

International Journal of Issues on **AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT**

VOL 2. NO 4, 2010

**Cendia de Development
Et D'Echanges Endogenes, (IDEE)
Quidah near Cotonou, Benin Republique**

*A Publication of Centre for Issues in the Development of Africa
(CENDIA)*

International Journal of Issues in the Development of Africa

Vol. 2 No. 4 [2010]

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CENDIA
Institute de Development
Et D'Exchange Endogenes (IDEE)
QUIDAH Benin Republic

A publication of Centre for Issues in the Development of Africa

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GOD FATHERISM IN AFRICAN POLITICS: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Godfatherism is a global phenomenon, its emergence in Africa could be seen from the fact that Africa is a region where political positions are seen as goldmines and the political terrain as the easiest means to wealth, influence, power and relevance. This paper x-rays the origin, nature, factors that breed godfatherism and the evils of godfatherism in Africa democratic experiment. It argues that the motives and pursuits of the godfathers are counter-productive to the social contract in governance. Moreso, godfatherism in African politics have eroded the electorate's belief and confidence in the electoral process, and has breed political violence in the polity. It argues further that godfatherism can destroy the democratic project in Africa, until some stern measures are taken to stem the tide. It therefore suggests that there should be a ceding on individual donations to the party or candidate in order to reduce the control by donors or godfathers. Intense effort against corruption is invaluable, if godfathers know that their investment cannot be retrieved or recouped, the incidence of godfatherism will be minimized. It concludes that the activities of godfathers were counter-productive to the goals of development in Africa, as it has done more harm than good to the African political psyche.

Introduction

It is well known that all over the world, power and influence play a tremendous role in the activities of people especially in public affairs. Those who possess these traits tend to control the affairs of the moment either in politics, economic, sports, religion, management, education, to mention a few. This phenomenon held sway even during the period of classical continuity (Emordi, et al, 2007:12). The African political landscape is full of contours orchestrated by dynamic changes developing from traditional political leaders in the pre-colonial era through colonial gladiators' indirect rule system with post colonial political re-engineering. Thus, the present political calculations in Africa would be incomplete without analyzing the role of godfathers in the continent.

In Africa, for a politician hoping to excel in politics, his life and career revolve round the fulcrum of his network of people that have the needed influence, political will and sometimes able to negotiate where necessary and be courageous enough to impose their candidate; and to a large extent, shape his strength and acceptance. Therefore a good politician must be one who is able to get the powerful few to his side at all times while making efforts to convince the large majority to accept him as the best in the political contest to serve their interest (Abia,2008:358).

Politics according to Olarinmoye (2007:35) is a matter of risk management with the successful politician been one who successfully overcomes, personally or through the assistance of external agent(s) the constraints that threaten to hamper his political career. In conquering and conserving political power, politician needed the understanding of the intricacies of political power acquisition and control. It is in meeting the enforcement needs of political parties that godfathers became central to the success of politics in Africa.

The godfather has become a scary phenomenon in African politics. Ayoade (2006:78) argued that it started as a benign political accretion of the position of either political notables or dreaded political rascals who are recalcitrant to the deterrence of the legal regime. For political notables, the attraction is that their credibility can sway political support such that they can determine the electoral fortune of candidates. They are therefore sought after and cultivated by candidates. They are strong party men and can also determine the nomination process because they often wield much influence in the party machine. Ayoade, (2006) noted further that:

The influence of some of those notables is only significant within the parties where they operate. Where such parties are dominant, their influence equally radiate the electoral landscape of the entire political constituency and their support can secure electoral victory. But there are other notables whose influence transcends the political party. They constitute a political colossus in the entire political constituency such that they are much sought after by parties and candidates alike. They are highly politically mobile and can sway political support to the political party and/or candidate behind which they throw their political weight. Such godfathers are benign and benevolent and are symptomatic of effective party discipline. Thus orders issued from only the parties such that the control of the party machine guarantees the success of god father. Such godfathers then become the effective gatekeepers of the party and ipso facto of the political landscape.

