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Patrons and Clients

Godfathers and the Democratization Process in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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Abstract

Godfatherism as a phenomenon has been in existence since time immemorial and continues to feature in many human endeavors. It is a *sui generis* practice that depicts political might, political survival and power sustenance. In Nigeria, it indicates political relevance and significance that guarantees meteoric rise in political careers. This dominant political culture has been sustained by a privileged few that have held sway over the political directions and fortunes within Nigeria's polity. Drawing case studies from Northern and Southern Nigeria, this study explores the characteristics of presumed godfathers in Nigeria's political sphere. It details the basic information about godfathers, their ideology, the goals that inform their kind of politics and their primordial engagements with the phenomenon. The study has major policy implications for the seemingly uneven gradation that party politics has assumed in Nigeria.

Keywords

patrons – clients – godfathers – democracy – Nigeria

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1 Introduction

Africa has witnessed some improvement on the democratization front since the commencement of the 'Third Wave' of democracy. Starting from the late 1980s through to early 1990s, multiparty politics and the conduct of elections have become the norm rather than the exception in many sub-Saharan Africa countries (Amuwo, 1992; Herbst, 2001: 357; van de Walle, 2003; Vorath, 2011). Some of these elections have resulted in regime turn-over and alteration of power between ruling and opposition parties. It is also instructive to note that there is now greater clamor for political accountability of elected leaders. But while there has been progress, it is important to note that the democratization process has not been even across states on the continent. While there has been transfer of power between regimes in certain countries, the holding of elections has helped to cement autocratic regimes in others. In the same vein, the holding of democratic elections in some Africa countries has often been characterized by rancor, electoral fraud, and incidences of violence and disputed results (International Peace Institute, 2011). These negativities often undermine the credibility of the electoral processes and by extension the legitimacy of the regimes that emanate therefrom.

The fate of democratization in Nigeria, unarguably Africa's most populous democracy, has been marked by minimal progress on some indices and retrogression in other indices. However, on a positive note, Nigeria's Fourth Republic recorded significant progress when compared to the fate of democratic processes in earlier Republics. For a start, Nigeria has recorded the most sustained exercise at democratic experimentation. Since conducting the transitional elections in 1999, Nigeria had held democratic elections in 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019. If taken with the transitional elections, Nigeria has held six consecutive general elections without interruption. This feat is the first since the country's independence in 1960. Without considering the flaws that characterized the administration and conduct of these elections, that they were held at constitutionally stipulated intervals is an important milestone in the annals of the nation's democratic and electoral history.

Even though problematic from the onset, the opposition coalition that birthed the All Progressive Congress (APC) and the party's successful struggle for power at the federal level in the 2015 general elections is also one of the positive milestones in Nigeria's democratization adventure. One of the greatest challenges facing democratization processes in transitional democracies especially in sub-Saharan Africa has been that of fragmented opposition and how this weakens and constrains attempts at mounting viable challenge against the ruling party especially during elections. With the merger of opposition parties,

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Action Congress of Nigeria, ACN; Congress for Progressive Change, CPC; All Nigerian People's Party, ANPP; and a faction of All Progressive Grand Alliance, APGA leading to the formation of the All Progressive Congress, APC, political opposition in Nigeria began a robust quest for power that finally resulted in the defeat of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2015 general elections. The defeat of the ruling party in the elections resulted in regime change (Saka & Amusan, 2018). This episode is an important and significant milestone because it marks the first in the history of the nation's democratic process in which a ruling party is defeated at the polls and concedes defeat thereby resulting in regime alternation. For transitional democracies, regime turnover is an important marker of progress towards democratic consolidation.

