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GOD FATHERISM AND POLITICAL PATRONAGE IN NIGERIA: A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The form of political system in Nigeria in the early post-colonial period was characterized by a clientelistic structure whose top echelon was occupied by the new elites who captured the economic and political powers of the Nigerian state immediately after independence. They were patron occupying state offices as “pre-bends”. They became the “gate-keeper”; determines the development initiative to be followed and employed and benefactors of privileges. Studies of Godfathering and political patronage in Nigeria have not adequately addressed how these patronage has remained an important aspect of the political and economic powers of the state. This study, therefore, examined Godfatherism and political patronage in Nigeria: a theoretical overview. A synthesis of elite, coalition, party system and meritocratic theories provided the conceptual framework. The design was exploratory and the study was descriptive in nature, combining both secondary data from books and the internet. Modern political institutions controlled by elites acquired power through the people. This development places political elites in a position to bestow privilege and concessions as they deemed fit. Hence, this engender the creation of a clientelistic structure with political elites as patrons and the vast majority of population as clients willing to yield their loyalty to patrons for the satisfaction of valued resources. Patrons who, due to their influence on the state apparatus, control both political and economic powers therefore, more often than not control the direction development takes in these areas. The resultant inequality therefore, produces a class of elites who control the economic and political powers of the state and another class of masses who yield their loyalty to the elites in order to secure access to state surpluses to be delivered as “good” or compensation for loyalty. Since access to valued resources is assured through the clientelistic structure, the emergent social relationships may have implication for Nigeria’s development both in the rural and urban areas.

Key word: Political patronage, Clientelism, Democracy, Godfathering, Democratic Governance

Introduction

Political patronage via state jobs is global phenomenon dispensed by governing political party or parties but this phenomenon in Africa lead to poor institutional quality or performance

of the state. In the 1980s and 1990s many African states adopted a multiparty democracy based on two distinct systems of governance (Nijzinket al, 2006; Kopecky, 2011). Countries such as Mozambique, Gabon, Ghana, and Nigeria among others, adopted a presidential system of governance based on the United States philosophy while countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi, etc., adopted a parliamentary system based on the Westminster governance tradition, other states such as Senegal, Cape Verde and Namibia adopted a combination of the two systems of governance (Nijzinket al, 2006; Kopecky, 2011). These political changes were brought up by the political parties, which were seen then as liberation movements.

However, soon after this democratization process, many African states were bedeviled by many problems such as poor institutional quality or poor economic performance, unconstitutional change of government, political violence and so forth. Poor quality or performance of the state is blamed on political patronage, among others (Nijzinket al, 2006; Kopecky, 2011). It is worth noting that political party structures undoubtedly can either limit or enhance the powers and operations of the state institutions including the legislature. The ensuing debate in the public administration or political science scholarship is whether political patronage promotes or hinders institutional performance or quality (Mamogale, 2013). Rival theoretical explanations are advanced by different scholars on the relationship between political patronage and state economic performance.

The focus of this study was to examine the phenomenon of “God fatherism and political patronage in Nigeria: a theoretical overview”. Though, the concept is as old as politics itself, its recent rise in Nigerian politics gives reasons for the evaluation of the concepts and the impact it makes in the political space of country.

Conceptual review

It is not surprising that much of the writings about political patronage in the political science or public administration literatures focused more on developing nations, Africa in particular. This is because many post-colonial African states were castigated as predatory, patrimonial, choice-less democracies, kleptocracy, rent-seeking, etc. As a result, political patronage, which is associated with names like political appointment system or cadre deployment in Nigerian context is seen as immoral and a democratic pathology, which is associated with malfunctioning of the governance systems (Mamogale, 2013). Therefore, political patronage is conceptualized as an exchange relationship in which a variety of goods and services are traded between the political Godfather and the godson.

Usually these varieties of goods and services are not traded within the confines of the law and regulations. This simply means that the way in which these goods and services are traded between the principal and the agent does not follow any legal prescripts (Mamogale, 2013). In other words, political patronage or simply cadre deployment is not a legislated policy of government thus often leading non-compliance with recruitment or rather human resource management laws and regulations (Kopecky, 2011).

From a principal-agent perspective or what Weber (1948) calls "super" and "subordinate" relationship in a political setting, the principal simply refers to a politician as an elected public representative who is not purely an administrative figure, whereas the agent refers to the state official who is appointed presumably on the basis of qualifications to occupy specialized office either on contractual basis or permanent basis. The principle of "super-subordinate" relations in the institutions means there is a regulated supervision of the lower office by the higher ones and this principle is found in all institutional structures of the economy (Kopecky, 2011). Politics is about power relations between the principal and the agent. The agent is hired and rewarded to implement policy preferences of the principal. The political principal, on the other hand, has the leverage to offer legislation, access to state structures and/or job opportunities in exchange for various benefits such as electoral support, campaign contributions, party loyalty, exclusive information and expertise available from the agent.

