

GODFATHERISM, PARTY POLITICS AND DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

The transition from military rule to democracy in the fourth republic in Nigeria rekindled the hope of Nigerians after over three decades of militarization of Nigerian state characterized with high rate of impunity, monumental corruption, oppression and insecurity. However, the democratic rule in the fourth republic has been characterized with godfatherism and party politics which has weakened Nigerian democratic institution. This paper is therefore written to examine the causes and effects of godfatherism and party politics in Nigerian democracy. The researchers obtained data from both primary and secondary sources while data were analyzed using the simple percentages, mean and frequency table. The paper concluded that godfatherism and party politics have been the bane of Nigerian democratic system. Finally, the researchers recommend that democratic institution should be strengthened to eschew the system from godfatherism and politicking of core government policies and programmes.

Keywords: Godfatherism, Party politics, democracy, republic.

Introduction

In developing societies, the wellbeing of the citizens largely depends on the extent to which the democratic institution is strengthened and sustained. This according to Bonnie and Khinde (2007) is because good governance, selfless leaders and mutual trust between the leaders and led could be guaranteed if choice of who should govern the society at any given time is solely engineered by the citizens on one hand and on a steady and sustained democratic machinery on the other hand.

The concept of democracy has become so popular that more than 20 percent of the political parties' world over contained the variable democracy. Though, its origin comes from the ancient Greek political thoughts; Greek philosophers classified governance based on the number of citizens involved in such process (Richard and Fred 2002). Democracy according to Ademolokun (2000) is an idea targeted at enhancing a sound and egalitarian society through an integrated effort of the masses towards a better society. Though, every nation has embraced the principle of democracy because it is the only mechanism through which the interest, well being, rights and lives of the citizenry could be unquestionably protected and guaranteed. However, its practices has taken different dimension across the globe. In developing nations for example, it has been characterized with Godfatherism, party politics, tribal and religious politics and money-bag-politics. Though, Godfatherism in Nigeria politics is not new, it gains more prominence in the fourth republic as it had helped many to ride into political power (Joseph, 1991). More so, the Political Kingmakers cut across party line and even thought it was more celebrated in some states in Nigeria such as; Anambra, Enugu, Kwara and Oyo in recent time it has become a common phenomenon in the entire country including Kogi State and has threatened the democratic institutions in Nigeria thereby undermining the sanctity of the system and the wish of the masses (Champion, June 8th, 2003).

Consequently party politics predicated politics to be engaged in and considered with the ideal of political parties rather than core democratic principles and values. These scenarios have threatened Nigerian democratic system in the fourth republic. It is on these premises that the research is being carried out.

Statement of the Problem

Though, Okoli and Onah (2002) submit that development involves progression, movement and advancement towards something better. Democracy could be said to be better as compared to the Military Era before the fourth republic but, it has been characterized with godfatherism, politicking of core government policies and programmes vis-à-vis interest of the masses. In furtherance to this, the current democratic system has been threatened with policy somersault, policy reversal, human right abuse, economic bondage and monumental corruption. It is against this backdrop that the research is being carried out with the intent of proffering solutions to the democratic challenges witnessed.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine the causes and effects of godfatherism and party politics on Nigerian democracy. The specific objectives include, to:

- i. identify the remote and immediate causes of godfatherism and party politics in Kogi State.
- ii. expose the negative effects on the socio-economic lives of the citizens of Kogi State.
- iii. Proffer solutions to the identified problems towards enhancing a just and an egalitarian society in Kogi State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

- i. What are the remote and immediate causes of godfatherism and party politics in Kogi State?
- ii. Does godfatherism and party politics affect the socio-economic Lives of the citizens Kogi State?
- iii. How can these negative monsters be eradicated K fromogi State?

Scope of the Study

The study examine the causes and effects of godfatherism and party politics in Kogi State from 2003-2012. More so, the Governorship election shall be the main focus. This period is reasonable enough to critically asses the variables and considering the fact that Kogi State has also suffered from the negative trend of godfatherism and party politics within this period.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Democracy: Democracy as a form of government started from ancient Greece, (Athens). Onubi (2002) noted that Democracy simply means “rule by the people” thus; it is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. There fore, it is referred to as government of the majority. Democracy is also described as an idea, process (series of events leading to change or course of action) of system of government (Agbaje 1999). Therefore, democracy entrenches and expands, or seeks to entrench and expand, rights, ability and capacity of the citizens in a given society.

Ademola (2009) however noted that the first problem in the concept in its divergent approach in attempt to give it a meaning yet, there is consensus on the original attributes of democracy which encompasses: people, freedom and authority. More so, in Nigeria, the concept have been misconstrued with mere civil rule because the practice has not witness freedom of choice, constituted authority, rule of law, sagacity and service delivery to the citizenry (Azeez, 2004).