Nigeria's quest for democratic sustenance and consolidation has also been aided by incremental electoral reforms that have been witnessed since the commencement of the Fourth Republic. Of significant importance is the 2008 Justice Ibrahim Uwais Electoral Reform Committee instituted by the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua in the aftermath of the controversies that trailed the conduct of the 2007 general elections (Yagboyaju, 2011). Some of the recommendations of the Uwais committee report featured in the 2010 Electoral Act. The continued attempts at reform and automation of some aspects of the electoral process rubbed off positively on the conduct and credibility of the 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

The progress notwithstanding, the democratization process in Nigeria in the Fourth Republic continues to face serious challenges. Of importance is the impact of 'Money Bags' and 'Big Men' popularly called godfathers in Nigeria's democratic parlance and literature. The godfathers and the patron-client relationship which they nurture with those they facilitate their ascension to elective and appointive political positions have serious implications for the health and viability of the democratic process and impact on the nation's governance system. To say the least, patron-client network and its consequential pattern of patronage disbursement has been a recurring phenomenon in Nigeria politics especially since the Second Republic between 1979 and 1983. Joseph (1987) used the term 'prebendalism' to describe the pattern of patronage network and the attendant resource disbursement that has become an art in governance that was premised on this system of elite (godfathers) network management in the country. This system of 'prebends' and patronage was facilitated by godfathers who control the instrumentalities of political power within the system and their grip on the political process has greatly manifested in Nigeria since the commencement of the nation's Fourth Republic in 1999.

Clientelism, the patron-client relationships that emanated therefrom and the control of the political system by powerful political patrons (godfathers) is

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an age old political phenomenon (de Sousa, 2008). Thus, it is crucial to stress here that elite grip and control over the political system and the deployment of well-oiled patronage network to maintain and retain control over the levers of political power is not a phenomenon peculiar only to Africa or the Nigeria's democratic space. Dominance of political systems is prevalent across all political systems. Indeed, elites, nay power elites, are the most powerful set of people within any national political system. Whether restricted to small powerful families or spread across national socio-economic and political classes/spaces, elites are people who make or shape the main political and economic decisions across political systems irrespective of their forms.

In fact, the most democratic of nations are directly governed by an elite group of some kind and this group exercises a great deal of influence in shaping the political and governmental agendas between elections. They set public agendas, shape what counts as legitimate and feasible policy options to address public issues and more often than not, exercise a great deal of influence on how fellow citizens understand the country, its governance system and how the country compares with others in the global system (Hossain & Moore, 2002). While not as perverse as is the case in some developing democracies, power elite in developed democracies are also clientelistic and deploy patronage as political instrument (Kitschelt & Wilksinson, 2007). To this end, patrimonial politics and the instrumental utilization of patronage is not a phenomenon akin only to Third World democracies.

In developed democracies such as the United States, notable political families with regional and national clout and with iconic images in the eyes of the voting public include the Adams's, the Lees, the Roosevelts, the Tuckers, the Bayards, the Kennedys, the Tafts, the Bushs, and the Clintons (Hess, 2016: 3). In Canada, incumbent Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is the son of a former prime minister. Not only that, but the political system is also firmly under the control of power elite (Marland, Giasson & Lawlor, 2018). The Marcos, Aquinos, Arroyos, Dutertes, Garcias, and Ortegas to mention just a few are notable political families in the Philippines. Indeed, the just concluded presidential election in the Philippines approximates a contest between dynastic political families and it was a representation of similar patterns in earlier national elections (Tadem & Tadem, 2016). In India, the Nehru-Gandhis constitute an intergenerational ruling family through their control of the apparatus of the Indian Congress Party (Jensenuis, 2018). In Pakistan, the Bhuttos had ruled from father to daughter and now to Bhutto son becoming a minister in the new government following the fall of Imran Khan government (Bennett-Jones, 2020). In Bangladesh, daughters from two dynastic families control the political space as prime minister and opposition leader (Rudd & Mohammad, 2016).

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The same applies to the Lees in Singapore, the Rajapaksa in Sri Lanka and the Sukarno in Indonesia, while the political environment is similar in Thailand (Barr, 2016; Mietzner, 2016; Purdey, 2016).