Godfatherism is one word that opens narrow doors when it comes to deciding who gets what in the political scene. They make or mar potential candidate all over the country (Hunkenukon, 2008:1), In fact, the concept of

godfatherism is firmly establishing itself as a guiding principle in contemporary African politics. The issue of greedy godfathers in the African political scene has now reached epidemic proportions. Just like bribery, corruption, nepotism, tribalism and fraud, the perpetrators now want to make it a way of making a living. The most discouraging part of the issue is that even the poor downtrodden masses have embraced these dastardly acts as being normal (Onugbogu, 2007:1).

Available evidence suggests that godfatherism in the past was not essentially for personal gains. Preoccupation in the business of politics was not seen as a personal investment. Rather, the concern of the mentor was to ensure good governance, which is the use of the apparatus of political parties to re-strategise and energise the economic strength of the state to give the citizenry the necessary essentials of life (Emordi, et al 2007:14). In South Africa for instance, Nelson Mandela prepared his godson, Thabo Mbeki, to take over from him when he left politics. He did that for the interest of the people of South Africa. Since then, it has not been reported that he has been dictating to his successor how much to be given, who to be given an appointment nor what to do.

In Nigeria, the older nationalists and politicians like Azikwe, Awolowo, Aminu Kano, Ahmadu Bello played godfather in the ideal way, that they were celebrated and adored by their followers. For instance, Chief Obafemi Awolowo's style of leadership was seen to be in conformity with what obtained in older democracies such as the United States of America and United Kingdom, where godfathers content themselves with being king maker and anytime they want to peddle influence, it is to the advantage of the electorates (Emordi, et al 2007:14-15). In developed society, the existence of sponsors or godfathers is well accepted and is seen as part of the political fabric. In USA for example, in 1978

Bill Clinton of Arkansas was helped into office of governor by the Arkansas poultry farmers. The then young governor came into office and was at loggerheads with the same farmers who helped him get elected; the farmers did not form a kangaroo court and impeach the governor. They went home planned on the next election and made sure that Clinton was not re-elected in 1980. Now here is the real show of political savvy and maturity. Clinton did not go about crying or looking for someone to kill, instead he went back to the same poultry farmers and struck a deal with them. He was re-elected in 1982 and was the governor until he ran for President in 1992. The important issue here is that, godfathers need to work with their candidates not just to steal and plunder but for the development of society at large (Onubogu, 2008). If the above situation ideally reflects godfatherism it is not a bad political practice. However, in Africa today, it has been bastardized because of greed, on the part of the benefactor and the godson. Why can't the present African godfathers allow their candidates some breathing space instead of preferring that they become cronies or robots to be pushed at their whims and caprices? This paper therefore seeks to answer the above question by examining godfatherism in African politics with particular reference to Nigeria. It examines the relationship between the godfathers and godsons and finally, prescribed measures to curb the menace of godfatherism in African politics in general and Nigerian politics in particular.

Conceptual and theoretical underpinning

Conceptualising "godfatherism" and "politics" is pertinent in order to give an explanatory power to this study. Godfatherism according to most scholars has its origin in Christianity. In the view of Hunjenukan (2008), the term became popular following the film "THE GODFATHER" directed by Francis COPPOLA. The film

according to him databases the original meaning of the term. He argued that it is a term now reserved for God forsaken criminals who will go to any length to achieve their set goals of wielding political power including arson, intimidation, warning flogging and assassination. Godfatherism in a broad sense is an ideology which is constructed on the belief that certain individuals possess considerable means to unilaterally determine who gets party ticket to run for an election and who wins in the electoral contest. They are men who have the power and influence to decide both who gets nominated to contest elections and who wins in the election (Ibrahim, 2006). Godfatherism, therefore, emerges as an unholy alliance between the man of ideas, but without the resources to win an election and the man with the resources to "win" an election, but lacks the qualities to stand as candidate. Godfatherism in this sense means the practice of political office seekers getting connected to an individual who is believed to have the ability to deliver desired outcome in an electoral contest. It is the tradition of looking for a political father to help to promote one's political aspirations (Gambo, 2006:90). The concept of godfatherism as adopted in African politics is all about the concept of elite recruitment. The western tradition of politics itself is the controversy between elitism and democracy. Political philosophy was founded on this controversy the focus of Plato's REPUBLIC was outgrowth on his criticism of Athenian democracy (Abia, 2008:36).