The constitutional provision of ruler-ship in Nigeria is the Party system and the constitution has made the formation of political parties wholly a private investment. All candidates must depend upon political parties for canvassing for, votes from the electorate. This is in contrast to political systems with provision for independent candidature. The formation of political parties in democracies is capital intensive in nature, hence it involves the rich and wealthy individuals who can fund and maintain them. In the third world, these individuals make up the clique known as the "Godfathers" whose patronage and interests are required for the smooth running of the party system (Philip, Chirs, Osimeral & Kingley, 2014).

As William (1979) observed, political elites 'participate in, or influence the making of, decisions that allocate resources within and among social units'. A variety of conflicts are produced in the process. Discourses on political elitism raise two important questions: hierarchy and inequality. 'Hierarchy' has to do with the vertical ranking of people in the society into two categories, namely, those at the top and those occupying the lowest positions. Those at the bottom are assumed to be less important than those on top (William, 1979).

These social hierarchies are assumed to be pyramidal in nature. There are more people at the bottom of the hierarchy than those on top. The latter are the crème dusac of the society and are responsible for exercise of social, economic and political powers. Their powers consists largely in their ability to 'articulate ideas, to persuade, to cajole and coerce, to mobilize, to embody and advance symbols top which large numbers of people respond' (William, 1979). It is in respect of this point that the notion of political elite is associated with inequality. The political elites simply organize themselves in a manner that makes them superior to the rest of their society. This inequality makes it easy for us to differentiate between 'rulers' (the political elites) and the ruled (the masses).

An important issue raised by Pareto and Marx in their works is that political elites insulate and isolate themselves from their society and try as much as possible to reproduce themselves from within. They do all possible within their reach to ensure that non-elites do not join their membership. To ensure this, the political elites maintain a safe, functional distance from the rest of the society. They reproduce themselves on an individual and selective basis in a process which Pareto specifically referred to as the 'circulation of elites'. The criteria for such elite recruitment are often parochial and the process is usually done in a manner that does not in any way compromise the traditional integrity of the dominant elite class. As Pareto argued, the dominant class often tries to frustrate any efforts at the 'collective circulation of elites' and would rather support individual recruitment.

Conceptualizing the term Political Patronage

A formal definition of patronage is "the power of appointing people to governmental or political positions" and "the positions so distributed" (Webster's II New College Dictionary 1995). Generally, the word patronage has a negative connotation that this straight-forward definition fails to convey. Patronage suggests the transgression of real or perceived boundaries of legitimate political influence, the violation of principles of merit and competition in civil service recruitment and promotion. Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that governments the world-over accept that some political appointments are fully legitimate. A small number of these appointments are justified as a means for political leaders to fashion a circle of government policymakers and managers who share a common agenda. Patronage is clearly a problem, however, when these appointments pervade public administration, severely undermining merit principles. Somewhere between these two extremes the line between appropriate and inappropriate uses of patronage is crossed.

Political patronage is the dispensation of favours or rewards such as public office, jobs, contracts, subsidies, prestige or other valued benefits by a patron (who controls their dispensation) to a client. The patron is usually an elected official or is otherwise empowered to make such grants. In return, the client supplies the patron with some valued service, such as voting for the patron's party or providing money or labour for electoral campaigning. The relationship between patron and client is typically unequal, selective and discretionary; the patron does not generally grant favours to all potential clients but picks and chooses among them.

Conceptualizing the term God fathering

The concept of godfatherism is synonymous to intermediary, mentoring, benevolence, and support and sponsoring. In a political setting, the concept is an ideology that is championed on the belief that certain individuals possess considerable means to unilaterally determine who get a party's ticket to run for an election and who wins in the electoral contest (Chukwuemaka, Oji, & Chukwurah, 2013). Godfathers are men who have the 'power' and influence to decide both who get nominated to contest elections and who wins in the election. In this sense, Godfatherism means office seekers getting connected to an individual who is believed to have the ability to deliver a desired outcome in an electoral contest. It is the tradition for looking for a political father to help promote one's political aspiration.

Bassey and Enetak (2008) conceptualized godfatherism to connote the power and influence of people who are politically relevant in deciding who gets nominated to contest elections and who eventually wins the election. Godfathers are highly politically mobile and can sway political support to the political party and/or candidate behind which they throw their political weight. Those that play godfatherism are known as godfathers while those who benefit from their benevolence are known as godsons.