In essence, power elites comprised of notable political families constitute the core of ruling elites across systems, whether developed democracies, developing democracies or autocracies. What differentiates the systems is the extent of institutionalization of family dynasties at the heart of the power equation. Whereas in developing democracies, political families become dynastic through intergenerational institutionalization, powerful political families in developed democracies do not often demonstrate the family/dynastic institutionalization attributes in profound manner. This might be informed by the nature of political culture, development of political institutions and entrenchment of the rules of laws, democratic principles and values. Using the case study approach and drawing information from sources that include but not limited to governmental and non-governmental reports, opinions, commentaries and editorials from Nigeria's news dailies, this study engages the phenomenon of godfathers in Nigerian politics in the Fourth Republic. It highlights the patron-client networks and pattern of prebends they help to institute and the implications these have on the nation's democratic experiment and governance process.

This study is divided into six sections. Following this introduction is the conceptual and theoretical discussion on elite, elitism, prebendalism and godfather politics in Nigeria's political development in the Fourth Republic. Section three engages in the discourses of political families, dynasties and clientelism from a comparative perspective. Section four is devoted to the discussion of the politics of iconic godfathers in Nigerian politics since the return to civil rule in May 1999. Section five engages with the issue of clientelistic godfather politics and the development question in Nigeria. The last section being the conclusion is a brief recap on 'godfatherism' and the implications it continues to have on Nigerian politics and governance process.

2 Elites, Prebendalism and Godfathers in Nigerian Politics: a Theoretical Overview

The concepts of elites, prebendalism and godfatherism have indeed become dominant themes in discourses pertaining to the Nigerian governance and political processes. As such, these concepts have largely dominated writings of scholars on Nigerian government and politics (Dudley, 1973; Joseph, 1987; Albert, 2005; Omotola, 2007). The Nigerian political scene has been dominated

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by a few powerful political figures and prebendalism has remained its major defining feature of governance and statecraft. It is also important to note that the dominant nature of Nigeria's ruling elites and prebendalism manifest through 'godfatherism'. These have shaped the socio-political and economic culture of the average political elites since independence (Joseph, 1987).

According to Pareto, elites are those people who possess qualities of intelligence, character and capacity in various forms to a marked extent (Pareto, 1935). He further claimed that elite refers to the small number of individuals who have achieved marked success and have gotten to the prime position in their various areas of endeavor. Such individuals include successful businessmen, academics and professionals. These individuals are gifted than others and are simply ahead of others in their various careers (Pareto, 1935). Members of the elite can be stratified into two classes. These classes are the governing elite and the non-governing elites. The governing elite refer to those individuals who are directly or indirectly involved in the governance process of a state. The non-governing elite however, are not involved in the administrative process of a state but by virtue of their position in the society they are able, to a reasonable extent, influence the process of arriving at policy decisions in particular and governance process as a whole (Verdier & Ades, 1996). There are various attributes of the political elites. One common and conspicuous characteristic however, is that political elites rotate or alternate power within the society. This process is referred to as the circulation of elites.

Central to the concept of elites is the doctrine of elitism. Elitism as a political doctrine is a central theme in both classical and contemporary political analysis. While the term is devoid of an agreed definition, elitism is premised on the belief in the rule by a select few. Primarily, it emphasizes the restriction of the ability to rule and exercise power in a society to a small group of people known as the political elites based on the possession of certain characteristics, which distinguishes them from the multitude of people (Higley & Pakulski, 2012). This perception has been the focus of writings of classical elite theorists such as Vilfredo Pareto who wrote on law of elite circulation, Robert Michels who wrote on iron law of oligarchy and Max Weber whose writing focused on power and domination. Such characteristics possessed by the elites, which make them distinct from the mass of the people, are most essentially noticeable during certain circumstances and in times of needs (Higley & Pukulski, 2012).