Another concept central to this discourse is "politics". Defining what "politics" is has been the object of much controversy. However, several definitions of the concept abound in extant literature. For the purpose of this paper, the following definitions shall be examined. To Harold Lasswell, politics is all about "who gets what, when and how". This definition of politics raises certain fundamental issues which is central to this paper. It

reminds us that there are at least two factors in the life of a man, i.e. power and wealth. Because these elements are scarce relative to the demand for them, they generate conflicts which politics seek to resolve or manage (Akhakpe, 2003:2). In the view of Abia (2008:16), politics is that which is concerned with the attainment of social goals. It is the sphere in which decisions are made with respect to the whole society, decisions which are enforceable. The core area of politics, therefore, is the area of decisions, or rather enforcement of decisions, and the essence of politics is the dependable coordination of human effort for the attainment of the goals of society. From the above, it shows that politics involves, to a significant extent, the use of power, rule and authority in any human relationship.

For the purpose of our analysis in this paper, power theory is considered relevant. Power is the non-divisible unit of energy which is capable of causing a change in the actions of its victim in spite of the victim's opposition to the change. And for power relationship to exist there must be a conflict of interests or value between two or more persons or groups (Barrat, 1969). That is why Harold (1936:310) views politics as "the study of the shaping and sharing of power". In conceiving of society in elite-mass terms, he tended toward an elitist approach to the political process. Lassell argued that, the elite was characterized by its ability to get the most values and by its prowess in manipulating the masses. The elite preserve its ascendancy by manipulating symbols, controlling supplies, and applying violence. This is exactly the situation in Africa as far as godfatherism is concerned. What Harold Lasswell is saying is that the exercise of power by an elite is simply the exercise of a high degree of coerciveness, and this largely explain the extent to which some godfathers in African politics have gone in order to control power and subsequently, the resources of the state. Abia (2008:363) therefore

noted that the inferences of Harold Lasswell's statements for the purpose of constructing a political theory for godfatherism are two folds:

- The decisive factor in distinguishing political elite (godfather) from non political elite and non-elites is the nature of the decision rendered not the position held by the decision maker.
- A godfather or a political elite decision need neither be made within governmental institutions nor confined to issues closely related to government.

Thus, godfatherism is all about elite recruitment, and whenever attempt is made by the ruling elite godfathers, to block attempt by the new elite to emerge, conflict and crisis ensues. The politics of godfatherism have driven its root deep into electioneering process in Africa. A politician without the support of a godfather is like trains without rail tracks.

Godfatherism in Nigerian politics

The emergence of godfatherism in Nigerian politics could be seen from the fact that Nigeria is a country in which political offices, especially at the higher levels such as governorship are seen as goldmines. The political terrain is seen as the easiest means to wealth, influence, power and relevance (Emordi, et al, 2007:15). Godfathers operate in the Nigerian polity with impunity because of their immense influence. For instance, Chris Uba, one of the self-styled godfathers in Nigeria's fourth republic once boasted thus:

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. It is not just the Governor and his Deputy. There are also three Senators, 10 members of the House of

Representatives and 30 members of the House of Assembly of the state. I sponsored them. I put them there although only 29 House of Assembly members eventually made it (ThisDay editorial, July 19, 2003:1).