The advent of godfatherism in the Nigerian partisan politics dates back to the First Republic when leaders of the three major political parties (Northern People Congress (NPC), Action Group (AG) and National Congress of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) carefully and meticulously cultivated godsons that they were convinced would advance the well being of the citizens. According to Bassey and Enetak (2008), Ahmadu Bello of NPC, Nnamdi Azikiwe of the NCNC and Obafemi Awolowo of the AG were motivated to do so not to use godsons as surrogates to promote parochial interests, but to promote the developmental aspirations of the people. Unlike the present crop of political godfathers, the first generation godfathers were essentially benevolent and progressive because they did not abuse their status as godfathers by

imposing frivolous demands on their godsons as it is the case today. Literally godfathers are seen in Nigeria to be men who have the power personally to determine both who get nominated to contest elections and who wins in a state.

The nexus between the concept of Political Patronage and Godfatherism

The term patronage appears with increased frequency in anthropological analysis. Indeed, it has become a major concept in the study of peasant societies, somewhat analogous to the concept of the “big man” in certain kinds of chiefdoms, or “fission and fusion” in lineage-type societies (Jeremy, 1966). There is, however, considerable ambiguity in the meaning given to the term. Patronage is found on the reciprocal relations between patrons and clients. By patron it means a person who uses his “client”, and in return provides certain services for his patron. Patronage is thus the complex of relations between those who use their influence, social position or some other attribute to assist and protest others, and those whom they help and protest (Jeremy, 1966).

The structure of the system of patronage, which is based on social relationships between clients seeking for a man with the ability and friendship connections to protect them and a patron who accepts these duties in return for political allegiance, grows upwards and through lawyers, other persons of influence, and members of parliament, is linked to the legislative assembly. Thus the organization of government and the structure of patronage are parallel hierarchies (Campbell, 1964). In patronage, the transactor (patron) has the power to give some benefit which the respondent (client) desires. Examples of this would be the improvement of a road near the respondent’s house, or the employment of the respondent (or his relative) in an office over which the (patron) has control. The number and extent of such benefits naturally vary with the power of the (patron); but even the most influential is unlikely to please everyone who comes to him. He must therefore husband these direct patronage transactions so that they produce linkages with key people who can bring followers with them (Adrian, 1966).

In some countries such as Canada the term is used to describe political patronage or political Godfatherism. political patronage refers to the dispensation of favours or rewards such as public office, jobs, contracts, subsidies, prestige or other valued benefits by a patron (who controls their dispensation) to a client (The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2013). While political godfatherism connotes the invasion of the political candidates by discarnate powerful sponsor, tending to complete possession for the purpose selfish gratification (Mbamara, 2004, Bassey &

Enetak, 2008). For some, the godfather is the political slave merchant while the godson is the political slave or slave boy or political article for sale.

The godson is purchased with big sum of money under a democratic oath. Their aims and objectives include appointments, stealing, robbery and looting of government treasury. The decision making appointments and contract awards is usually manipulated by the godfather. In the words of Ajayi (2014), Chukwuemeka, Oji & Chukwurah (2013), Godfatherism is a kind of; Politics whereby an influential person in a popular or ruling party will assist someone usually a lackey, i.e. godson to emerge as the governorship candidate of a party at all cost and either by hook or crook, he will help him to emerge victorious in the state governorship election irrespective of whether he is a popular candidate or not.

Intuitively, political godfatherism represents a self-seeking individual out there to use the government for his own purposes (Isaac, 2005). The cost of this incidence is enormous to the state as what usually obtains is that when the incumbent godson is at pains to satisfy the whims and caprices of the godfather among other competing demands on the scarce resources of the government, the interest of the larger number is savagely undermined. This according to Joseph (1999) has left democracy in Nigeria to assume the form of prebendalism. The French 'godfathers' can be broken down into two types: the first are those who manipulate the economy for their own benefit, and the second those that can be referred to as crisis fixers, social reformers, and populist advocates of the poor (Newsweek, 2003).

Political patronage and politics in Nigeria

The patron/client relationships that popularized the term in Nigerian politics have cultural roots among many Nigerians. It is not a totally new experience in the sociology of the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo for people to have one or other type of 'godfather' (Isaac, 2005). For example, the word 'godfather' has a local equivalence in Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo languages and these words have been in usage since the pre-colonial era. A godfather is known among the Hausa as a 'maigida' (landlord or the head of a household). The word 'maigida' goes beyond its literal meaning.