In developing democracies such as Nigeria's, political elites make use of prebendalism to foist their class interests on the rest of society through their control of power. The term prebendalism was used by Joseph (1987) to describe the patron-client relationship or patrimonial process that characterized political

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governance in Nigeria. Prebendalism refers to a situation where elected political elites and top government officers unlawfully accrue to themselves a share of national resources and use such to benefit their supporters, co-religionists and members of their ethnic and social groups as the case may be (Joseph, 1987). Joseph (1987) further noted that in political systems characterized by prebendal politics, state offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by officeholders, who use them to generate material benefits for themselves and their constituents and kin groups. Prebendalism as it is obtained in Nigeria can be perceived from two distinct perspectives. One is a situation where political offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by their holders and can be used to accumulate material wealth. Two, as a form of political clientele in which people ascend to political offices through the active support of power brokers that is, godfathers who are rewarded for their 'investments' by the political office holders through the usage of the trappings of such office to deliver tangible and non-tangible material benefits to the political godfathers. From these two perspectives, prebendalism could be taken to mean the use of political offices for direct personal gains or to indirectly benefit political masters and/or benefactors, cultural groups or other kin groups (Ugwuani & Nwokedi, 2015). Prebendalism thrives on patron-client relationship which can also be referred to as clientelism and/or patronage system (Hoglund, 2009).

The patron-client relationship that was the most important feature of prebendal system has been described as relations in which the patron, usually the godfather provides protection, services or rewards to the client, usually individuals of lower status seeking political offices who become the patron's political godson. Nigeria's political terrain, particularly in the Fourth Republic has largely been characterized by the overwhelming presence of godfathers that serve as facilitators for individuals that aspire to elective and appointive political positions and offices at the sub-national and national levels. A godfather is any influential or powerful person or leader who sponsors another person into an elective political position or helps another person to get political appointments such as ministerial positions or to secure juicy bureaucratic office for favored candidates. This type of godfather-godson relationship is based on patronage and clientelism. Albert (2005: 83) sums up the issue of godfatherism vis-a-vis prebendalism in Nigeria when he averred that:

> The phenomenon of godfathers, most especially of the type that is seen in Nigerian politics, is a worst case scenario of transactional leaders. The godfathers are strictly in an instrumental relationship with their clients. Their main goal is to use their client to attain selfish goals; the latter too do the same. The relationship between the two of them thus has little

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> or nothing to do with the larger society the two of them claim to lead. The relationship between the godfathers and their clients has little or no enduring purpose that could hold both of them together. It is thus common to find them going in separate directions shortly after a 'contractual agreement' is reached between them. The problem is that both of them lack a higher goal that could bind them together. Instead, they have often contradictory higher goals.

Though godfatherism is not a recent development in Nigeria's politics, it has however become a scary issue given the negativity that surrounds it especially in relation to the political process, notably electoral contest in this present Republic (Ayoade, 2006). As Gambo (2006) notes, godfatherism is an ideology constructed on the belief that certain individuals possess considerable means to unilaterally determine the outcome of electoral contest thereby determining who gets elected into which political office. The belief is that they are so powerful, influential and witty to the extent of being able to decide both who gets party nomination to contest elections and manipulative as to influence who win in such elections (Jibrin, 2003). Former Governor Ken Nnamani of Enugu characterized the godfather as:

> an impervious guardian figure who provided the lifeline and direction to the godson, perceived to live a life of total submission, subservience and protection of the oracular personality located in the large, material frame of opulence, affluence and decisiveness, that is, if not ruthless... strictly, the godfather is simply a self-seeking individual out there to use the government for his own purposes.
>
> NNAMANI, 2003: 56

Godfatherism means the practice by which a political office seeker (godson) gets connected to an individual (godfather) who is believed to have the ability to deliver desired outcome in an electoral contest. It is a symbiotic relationship in which the godson courts and nurtures the support of the godfather. While the godfather delivers victory in electoral contests, the godson is expected to nourish the relationship by abiding by the biddings of the godfather. The godfather is not in the business of philanthropy rather, the intention is to be in control of the state and enjoy unfettered access to state resources through the godson, and the proxy that actually occupies political office (Ayoade, 2006: 89-90). Godfathers most often want to control and are actually in control of the machinery of the polity governed by their godsons. They make critical governance decisions, determine the nature of political appointments, receive

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juicy contacts and earn unimaginable stipends all at the expense of the state (Human Rights Watch, 2007). Given its negative features, 'godfatherism' as a practice hinders competitive democratic contest and prevents accountability and transparency in governance.