In a value-conscious society, as noted by Gambo (2006:92) Uba would have been painstakingly interrogated and if found guilty of committing massive electoral fraud, be punished as prescribed by the 2001 Electoral Act. Painfully enough, he was instead rewarded with appointment as a member of Board of Trustees of the ruling People Democratic Party for successfully pushing through all PDP candidates in Anambra state in the 2003 general elections. Nobody ever interrogated him on how he violated the integrity of the electoral process in the state. This according to Gambo (2006) fits into the theory that godfathers manipulate electoral process to have their anointed godsons in elective public offices in exchange for protection and patronage or what Richard (1991) described as "prebendal politics".

Looking at the historiography of godfatherism in Nigerian, it is appropriate to say that godfatherism in Nigeria politics did not start in 2003. It started during the first republic when the forefathers of the nation influenced and controlled political activities in Nigeria. Thus, political history cannot exonerate the likes of Ahmadu Bello, Obafemi Awolowo and Nnamdi Azikiwe as being political and ethnic godfathers in their spheres of influence in the first republic. It then means that the phenomenon is as old as Nigeria (Odion, 2007:75). The political godfathers in the first republic presented for elections political role models like Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Pa Adegunle Ajasin, Chief Bola Ige, Alhaji Lateef Jakande, , Chief Jim Nwobodo, Alhaji Abubakar Rimi and Alhaji Balarabe Musa. Those political

godfathers expected neither to drink a pint of water nor to reap material rewards from the governments that they installed. Rather, their common objective was to present the best candidates who understood and believed in their party's ideology and who were also capable of executing programmes that would improve the people's welfare and provide caring leadership (Hunjenukon, 2007).

However, Hunjenukon (2008:2) observes that there are lots of differences between the ideological godfatherism of the first republic and the crude form that is currently in place in Nigeria. The series of political imbroglio experienced in some states of the country has exposed the negative impacts of crude political godfatherism in Nigerian politics. Like other forms of political corruption, it is a big threat to Nigeria's democratic - experiment, because it prevents the people from participating unfettered in the political process. This problem according to him, is one of the biggest challenges that should be resolved for sustainability of democracy in Nigeria.

The recent trend is however of a more negative and counter productive in nature. It bears directly on the power relations and the means of acquiring that power. As politicians, young and old realize that selection is more viable than election in the quest for public office, they then cultivate the godfathers in order to leverage their access to power. The activities of godfathers include funding of political parties and their choice candidates. No wonder, Odiagbe and Obetoh (2005:7) noted that those who invest or donate huge amount of money definitely enjoy large amount of goodwill or influence within the party that they become part godfathers.

The godfather morass is today a dangerous phenomenon in Nigeria. It has erupted in many states within the country. Since the inauguration of the fourth

republic in 1999, godfathers have emerged in some states of the federation. In Anambra state for instance, successive godfathers have exercised overbearing influence over their political godsons. Chief Chinwoke Mbadinuju had the heavy burden of contending with Chief Emeka Offor who supported him to "win" the Anambra State election in 1999. The Governor expended more energy and time struggling to free the resources of the state from the predatory grips of his godfather than attending to critical issues of governance before he was voted out in 2003 general elections. Dr. Chris Ngige, the People Democratic Party candidate supported by Chris Uba, emerged as the governor of the state. While Chris Uba wanted the immediate enforcement of the terms of the mutual agreement preceding the election, Dr Ngige, perhaps upon reflection, fought back to save the resources of the state for the common good of the people of Anambra State. As a result of Dr. Chris Ngige's refusal to pay back his godfather the necessary commission and patronage. For the first time in the political history of Nigeria, a serving governor was abducted for nearly a whole day but was reluctantly reinstated by a court order. Ngige election was later invalidated by an Election Petition Tribunal in Awka. The verdict of the tribunal was challenged by Ngige at the court of appeal. The court of appeal after a painstaking review of the case, uphold the verdict of the tribunal thereby sending Ngige out of Government house to pave way for Peter Obi of the All Progressive Grand Alliance to take over as the validly elected Governor of the State in 2005.