Abner, Paul & Polly (1965) used the term in their works to refer to those who provided brokerage services to Hausa traders in transit in different parts of West Africa. These Hausa traders brought cattle from their homeland to different parts of South-Western part of Africa and took back kola nuts to the North. At the various transit centers where they have to stop to do businesses, they rely on a maigida to facilitate their economic activities. The maigida provides them with accommodation, storage and brokerage services. The maigida receive compensations

for their services and many of them became rich from the number of clients they had. Even in Hausa land, from where these itinerant traders came, this kind of patron/client relationship is popularly known (Albert, 2005).

A 'godfather' is referred to in Yoruba land as 'baba-kekere' (the small father), 'baba-isale' (the father of the underground world), or 'baba-nigbejo' (a great help in times of trouble). The most historical of these terms is 'baba-kekere'. It was used to depict community leaders with whom people of less social status identified as a way of providing physical, social, political and economic security for themselves. For example, most of the Yoruba refugees who came to settle in Ibadan in the early nineteenth century settled with the 'baba-kekere' in the city (Falola, 1985).

These were military chiefs and patrons appointed to be in charge of certain Ibadan colonies by the town's traditional council. The migrants who settled under these Ibadan chiefs paid the 'baba-kekere' tribute, part of which the 'baba-kekere' transmitted to the Ibadan authorities. In return, the chiefs were obligated to protect those under them against any act of violence that characterized Ibadan at this time.

Dibia (2003) too has observed that the idea of godfatherism is grounded in the sociology of traditional Igbo society. He made reference to the popular relationship between 'Nnam-Ukwu' (my master) and 'Odibo' (the servant) in the Igbo world view. A younger person is entrusted to a more mature and experienced person for training in social, economic and moral adulthood. The role played by the man in this kind of relationship is akin to that of a godfather. In the cases mentioned above, a person of lesser social status attaches himself to another person, usually of higher status, for support, which could be social or economic. The godfather gets something in return from the adopted son for the transactional relationship. It is probably on this understanding that the modern notion of godfatherism in Nigeria is based.

In other words, the phenomenon of godfatherism is not strange to the cultural world of the Nigerian people. The giving of kola by a client to his patron is also not strange. What is probably strange is that the transposition of this social or economic system into the political arena and also the ridiculous nature of what patrons now ask for from their clients as compensation for providing them with 'brokerage services' (Isaac, 2005).

Five types of political godfathers are discernible under the present democratic dispensation in Nigeria. The first type is 'geo-political' or 'ethnic' organizations that arrogate to themselves the right to decide who represent their jurisdiction in government. Such movements under the present democratic dispensation include 'Afenifere', the Yoruba socio-cultural organization; Arewa Consultative Council (ACF) which presents itself as the authentic voice of

the North; Ohaneze, the pan-Igbo cultural group that considers itself to be the only body with the power to determine Igbo interests. The powers of all these organizations have been receding recently. This is to the extent that their candidates for political offices are often defeated by those sponsored by 'individual godfathers'.

The second category consists of 'geo-political' or 'ethnic father figures'. These are some prominent individuals within some geo-political or ethnic organization who are popularly respected by members of the movement they belong to, as a result of some past 'nationalist activities'. Such people, very few in the Nigerian society, have occupied public positions in the past and were found to have served their people to the best of their ability. Their political opinions are thus much respected.

The best known example of this class of godfathers was the slain Nigerian Minister for Justice, Chief Bola Ige. He was the Deputy leader of Afenifere, but his influence in Yoruba politics towered above that of the pan-ethnic group. He was a godfather to many south-western Nigerian governors between 1999 and 2003. He was considered to be a true scion of Chief Obafemi Awolowo. During his tenure as the Executive Governor of the defunct Oyo state (1979-1983), he performed so well that he became idolized by the Yoruba people of South Western Nigeria as an embodiment of 'free education, free health' policies of the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

In his lifetime, politicians in south western Nigeria made sure that he was on their campaign train. Even after his death, politicians (most especially members of Alliance for Democracy (AD) campaigned under his name. He is believed to have played a prominent role in the choice of the governors of Oyo and Osun states during the 1999 elections. His name consistently came up during the Bisi Akande vs. Omisore conflicts in Osun state 1999-2002 as the godfather to Governor Bisi Akande. One thing with this first set of godfathers is that they are well-known and have the support of grassroots people. The respect people have for them is also tied to concrete developmental issues.

The third category of political godfathers consists of some rich Nigerians who see sponsorship of political candidates as a source of upward social and economic mobility. Such politicians go around, like a typical businessman, looking for 'materials' (not necessarily marketable) to invest their money in. The clients are usually people who are interested in winning elections 'by all means' but who do not have the grassroots support, the money, or the violent dispositions for winning elections.