Consequently, even the military government that is mostly criticized world over also provides basic facilities for its citizens therefore, the clear distinction between military and democratic rule is freedom and people oriented government.

Godfatherism: The godfather is popularly known by the Hausa’s as “Maigida” (Master of the house). The word Maigida goes beyond it literal meaning. Abner (1971), Polly (1966) and Pally (2004) 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. In the Yoruba society godfather is referred to as “Baba Kekere” (the small great father). “Baba Isale” the father of the underground world), or Baba Nigbejo (a great

helper in time of trouble). Dickson (2003) also noted that the philosophy of godfather is grounded in the sociology of traditional Igbo society. He further showed evidence to the popular relationship between “Nnam-Uswu” (my Master) and “Odibo” (the servant) in the Igbo traditional concept.

Therefore, the triple cases showcase above shows those persons of lesser social status attaches themselves to another person of higher social integrity usually for economic benefits. Though, this practice is not alien to Nigeria but what is strange is the replication of these practices into our political system. Olawale (2005) observed that this phenomenon has far-reaching negative effects on our democratization process in Nigeria.

Party politics: Party politics is the politics engaged in by, expressed through the channel of and or considered from the ideal of political parties as opposed to national interest (Nwankwo, 2001). Azeez (2009) also sees party politics as activities political parties in a democratic environment to dominate the polity through democratic institution. To this end, party politics exist when elective ideals are present in a democratic system and the views, opinions or political philosophies are debated with the consciousness of promoting and protecting the interest of the party in power.

More so, party politics are activities of formal structure, institution and organization which competes through electoral mechanism to influence the people polices and programmes as well as allocation of public wealth through a stipulated and articulated procedure (Okoye, 1982). Though, party politics is ordinarily directed towards ensuring Checks and balances in governance, strengthening the democratic institution and serve as feedback mechanism, however, its activities have been extremely abused through political rivalry, ethno-religious sentiment and making it undemocratic.

Godfather, Political Apathy and Party Politics in Nigeria: Socio-economic Dimension and Implications.

Table I: Results of the 2003 Gubernatorial Elections in Nigeria

S/No	State	Vote	Party	Winner
1.	Abia	540,983	PDP	Orji Uzor Kalu
2.	Adamawa	375,000	PDP	Boni Haruna
3.	Akwa Ibom	1,028,722	PDP	Victor Attah
4.	Anambara	452,820	PDP	Chris Ngige
5.	Bauchi	1,198,130	PDP	Adamu Muazu
6.	Baylsa	698,661	PDP	Dieprieje Alamisaya
7.	Benue	681,717	PDP	George Akume
8.	Borno	581,880	ANPP	Ali Modu Sheriff
9.	Cross River	1,193,290	PDP	Donald Duke
10.	Delta	1,038,607	PDP	James Ibori
11.	Ebonyi	768,674	PDP	San Egwu
12.	Edo	969,747	PDP	Lucky Igbinedion
13.	Ekiti	229,906	PDP	Ayo Fayoshe
14.	Gombe	494,562	PDP	Danjuma Goje
15.	Imo	695,149	PDP	Achike Udenwa
16.	Jigawa	816,385	ANPP	Ibrahim Turaki
17.	Kaduna	1,196,688	PDP	Mohammed Markafi
18.	Kano	1,082,457	ANPP	Ibrahim Shekarau
19.	Kastina	892,340	PDP	Umar Musa Yar'adua
20.	Kebbi	502,833	PDP	Adamu Aliero
21.	Kogi	459,942	PDP	Ibrahim Idris
22.	Kwara	322,242	PDP	Bukola Saraki
23.	Lagos	911,613	AD	Bola Tinibu
24.	Nassarawa	505,893	PDP	Abdullahi Adamu
25.	Ogun	497,355	PDP	Gbenga Daniel
26.	Ondo	611,926	PDP	Segun Agagu
27.	Osun	478,492	PDP	Olagunsoye Oyinlola
28.	Oyo	636,730	PDP	Rasheed Ladoja
29.	Plateau	364,903	PDP	Joshua Dariye



30	Enugu	1,131,292	PDP	Chimaroke Nnamani
31.	Rivers	2,098,692	PDP	Peter Odili
32.	Sokoto	665,545	PDP	Attahiru Bafarawa
33.	Taraba	784,013	PDP	Jolly Nyame
34.	Yobe	369,906	ANPP	Bukar Ibrahim
35.	Zarfara	829,954	ANPP	Yerima Sanni
36.	Niger	561,935	PDP	Abdukadir Kure

Sources: Nigerian Tribune April 23rd, 2003.