In Borno state, the same scenario played out where Governor Kachallah who was supported by his godfather, Senator Modu Ali Sheriff was ousted by the latter in the 2003 general elections. The godfather personally challenged his godson in a political contest. The Borno experience was an exception because

godfather would always want to cultivate surrogates because they are either not directly saleable to voters or would want to protect themselves from liability should they later demand that the surrogates engage in illegal activities (Ibrahim, 2006).

The battle line in Oyo state was drawn between Late Lamidi Adedibu-the kingpin of Ibadan politics and his estranged godson and governor of the state, Rashidi Ladoja. Adedibu claimed to have invested financially in "installing" the governor, with an agreement that the governor will be a lame chief executive, taking orders from him and to subject public resources to his private whims and caprices. However, Ladoja reneged and refused to play according to the rules of the game. This culminated into the mayhem witnessed in Ibadan after 2003 elections till January 2006. Many lives and properties were lost, the State House of Assembly was also polarized along the two (2) divides and this led to the suspension of fourteen (14) members out of thirty-two (32) - member Assembly. Subsequently, Ladoja was impeached in January 2006 to pave way for his deputy, Alao Akala, another willing godson, who is eager to serve the godfather better. Chief Adedibu's grouse was that he was not getting enough returns from his investment and blamed this on his godson's uncanny greed. The once cordial relationship soon degenerated and pitched godfather and godson against each other and as usual, the godfather succeeded in relieving the governor of his coveted seat and put in a more pliant godson as Ladoja's successor. The Status quo was maintained till December 7th 2006 final ruling of the apex court (Supreme Court) that his removal was illegal and was reinstated after eleven (11) months out of Office. His coming back to the office was faced with serious resistance from his former godfather's (Adedibu) camp, which led to break in law and order of the state capital for few days and living many innocent citizens with various kind of injuries.

Another state where political godfatherism is so pronounced is Enugu in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. The immediate past governor of the state, Dr Chimaroke Nnamani rode on the political horseback of Chief Jim Nwobodo who was the Governor of old Anambra state in the second republic which lasted from 1979 to 1983, supported his godson for governorship election in 1999. Nwobodo's godson won the governorship election in 1999 but the godfather-godson relationship did not endure. No sooner had the governor been sworn in than they fell out with each other (Gambo, 2006:97). According to him, the Enugu state experience is exceptional because in most cases, the godson would be denied second term by the godfather who has the political clout to do so. One possible explanation for this could be that the godson's performance in office was so remarkable that the electorate decided, possibly against the wish of the godfather to renew his mandate.

Between 1999 and 2003, the battle line in Kwara politics was well defined. Dr Olusola Saraki, former Senate leader and political kingpin, was in contest for relevance with his former protégé, Mohamed Lawal, a retired Navy Commodore, who was the Governor of the state then. Saraki, who has installed not less than four (4) Governors in the state, including Lawal himself, fell out with Lawal on the sharing of political benefits and commissions. But Lawal did not compromise and these led to a cold war which culminated into the expulsion of Saraki from the then All People's Party (APP) now All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) and Saraki teamed up with People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the state. Then, the 2003 elections to both men was the ultimate battle to determine the political grandmaster of the state. They deployed their vast resources to prosecute the "war". During this "war" bomb blast shattered the peace of Ilorin, this happened at the premises of National Pilot owned by the Saraki's. Lots of people were assassinated,

maimed, injured, etc, during the imbroglio. Notable among those assassinated was the then Chairman of PDP in the state, Ahmed Pataki, who was brutally murdered in August 2002. Supporters of the two (2) camps openly confronted each other with dangerous weapons with the Police turning into spectators. But this was put to an end when the Bukola Saraki (the son of Dr Sola Saraki) won the Governorship election in the state in 2003 and the rest becomes history.