The godfather assures the candidate of easy availability of this possible assistance in exchange for some personal benefits for the godfather after election. Many of these godfathers keep their promise of making the candidates win their elections. This could be any form of electoral malpractice, but is hardly through any honest political activities. Uba, the best-known political godfather under the present dispensations in Nigeria, is a good example of this kind of godfather. He nominated and ensured the victory of governor Ngige of Anambra State during the 2003 elections (Isaac, 2005).

The fourth type of godfathers consists of those who only deal with rich clients. Such people, for want of appropriate terminology, can be said to be 'political entrepreneurs' (Isaac, 2005). They live on politics. The only asset they have is that they are well schooled in the tricks of winning elections among the grassroots people. They are familiar with all constituencies to be won over in a political contest and what it formally and informally takes to win them over. They often are not rich people but their clients are. The contractual relationship between the two is simple: the client provides the money and the godfather delivers the votes. In other words, this category of godfathers does not invest their own money but that of their clients in politics. In exchange, they are accorded important status in the government formed by their clients after election. They are given juicy contracts as well as slots in ministerial and board appointments.

The fifth type of godfather consists of rich patrons who are willing to provide what it takes for either rich or poor clients to win elections. He is willing to provide poor candidates with money and logistical support to win elections and he is ready to contribute to the campaign funds of rich candidates as well as provide him with logistical support. Dr Sola Saraki of Kwara State has played this kind of role in the past. He supported several poor people to win elections in Kwara State. Governor Mohammed Lawal, the governor of Kwara State with whom he has his major running battle cannot be said to be a poor man. He is a retired naval officer and a former military governor. He was a man of immense means before he was nominated by Saraki to become the governor of Kwara State in 1999.

The implications of Political Patronage on Democratic Governance

Political patronage is one of the factors that embedded democratic setting in Nigeria since first republic (Oshodi, 2011). Regrettably in the face of dilapidation or non-sufficient existence of social infrastructures especially in states and local governments, public resources are used for political patronage. In Nigeria's fourth republic, the emergence of 'godfatherism' posed great threat not only to good governance but also the socio-economic stability of democratic governance (Chukwuemeka, 2012). Perhaps one of the most disturbing and damaging influence

of political patronage in Nigeria's fourth republic was in domain of making nonsense of a truly free, fair and credible electoral process in which the electorates by right are expected to freely elect people of their choice into public office to represent their interests.

Indeed, the privilege of electing people of their choice into public office was denied given the situation in which 'godfathers' foisted candidates of their preference on the generality of the people. This is to say the least very inimical to the tenets of democratic rule, when public office holders would not be accountable to the people, who at any rate did not count in their elections into public office. Invariably, the loyalty of such public office holders would be tilted towards their godfathers and this in itself negates one of the critical attributes of democracy which is responsive and transparent government.

This scenario is also inimical to good governance and political stability which are predicated on the rule of law, due process, accountability and transparency in the management of public business. The emergence of political patronage has also robbed the citizens of the privilege of enjoying the dividends of democratic governance in the sense that the-would be government became reluctant to initiate and implement policies that would advance the wellbeing of the generality of the citizens. This was as a result of the fact that political patronage in Nigeria was basically predatory in nature.

The primary motive of venturing into politics was borne out of the need to acquire money from the coffers of government to which their godsons held sway. Therefore the lean financial resource accruable to the state from the federation account which was meant for the improvement of living standard of the citizens was paramount interest to them. In instances where the 'godsons' upon reflection refused to settle their 'godfathers' as agreed upon before securing public office, hell was let loose. The experiences recorded in Enugu State in 1999 between Jim Nwobodo and Governor Chimaroke Nnamani. Also in 2007 between Governor Sullivan Chime and Chimaroke Nnamani were awful.

Another far reaching effects of political patronage on the entrenchment of good governance, which in turn would engender democratic growth and stability, according to Uduji (2009) is the complete erosion of the normative elements of democracy of which trusts is a sine-qua-non attribute between the government and the governed. In a polity where prescribed rules guiding the electoral process are frequently disobeyed with impunity, the basis of citizen's trust in government was compromised. If the situation is not decisively addressed with the urgency it deserves, the resultant effect is that trust as a vital social capital is lost, and when there is no trust between the government and the governed, interaction would only take place on the basis of

mutual suspicion and this does not augur well for the healthy development of democratic governance.

However, political patronage has become a scary phenomenon in Nigerian politics. As observed by Omotola (2007), political patronage in Nigeria, particularly in its current form and character, is distributive. Though it is a longstanding and deeply rooted feature of the cultural values of Nigerian society, where it is purely socio-economic in nature and mutually productive for both parties, its politicization would appear to have contributed to the criminalization of politics. Political patrons reign across all spheres of the society: academics, legal, and religion environment.