Table II: Results of the Gubernatorial Elections of 1999 and 2003 in Nigeria: A Comparative view

S/No	PARTY	1999	2003	Gains(+); Loser (-)
1.	AD	6	1	-5
2.	ANPP	9	7	-2
3.	PDP	21	28	+7
	TOTAL	36	36	

Source: <http://www.inecnigeria.com>

Table III. Results of Kogi State gubernatorial by-election March 29th, 2008

S/NO.	PARTY	CANDIDATE	VOTE
1.	PDP	IBRAHIM IDRIS	518,581
2.	ANPP	ABUBAKAR AUDU	175,978
3.	PAC	RAMAT MOMOH	1,529
4.	DPP	YUSUF OBAJE	1,259

Source: allafrica.com. Retrieved 2010-02-09

Table IV. Results of Kogi State Gubernatorial Election December 3rd, 2011

S/No	Party	Vote	Candidate
1.	PDP	300,372	Idris Wada
2.	CAN	159,913	Abubakar Audu
3.	AP	1,102	Fred Odia
4.	ALP	589	Ahmadu Ibrahim
5.	ANPP	9,642	Ubolo OKpanachi
6.	APGA	331	Yusufu Obaje
7.	CPC	5,724	James Ocholi
8.	CPP	379	Bola Aure
9.	JP	619	Aisha Audu
10.	LP	216	Ibrahim Tanko
11.	ND	112	Mohammed Ali
12.	NDP	226	Mohammed Dangana
13.	NTP	202	Gowon Egbunu
14.	PAC	2,047	Aboh Samuel
15.	PDC	661	Elegbe Amos
16.	PPA	1,130	Joseph Adigbo
17.	PPN	253	Gideon Ojatta
18.	SDMP	452	Lawal Lamidi
UNPP	PDP	198	Abubakar Bala

Source: <http://www.inecnigeria.com>

The above election results shown from table I-IV are results of the 2003 gubernatorial elections, comparative view of election results between 1999, 2003 and 2008 gubernatorial by-election in Kogi State and the result of gubernatorial election in Kogi State conducted on 3rd December, 2011. The results of 2003 for example show a significant impact as compared to 1999 general elections. The reason is not far fetch; the increase in Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) winning more states from 21 to 28 is due to the fact that it was the ruling party at the national level. Though in 1999 Kogi State gubernatorial election was won by ANPP- Prince Abubakar Audu but in 2003 the influence of party in power at the national level vi-a-vis various forces (godfather) returned the gubernatorial seat to the ruling party.

More so, Court judgment on annulled the 2007 gubernatorial election and in 2008 fresh election still return the seat to People Democratic Party. When the Supreme Court extended the seat of five governors is 2011 Kogi State gubernatorial election was held on 3rd December, 2011 and despite all effort by progressive parties, the seat was maintained by the ruling party. Though Jonathan (2010), posits that electoral integrity is not only about electoral reforms, legal and constitutional changes but also about changes in attitude and conduct. The voter's apathy is still very high, for example the total numbers of registered voters for Kogi State gubernatorial election for 2011 general election were 1, 325272 but only 518949 voters' participated showing that only 39% of total voters participated in the election. The scenario is very worrisome as it shows that there is still high rate of apathy and it is not good for our polity. More so, the several courts adequate and electoral tribunal portrayed the extent of corruption in our democratic process.

Ibrahim M. (2013) rating on African governance ranked Nigeria 41st out of 52 African countries with 43.4% thus, lower than the African average of 51.6% and 13th out of the 16th position in the West African countries. More so, transparency international rated Nigeria 35th most corrupt nation with Nigeria occupying the 139th place out of 176 Countries surveyed in the report of 2013. Consequently, this implies that Nigeria democratic system has negatively affected the socio-economic of the citizens, hence there is need to correctively and aggressively address these negative trends towards a better socio-economic fortune.

Methodology

Kogi State consists of 21 Local Government Areas and based on sample frame of 30%, six Local Government Areas were selected with two each randomly selected from the three senatorial districts. The Local Government Area selected was: Ibaji and Dekina from Kogi East, Adavi and Ajaokuta from Kogi central, Mopa-Muro and Lokoja from Kogi West Senatorial districts respectively. The main instrument use for data collection was structured questionnaires and interview scheduled.