The situation in Lagos state during the 2007 gubernatorial elections was not different. The former Lagos state Governor, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, in spite of opposition from other members of the Action Congress (AC) He ensured that his political godson, Governor Raji Fashola (SAN) who was also his Chief of staff between 1999 and 2007 got the AC party nomination. He later contested and won the election as Governor of Lagos state. Many observers have argued that Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu is a force to be reckoned with today in Lagos politics. In the same manner, the former President Olusegun Obasanjo made sure he did not leave the Aso Rock without anointing someone who can be trusted as the Presidential flag bearer of PDP in the 2007 Presidential elections. Many people have also argued that on assumption of office as President, Umaru Yar'adua, has to pay back his godfather the necessary commission and patronage most especially before taking important state decisions. President Yar'adua who was imposed on the Nigerian electorates by the former President is said to be loyal and committed to the course and interest of his sponsor who determines what happens in the country.

The situation is not different in many African countries such as Togo, South Africa, Congo and recently in Gabon where the Africa's longest serving leader and Gabonese President, died on June 8, 2009 and is reported to have lined up Ali-Ben Bongo, his son to take

over power after him, although under the constitution the leader of the Senate, Rose Francine Rogombo, an ally of Bongo, should take over as interim leader and organize election within 45 days (Punch, June 9, 2009:52). Thus, godfatherism pervades African societies and Nigeria is not an exception.

Also, in North Korea, it is being widely speculated that the former North Korea leader has anointed his younger brother as the country's next President (Punch, June 8, 2009:84).

From some of the preceding cases, even though by no means exhaustive, it would be appreciated that the concept of godfatherism as noted by Ibrahim (2006) is firmly establishing itself as a guiding principle in contemporary Nigerian politics. It is clear from above that there is no part of Nigeria which can be said to be immuned to the phenomenon of godfatherism. The list of godfathers in Nigerian politics is therefore endless; godfathers are very powerful and can go to any length to protect their interest against the general interest of the public.

The effects of godfatherism on political development in Africa

Godfatherism is an unpronounced global political culture and a negative complement to democracy. Even in the United States where the polity is strictly pivoted on democracy, scientific findings have identified Americans political life-style as being propelled by godfatherism of variable stuff. Because of the ubiquitous practice and global acceptance of godfatherism, as a prerequisite for attaining public office, it becomes pertinent for prospective and serving public officers to recognize political godfatherism before and after crossing political bridges. Consequently, the sycophantic nature of godfatherism made many intellectuals and men of lofty ideas encounter difficulties (mostly in African

countries) in penetrating the political arena (Hunjenukon, 2007). Looking at the effect of godfatherism on political development, Atere and Akinwale (2006:147) argued from Nigeria perspective thus:

Although it may be difficult to eradicate godfatherism from Nigerian politics because it is an integral part of age-old traditional practices such as respect for elders, paying homage and spiritual consultation, its devastating consequences on democracy and development are too far reaching to be ignored. Godfathers create democratic setbacks by encouraging illegitimate means of seeking political power thereby indulging in corrupt practices such as arms-stockpiling, political thuggery, bribery, election rigging and other forms of political demeanour. Considering the modus operandi of godfathers, it is obvious that many citizens are blocked from participating actively in politics. Thus, the emerging political apathy can be understood in the light of the government of the few, by the few and for the few.

The activities of godfathers in African politics have eroded the electorate's belief and confidence in the electoral process. The reason being that whether they vote or not a winner must emerge. Notions such as consent, popular mandate and sovereignty are devalued and the basis of democracy is grossly eroded (Odion, 2007:79).

Political godfatherism is inimical to the success of democracy in Africa and makes conflicts uncontrollable. Since Nigeria's independence in 1960, there have been difficulties in bringing great nationalities together as one entity due to conflicts of different dimensions (Atere and Akinwale, 2006:146).