Therefore, the clamour for democracy in Nigeria is to improve both political and socio-economic situation of the country through massive involvement in the policy making, but reverse is the case as those that attained political power in both legislative and executive arms of government got to the seat of powers through the support of some political ‘godfathers’ in various states cum the center, however, the desire of political godfathers is to hold political and socio-economic powers both at the center cum the component units as mechanisms to politically influence the activities of political office holders, that is, the Governors and some Legislators in terms of appointing people into various positions, such as Ministers/Commissioners, Chairmen of the boards, Secretaries to the various Institutions, and Treasurers of Local Governments as well as allocation of some developmental projects into various localities within the state or center as well (Alabi and Sakariyau, 2013).

Consequently, the impact of the political patrons on Nigeria’s general elections was unprecedented. Political patrons are those who have the security connections, extended local links, enormous financial weight to plot and determine the success of a power seeker at any level of a supposedly competitive politics. Although political patronage has an institutionalized feature in Nigerian politics over the years, its contemporary manifestations suggest that it has assumed epidemic proportions, becoming one of the greatest threats to democratic consolidation in Nigeria (Omotola, 2007). The recent activities of some Nigerian political patrons could be likened to attributes of mafianism; however, some still see the existence of political patrons as the ‘balancer’ of power in a democracy.

Akinola (2009) believes in the need to have a good-hearted individual (people’s hero) at the sole realm of absolute power, a political patrons distributes power as he deems, and anoints who rules. But, political patronage has taken a strange dimension in Nigeria’s political environment. It has become a menace pulling down the foundations of masses-driven

governance, thereby denying Nigerians the much-deserved dividends of democracy. Ademola (2004) added that since 1999, when Nigeria joined the comity of democratically governed countries, it has continued to experience an unprecedented rise in political violence ranging from increased crime wave, armed robbery, political assassination, and religious riots as a result of crises loomed between ‘godfathers’ and some ‘godsons’.

Indeed, Nigeria has joined the comity of democratic nations with the hope that the ideals of democracy will be upheld and sustained. However, the signals political events in Nigeria are showing are that what we actually have is a democratic system ‘sustained’ by political patrons. It is not one primarily aimed at improving the welfare of the people. Rather it is system the political class craves for in order to gain access to state resources to finance patronage, patrimonialism and for personal gains (Omobowale, 2007). This is why violence has to be used to silence the opposition and actualize primitive and exploitative acquisition. Thus, what the present democratic dispensation have brought forth for Nigeria in general is a system sustained by hoodlums for the sake of the political class and not the electorate.

Theoretical framework

In explaining God fathering and political patronage in Nigeria, the following theoretical paradigm was to be considered:

Coalition theory

This theory focuses on government formation, which simply means on how governing political party or parties enter and construct and consolidate their own government identity (Wood, 1998; Furlong, 1989; Scott, 1997). According to this theory, one way to do exactly that is through dispensing patronage politics via state jobs whereby political principals distribute and manage state institutions’ jobs in order to bargain over policy output. For this school of thought, political patronage or rather political appointment system is an ‘inherent’ feature of all governing political parties in government worldwide and there is no problem in dispensing the system at all.

However, there are variations between countries on the quality and integrity of bureaucrats appointed based on political patronage rather than merit. It is argued that all governing political parties widely apply this political tool to tame, control and regulate the behaviour of the state agents as they may not be entirely trusted, especially as they deal daily with public monies and other state resources. Even countries castigated as developmental states such as Malaysia, Brazil, China, Japan, South Korea, etc., apply the system at varying degree (Wood, 1998; Furlong, 1989; Scott, 1997).

In similar tone, Du Gay (2000) argues that political principals dispense political patronage via state jobs to tame the power of agency officials and to enhance their (politicians) own positions within government. According to this theory, political patronage via state jobs is not only about controlling but also about ensuring that the state agents achieve the principals' policy objectives particularly given the danger of the opposition political parties' agents to derail and sabotage the governing political party's policy vision and objectives.

Party System Theory

The party system theory also agrees that the conduct of political parties influences the performance of the state institutions including the legislatures since government is constructed by political parties. They can either limit or enhance the powers and operations of the state institutions. According to this theory, certain party systems are able to limit the extent or level of political principals or political parties dispensing political patronage.

This theory distinguishes between 'fragile party system' and 'competitive party system'. One basic difference is on the level of competitiveness, meaning the likelihood that the incumbent governing political party or parties can be defeated. GrzymanA-Busse (2003) argues that lack of robust competition between programmatic political parties in the state results into ineffective and inefficient state institutions evident in poor institutional quality or performance thus allowing a governing party or parties to dispense political patronage via state jobs.