A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed on equal bases among the local government involved in the study i.e. 6.6 questionnaire per local government. However, only 364 questionnaires were eventually retrieved from the respondents representing 91% retrieval rates. The data collected were organized into tables and subjected to analysis using descriptive statistics, simple percentages, mean and frequency.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table V: Personal Profile of the Respondents

S/N	Variables	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Age (years)	18-25	163	44.8
		26-33	104	28.6
		34-41	42	11.5
		42 and above	55	15.1
		Total	364	100
2.	Gender	Male	166	45.6
		Female	198	54.4
		Total	364	100
3.	Religion	Christianity	146	40.1
		Islam	180	49.5
		Others	38	10.4
		Total	364	100
4.	Occupation	Civil Servant	109	29.9
		Self Employed	94	25.8
		Applicant	20	05.5
		Students	70	19.2
		Others	71	19.5
		Total	364	100
5.	Marital Status	Single	109	29.9
		Married	220	60.4
		Divorce	15	04.1

		Widow	20	05.5
		Total	364	100
6.	Educational Qualifications	Illiterate	40	10.9
		Primary	36	09.9
		Secondary	118	32.4
		Tertiary Education	170	46.7
		Total	364	100

Source: Field Research (2014)

Most of the respondents age between the ages of 18-25 years with a total of 163 (44.8%) as shown in table v, while 104 (28.6%) as between the ages of 26-33, 42 (11.5%) age between the ages of 34-41 and 55 (15.1%) age or age 42 and above.

More so, most of the respondents age female with a total of 198(54.4%) while 166(45.6%) are male. The religion of the respondents shows that most of respondents are Islam with a total of 180(49.50), while 146(40.1%) are Christians and 38(10.4%) are of other religious. The occupations of the respondents revealed that most of them are civil servants with a total of 109(29.9%), 94(25.8%) are self employed, 20(05.5%) are applicants, 70(19.2%) are students and 71(19.5%) are of others occupations. Table V also shows that most of the respondents are married with a total of 220(60.4%), 109(29.9%) are single, 15(04.1%) are divorced while 20(05.5%) are widowed. Finally, the educational qualification of the respondents shows that most of the respondent attend tertiary education with total of 170(46.71%), 40(10.9%) age illiterates, 36(09.9%) have primary education and 118(32.4%) attend secondary education.

Table V: Personal Profile of the Respondents

S/N	Variables	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Cause of godfatherism and party politics	Poverty	57	15.7
		Corruption	148	40.7
		Lack of Voters Educatio	58	15.9
		Military Influence	101	27.7
		Total	364	100
2.	Effects of godfatherism and party politics in Nigeria	Insecurity	60	16.5
		Bad Governance	72	19.8
		Policy Reversal	94	25.8
		Lack of Essential service	138	37.9
		Total	364	100
3.	Do you agree that independent National Electoral Commission is biased	Yes	161	45.6
		No	155	42.6
		No Idea	48	13.2
		Total	364	100
4.	How can you assess the functions of judiciary in the democratic process	Successful	192	52.7
		Not Successful	140	38.5
		Neutral	32	08.8
		Total	364	100
5.	How can the problem of Godfatherism and party politics in Kogi State be addressed?	Voter Education	74	20.3
		Strengthening and democratic process	203	57.8
		Adequate funding of INEC.	56	15.4
		Foreign support	31	08.5
		Total	364	100

Source: Field Research (2014)

Most of the respondents said corruption is the causes of godfatherism and party politics in Nigeria with a total of 148(40.7%), 57(15.7%) said poverty, 58(15.9%) said lack of voters education while 101(27.7) said it is due to military influence in the polity. Table VI above also disclosed the effects of godfatherism and party politics in Nigeria with most of the respondents said lack of essential services with total of 138(37.9%), 60(16.5%) said insecurity, 72(19.8%) said bad governance while 94(25.8%) said Nigeria has witness policy reversed.

More so, most of the respondents with total of 161(45.6%) agreed that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is based, 155(42.6%) disagreed while 48(13.2%) do not give any response. In addition, most of the respondents with total of 192(52.7%) said that the functions of Judiciary in Nigerian democratic process is successful, 140 (38.5) said not successful while 32(8.8%) said the judiciary has been staying aloof in complementing Nigeria democratic process.

Finally, in attempt at proffering lasting solution to these ugly phenomenon to our democratic process most of the respondent with total of 203(57.8%) said through strengthen of Nigeria Democratic process voters education, 56(15.4%) said through adequate finding of INEC while 31(8.5%) said through foreign support.

Suggestion for further research

Considering the multi-dimensional approach of electoral issues to any nation, this research could not cover all the salient areas therefore, it is suggested that it first to third republic are considered it will create room for more in-depth exploration on the variables being considered.

Conclusion

The research has established that democracy in Nigeria has not been fully institutionalized and phenomenon of godfatherism and party politics are visible in the conduct of government and politics. This has threatened democratic process vis-à-vis the socio-economic lives of the citizenry.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings and conclusion from this paper the researches recommends that democratic institution should be strengthened to eschew the system from godfatherism and politicization of core government policies and programmes. More so, there is dare need to sensitize the citizens on the importance of participating in election and the citizens consciousness should be arouse on demanding proper accountability and stewardship from political leaders. Finally, all key players in Nigeria electoral process such as the government, Judiciary, electoral body, civil society, and religious institutions should vigorously be committed to strengthening the democratic system.

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