Also, since 1999 political violence have raged unabated as a result of politics of godfatherism e.g. Anambra, Jos, Oyo etc. Godfathers block the democratic process by obstructing candidate selection and even executive selection once government is installed. Godfathers produce an unresponsive leadership. The only person that must be obeyed is the godfather. The government can therefore act with impunity. In such situations the governed cannot direct the governors which is the most important quality of democracy when choice is blocked, as it is by godfather, and rights becomes privileges, citizens are sometimes tempted to migrate to the party of the godfather who actually does not need them because their votes do not count. Thus, party hopes do not add to the quality of life of the people and frustration results into violence (Ayoade, 2006:87). In the views of Leiden and Schmitt (1973:3), godfatherism breeds political violence in the polity. The erratic and disloyal behaviour of godsons in the eye of their sponsors has often led to violence and constant crisis, and political violence disturbs the political equilibrium of a state. While, Hunjenukon (2008) identified and discussed five perils of godfatherism in politics as follows:

- **Wilful destruction of lives and properties:-** In the battle of supremacy between the godfathers and their protégés, both private and government properties worth billions of naira have been destroyed. Also lives of innocent citizens are either lost through assassination or as a result of violence precipitated by godfather politics.
- **Hooliganism and Thuggery:-** Political actors in the business of god-fatherism seriously focus all their resources on how to build a formidable group of youths that can be used as thugs, hooligans and other delinquencies that thrives on periodic dole of the godfather

- **The proliferation of arms and ammunitions:-** The proliferation of illicit weapons has become one of the most urgent security and developmental challenges facing Nigeria and the whole of African continent. This problem is on the increase in Nigeria because these arms and ammunitions are being freely used by political thugs in battles of supremacy between the godfathers and their godsons in most cases.
- **Increase in crime rate:-** Godfather politics encourages youth delinquencies: such as cultism, armed robbery, drug abuse, etc. This is due to the fact that political players involved in godfatherism usually recruit youths that have these tendencies as foot soldiers and arm them by giving necessary logistics.
- **State of Anarchy:-** The chaotic situation generated by godfather politics, always leads to lack of control, disturbance of law and order. And ultimately, allowing some unscrupulous elements to exploit the situation by unleashing terror on the citizens. This was witnessed in Ekiti state in Nigeria during the last governorship rerun election. He stated further that apart from security threats, godfatherism is an evil building block for corruption, retrogression, under development, mediocrity, backwardness and perpetual poverty of the people.

In the view of Odion (2007:81), godfatherism affects developmental policies negatively. It has fueled the high levels of corruption in African politics. It has also led to the imposition in office of surrogates and inexperienced political actors. These surrogates in most cases are loyal and committed to the course and interest of their sponsors who determine what happens in the state. Godfatherism, no doubt, leads to corruption of youths.

As observed by Nnamani (2006:65) youth delinquency and lack of good and effective governance is the country is attributed to godfatherism. Also, the exclusive politics of godfather grossly undermined political participation. In addition, godfatherism tends to negate the clamour for and the moves towards a United States of Africa which many observers believed is inevitable and have been long overdue. The implication of godfatherism for political integration, democratic growth and stability in Africa is the erosion of the normative elements of democracy. Adeyemi-Suenu (2004:77) contended that the activities of the godfathers in a democracy cripple democratic choice, which subsequently shrinks democratic space. This he argues often creates serious electoral problems as the godfathers employ all legal and obnoxious means to win elections. The sportsmanship variables which makes politics of election interesting, has been sacrificed. Anarchy, insecurity, chaos and violence become the order of the day. This is the picture dominating Africa's political space. The effect of this on the unity and democratic development and future of Africa is better imagined. But, development can only take place when people are integrated and united in the pursuit of common goals.

Thus, in political systems where prescribed electoral rules are frequently flouted with impunity, the basis of citizen's trust in government is compromised. The consequence therefore is that trust as a critical social capital is lost (Gambo, 2006:100). It must be emphasized that since integration can be conceived as the joining together of political units into a holistic mechanism of social interaction, when there is no trust between government and the citizens, interaction can only take place on the basis of mutual suspicion.

The way forward

Having established the fact that godfatherism is

a threat to sustainable democracy in Africa. It is the predatory and monstrous variant that must be effectively weeded out of the political community because it offends moral sensibility. There is therefore the need to painstakingly seek to curb the existing widespread practice of godfatherism which has considerable implications for the integrity of African politics. There is need for proper electoral law dealing with the finances of political parties. A situation whereby the electoral system is hijacked by some moneybags or any powerful interest group without constraints must be discouraged. Also, political offices should be made less profitable by promulgation of laws that would remove unnecessary allowances paid to political office holders that have made the people to struggle for political power. This will go a long way in removing the problems of godfatherism.