3 Political Families/Dynasties, Clientelism and Patronage: a Comparative Assessment

According to Lekvall (2013: 38), clientelism and patron/godfather dominance of the political system remain realities of the political process in many regions of the world but notably in Latin America, post-Communist Europe, South and South East Asia and Africa. This pattern of elite dominance of the political system has also remained resilient in mature democracies such as Italy, Japan, Austria, Belgium and the United States despite the depth of their institutionalization (Kitschelt & Wilksinson, 2007). In their ideal forms, democratic institutions are very different from clientelistic systems by the extent of openness that characterize policymaking process and transfer of public goods. However, given the touches of inter-personality that characterize clientelistic systems, they are often viewed as lying at the far end of the institutionalization spectrum. Much as this might hold true, yet political systems exist and thrive in dualism (Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 2002: 9).

For instance, in the United States, 'constituent service' that entails interceding on behalf of individuals who have problems with their taxes, social security benefits, immigration papers and/or similar personal matters, remains at the heart of representation and a core responsibility for state and local representatives. A starker form of clientelism and patronage dispensing mechanism within the US political system is the practice of 'pork barrel' spending. Pork barrels refer to publicly funded projects promoted by legislators to bring money, jobs and other material benefits of the state to their districts. While pork barrels constitute legitimate and institutional spending on infrastructure and other forms of public works/projects, it is also deployed as a form of political favor to local politicians (middlemen or local patrons) or in wider context, favor to citizens in a constituency to cement political hold and ensure electoral victory in subsequent elections (Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 2002: 5-6).

Patronage is also dispensed to clients through the instrumental placement of thousands of political supporters and party stalwarts in Federal bureaucracy in the United States and Canada (van de Walle, 2009: 3). Such deployment of job placements and employment provisioning to supporters, stalwarts and constituents approximate the servicing of clientelistic network through

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the instrumental use of public resources. 'Constituency projects' inserted into national budgets by members of the Nigerian National Assembly approximates the 'Pork barrel' practices in the United States. In the same wise, Nigerian legislators are expected to help facilitate job placements and render all forms of assistance (material and non-material) to their constituents as token of appreciation for their loyalty and continued support (Demarest, 2021: 685; Agunyai & Ojakorotu, 2021). Thus, for all political systems irrespective of the level of political advancement, political institutionalization and political culture, patronage dispensing to strengthen clientelistic networks by patrons (godfathers and/or power elite in mature democracies) remain an essential form of political negotiation and brokering of power.

As form of political relationship, clientelistic networks rest on a rational economic calculus more than on blind or reflexive personal loyalty (Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 2002: 3). To this end, resources are important in oiling the networks and making it relevant. While membership of the governing elite is large and the influence they wield highly dispersed among the segments that constitute the elite cycle in developed democracies, in the developing countries the elite cycle is often small in size, membership process constricted, and they corner a large slice of national wealth and the influence that goes with it. However, when it comes to the preponderant presence of highly powerful families at the pinnacle of power, there are similarities between developed and developing democracies. Across countries, same families often remain within and retain their membership of the privilege club for generations.

For instance, in the United States, forty-four American political families have had at least four members of the same name elected to federal offices. In seventy-five families, three members of the same name hold national office. Another forty-eight dynasties could be referred to as mix-match, because they produced three or more members joined together through marriages. Though influential, these families collectively have contributed not more than 6 percent of the men and women who have been elected to Congress since 1774. While the percent or aggregate number elected into national office might be seen as minimal and thus, perceived as not too much consequential to the logic of power, this perception might be far from the reality. For instance, eighteen family dynasties have produced eleven Presidents, four vice-presidents, thirty-three senators, eighteen governors, seventy-three members of the US House of Representatives and eleven cabinet officers (Hess, 2016: 3). The positions they had occupied are surely of consequence and that just eighteen families had held that power at one time or another is a reflection of the strength of dynastic families in US democracy and their control over the political process at the national and sub-national levels. Dynasties rise and fall, thus US political

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dynasties will not always be the same ones. However, as Hess noted, it is important to reiterate that America is a land of past and future dynasties and there will always be dynasties controlling national power matrix in the United States (Hess, 2016: 8).