This in turn leads to corruption and poor governance, which are used widely by the World Bank, Transparency International, etc., as indices for measuring the quality or performance of the state institutions worldwide. In such situation where the state is inefficient due to poor governance systems and or corruption, the governing political party or parties legitimizes itself or themselves based on their ability to reward supporters through selective incentives rather than their ability to generate the kinds of public goods necessary for human and economic development as well as growth.

Meritocratic Theory

This theory literally rejects political patronage via state jobs as enhancing the performance or quality of state institutions. Proponents of this theory (Weber, 1948; 1968; Evans & Rauch, 1999; Henderson et al, 2007, Miller, 2000; Ritzer, 1975; Dahlstrom, Lapuente & Teorell, 2011; Andreski, 1983, Johnson & Libecap, 1994) argue that political patronage leads to politicization rather than professionalization of state institutions. Politicization of the state institutions eventually culminates into poor institutional capacity and lack of accountability on public goods provision as the system is immoral and a democratic pathology.

Dahlstrom et al (2012) gives an example of the mayor of Spain between 2001 and 2003 who replaced ‘merit-recruited’ state agents with political appointees. According to these scholars, the Spanish mayor was able to coordinate his corruption intentions with appointees he had himself selected based on political patronage. Conspicuously, the theory of meritocracy argues that poor performance by state agents appointed on political patronage is often blamed on others or covered up by their political principals.

Empirical evidence indicates that officials appointed based on political patronage may be recalled at any time once they have lost favour with their political principals. As noted by Kanyane (2006), with a culture of patronage politics an atmosphere of playing safe is often created, which is not conducive for responsible and accountable bureaucratic institutions. Proponents of this theory strongly maintain that people in the state should be appointed on merit because such officials see office holding as a vocation.

For this theory, office holding is not considered a source to be exploited for rents or emoluments nor is considered a usual exchange of services for equivalents (Weber, 1948). In the study of bureaucracy, Max Weber, for example, advocated for ‘career personnel’ with specialized training and expertise, among others, as the prerequisite for employment in any bureaucratic institutions. Of course, Weber’s work on bureaucracy has a profound impact on our theoretical understanding of how principal-agent relationship within institutions plays out and how the bureaucratic institution developed. Therefore, the theory of meritocracy has intellectual roots from the Max Weber’s study of a bureaucracy.

Moreover, Woodrow Wilson (1887 in Rosenbloom, 2008) in his study of administration also argued for an administration apparatus that is devoid of politics and meddling after he was concerned about the bureaucratic system in America that operated as a bastion for political patronage. Proponents of this theory suggest that democratic states all over the world should shun away from political patronage via state jobs and embrace a culture of meritocratic recruitment and promotion. They argue that access to institutions of government as an employee should be conditioned on the bases of possession of relevant knowledge, skills and qualification credentials, what Max Weber (1968) refers to as ‘expert-officialdom’.

This is due to the fact that partly qualified officials in terms of specialized training and examination always enter the state as employees with an understanding that office holding is a vocation. The executive office is separated from the households much as business assets are separated from private fortunes. Proponents of this school of thought give examples of some countries such as Australia, Brazil, Malaysia, China, Japan, UK, etc., that have also introduced a

system of tough public civil service examination to select the best potential candidates for the state institutions as agents. The civil service examination system in China, for example, has created a unique class of ‘scholar-bureaucrats’ irrespective of family or party pedigree (Fukai & Fukui, 1992) even if cadre deployment is applied.

Throughout the period of military rule and in the Nigeria’s fourth republic (1999-2013), emergence of political patronage posed a great threat not only to good governance but also to the socio-economic development and stability of democratic governance. Perhaps, one of the most disturbing and damaging influence of political patronage in Nigeria’s fourth republic was in domain of making nonsense of a truly free, fair and credible electoral process in which the electorates by right are expected to freely elect people of their choice into public office to represent their interests.

Indeed, the privilege of electing people of their choice into public office was denied given the situations in which patrons foisted candidates of their preference on the generality of the people. This is to say the least very inimical to the tenets of democratic rule (Chukwuma, 2008). When public office holders would not be accountable to the people, who at any rate did not count in their elections into public office, invariably, the loyalty of such public office holder would be tilted towards their godfathers and this in itself negates one of the critical attributes of governance and democracy which is responsive and transparent government. This scenario is also inimical to good governance and political stability which are predicated on the rule of law, due process, accountability and transparency in the management of public business.