In addition, political parties which constitute the vehicle of democracy should maintain their functional and structural integrity in a way that citizens' confidence in them is cultivated and sustained. Political parties should insist on the collection of membership and annual subscription fees from their teeming members as a way of strengthening their financial standing. These will invariably reinforcing citizens sense of membership, belonging and inclusion in the affairs of the parties and give them a stronger voice in the administration of the parties. In addition, there must be limit to what one individual can contribute to a campaign if we are to exercise the continent from the ogres called godfatherism. There should be a ceiling on individual donations to the party or candidates over a period of time, or the amount a contestant can accept from an individual. The essence is to ensure that control by godfatherism is reduced. This measure can be possible through discipline. Once this is done, control of godfatherism over the party or candidates will be minimized.

The anti-corruption crusade of governments in Africa should be intensified, vigorously and robustly pursued. If godfathers know that their investments cannot be retrieved or recouped, the incidence of godfatherism will be minimized. There is therefore urgent need to broaden the anti-corruption campaign to cover any behavioural pattern which offends collective sense of morality. The predatory variant of godfatherism would certainly fall under this and that anybody who makes illicit demands on an elected leader in the name of recovering campaign expenses should be jailed without any option of fine no matter his or her social standing in the society. This will help to minimize the scourge of godfatherism.

It would be recalled that money affects the voting behaviour of the electorates and this has aided the activities of godfathers. In that wise, political education is highly needed in order to educate the masses on the evils of money politics. The civil society should step up efforts in enlightening the citizens on their right to meaningful development and how this is being compromised by the thriving phenomenon of godfatherism. Also, the media should be careful, watchful and report any kind of behaviour which is repugnant to community sense of morality. Political awareness campaigns will be helpful in fighting the menace of godfatherism in African politics.

An intelligent and imaginative approach must be adopted to eradicate abject poverty and helplessness of the populace. When poverty is reduced through good governance, the problem of greed and avarice which derive from godsons to have a godfathers, would have been addressed. Eradication of poverty will help individuals to effectively participate in the developmental and political/democratic process of their nation. The issue of unemployment must be addressed. Attempts should be made to pave way for the politics

which empowers the masses and gives them economic freedom. This could be done through youth empowerment by creating jobs, provision of skill acquisition and soft loans for the masses. When this is done, since "An idle mind is the devil's workshop", godfathers will no longer find the youths useful to actualize their dreams. This will also be helpful in reducing youth restiveness thuggery, hooliganism etc and to curb violence in the polity.

Concluding remarks

This paper has attempted to x-ray what godfatherism is, the nature and character and the factors that make godfatherism thrive in Africa and its impact on politics and political development. Godfathers have been active participants in the installation of and sustenance of rapacious governments, civilian and military in Africa as they assist in subverting the constraints of democratic accountability while ensuring the continued underdevelopment of the state. Godfathers thus constitute the major obstacle to entrenchment of democratic consolidation in Africa, to make a steady and sustainable progress, people must therefore resolve to fight against manipulation of electoral processes, imposition of pseudo-leaders, culture of godfatherism and political violence. The presence and prominence of godfathers on African political scene is a function of needs of politicians to overcome constraints to acquisition of political power. They help to overcome such constraints through resource conversion skills which they place at disposal of political client. The reality on ground in Africa shows that godfathers are not benign forces in African politics as their very existence and success has demanded terms and exchange that lean heavily in their favour in which their control over economic and coercive resources facilitates the preservation and manipulation of "the

scarcities and insecurities experienced by the local populace". Godfatherism poses serious threat to the survival, growth and consolidation of democracy in Africa as it excludes the vast majority from participation in the democratic process.

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