidates whose nominations are petitioned. INEC should be empowered to not only investigate the petitions but should ensure that the nomination exercise was transparent and participatory. In addition, INEC should not only monitor party primaries to ensure that candidates are democratically nominated but also investigate complaints of

imposition and ensure that due process is followed in the nomination of party candidates

Strict penalty should be imposed on the activities of godfathers in partisan politics. Where disagreements between godfathers and godsons manifest in the open like the Anambra case between Ngige and Uba, the parties involved should be prosecuted and banned for life in taking active part in politics like contesting elections and holding public position.

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