The emergence of political patronage has also robbed the citizens of the privilege of enjoying the dividends of democratic governance in the sense that government has become reluctant to initiate and implement policies that would advance the well-being of the generality of the citizens. This was a result of the fact that political patronage in Nigeria was basically predatory in nature. The primary motive of venturing into politics was born out of the need to acquire wealth (money) from the coffers of government to which their ‘godsons’ held sway (Chukwumeka, 2012). Therefore, the lean financial resource accrueable to the state from the federation account which was meant for the improvement of living standards of the citizens was paramount interest to them.

Instances where the ‘godsons’ (governors, chairmen)etc. refused to settle their ‘godfathers’ as agreed before securing public office, hell was let loose. The experiences recorded in Senator Rashidi Ladoja of Oyo state and Lamidi Adedibu between 2003 and 2007, Olusola Saraki and Mohammed Lawal (2003-2007), and Chris Uba and Chris Ngige (2003-2006) were

awful and devastating. The end point and consequences of these ‘godfatherism’ in our politic is that economic activities are brought to a halt, especially education sectors, health, security (political wrangling), agriculture, housing and infrastructural developments etc.

The political patrons or godfathers in Nigeria see governance and political power as the cheapest and surest method of amassing wealth to the detriment of the governed. Sponsoring a weak and poor candidate to win election by appointment is seen as a lucrative business whereby the sponsor will invest heavily in imposing his candidate on the people as their leader, with all intent and protégé, called chairmen, and governors.

Political patronage is a dangerous development in Nigeria politics. The electorates are impoverished the more, and the corrupt rich godfathers are corruptly enriching themselves the more. The circle is endless, as the solution to this menaces is the serious problem facing Nigeria until a morally sound, committed and patriotic leader emerge to lead the people honestly with the attribute of transparency, openness, people oriented policies and programmes, Nigeria economic development will be a mirage. The susceptibility of the political structures and institutions to the influence and control of forces operating outside the government but within the political system is a great and potential threat to growth and economic development of the country.

Elite theory:

The major assumptions of elite theory is that in every society there is, and must be a minority which rules over the rest of society, and this minority forms the political class or governing elite composed of those who occupy the posts of political command and more regularly those who can directly influence political decision. They undergo changes in its membership over a period of time, ordinarily by the recruitment of new individual members from the lower strata of the society, sometimes by the incorporation of new social groups, and occasionally by the complete replacement of the established elite by counter-elite. Vilfred (1935) opined that in every branch of human activity each individual is given an index which stands as a sign of his capacity, very much the way grades are given in the various subjects in examinations in school (Suenu, 2004, Nkwede, 2014).

According to Suenu (2004), an elitist correlation to the understanding of political patronage is very apt. He sees political patrons as being synonymous with the elites. For him, elites in the political spheres are known in Nigerian context as godfathers. They are the ones who govern, and are known as the kingmakers, the notables and often seen as strongmen who control politics in their different domains. Apparently, in a political environment where political patronage is in vogue, individuals are ‘colonized’ by the political patrons. In order words,

patrons rule by proxies. The relevance of this theory to the current study cannot be overemphasized. This is because of its interconnectivity to the explanation of political patronage in a democratic dispensation and its implication on economic development in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The recruitment and appointment of state agents based on political patronage than meritocracy creates problems of poor strategic planning outputs and capacity deficit at the bureaucratic level pertaining to fiscal management and public goods provision. It also creates institutional instability and loss of institutional memory as evident in increased number of prolonged acting roles as a result of suspensions of more senior state agents by their political principals and high staff turnover. Various successive reports in Nigeria indicate the performance of many state institutions in the country is increasingly regressing after democracy due to lack of capacity, lack of consequences for poor performance, etc.

Nigeria has a huge pool of ‘expertly’ trained and qualified labour force to draw from but political meddling during recruitment and promotion processes pose a threat to building a capable, career-oriented and professional civil service. Empirically, studies has found that state officials who deal with human resource issues like recruitment in Nigeria want less political meddling in administration. This paper then suggests that where the governing political parties or the political principals see a need to dispense patronage via state jobs, considerations should be given to the cadre’s qualification credentials and integrity.

Political patronage in Nigerian present democratic dispensation will continue to threaten the practice of popular political participation in the country if no concrete efforts are made to deal with the problem. Godsons who have problems with their god fathers should openly provide information on the type of problems they are consequently subjected to. This exposure could aid the democratic governance of the country by humiliating the political patrons and revealing to the public how the Political patrons manipulate elections in the country, that would ultimately culminate into the sustenance of the democratization process, which in-turn shall engender the sustainability of the economic development efforts of successive political parties and emergent governments in Nigeria in future. Finally, unless political patronage is stamped out of Nigerian politics, it would be difficult for Nigeria to be stable in politics, democratic governance and economic development.

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