In Bangladesh, the families of current Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina and current opposition leader and former Prime Minister, Khaleda Zia control the levers of power since independence from Pakistan in 1971. Their fathers and husbands are former powerful figures and their sons are under grooming to inherit the political structures. Both woman and their families have retained the control of Bangladesh's two leading political parties, the Bangladesh Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (Hindustan Times, 2013; Ruud, 2020; Basu, Devine & Wood, 2018; Ruud & Mohammad, 2016). In Pakistan, slain former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was daughter to former President and Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. She inherited her father's political party, the Pakistani People's Party and the political structure. Her son, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, is now a minister, party leader and inheritor of the political family and the structure that sustain it (Hughes & Shaffer, 2021; Bennett-Jones, 2020; Bhutto, 2007). In India, the Nehru-Gandhi family dynasty is synonymous with power and royalty. Jawaharlal Nehru was India's first post-independence Prime Minister. Following his death after seventeen years as Prime Minister, his daughter and only child inherited the political dynasty and was elected Prime Minister in 1966. Following her assassination, her son, Rajiv Gandhi became Prime Minister in 1984. Rajiv's widow, Sonia Gandhi became the head of the Congress Party following his assassination in 1991. The Congress was led briefly by Rahul Gandhi between 2017 and 2019 and the leadership of the party has since reverted to Sonia Rahul Gandhi, inheritor of the Nehru-Gandhi, political dynasty (Jensenius, 2018; Gupta, 2009; Chakrabarty, 2008).

As the discussion above has highlighted the presence of patrons (godfathers), political families and dynasties manifest and constitute the realities in most political systems. Whether patrons (godfathers) or political dynasties control the political system, the dominance is often procured through the instrumental deployment of public resources in the form of patronage. Thus, it is important to aver that most underground or quasi-legal governance practices such as political patronage are neither good nor bad in themselves. What matters are the outcomes, and those are varied as Hutchcroft (1997) opined. It is probably easier to see the harms caused by clientelistic politics and patrimonial administration than it is to observe their positive features, but the fact remains that no governance system can operate effectively without some degree of institutional dualism, some balance among 'bad' informal practices and 'good' formal ones. The negative aspects of ad hoc governance are well

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known and need not be reiterated all over again (Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 2002: 9). That said, it is important to state that there are some offsetting gains from clientelism, patrimonialism and patronage politics. They include the appeasement of the elites and the integration of ordinary people into the governing system and society (Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 2002).

4 The Godfathers, Their Godsons and Democratic Process in Nigeria: Insights from Cases

The conduct of multiparty elections and at regular intervals is by far one of the important highlights of Nigeria's democratic journey since the nation's return to civil rule in May 1999. Its significance lies in the fact that the nation's democratic process in earlier Republics has often been truncated on the basis of poorly conducted, fraudulent and violence riddled elections. Thus, the conduct of five successive general elections after the transitional elections of 1999 and at the constitutionally stipulated time becomes a marker of democratic progress. While the conduct of the elections as at when due is important, the credibility and legitimacy of the outcomes of some of these elections left much to be desired. An important factor underlying the fraud and violence that characterized the management and conduct is the deployment of every means possible by political godfathers to ensure the electoral success of their godsons and anointed candidates.

To this end, the activities of godfathers, the so called 'big men' in the political process according to De Smedt (2009) before, during and after the conduct of each circle of general elections in Nigeria greatly impacted on the conduct and management of the electoral process and by extension the credibility and acceptability of the results of elections in the country. In successive general elections especially those conducted after the transitional elections of 1999, godfathers had served effectively as gatekeepers in their parties, and 'garrison commanders' in their localities (Oseni, Fatai & Saka, 2015; Omotola, 2007). The cases of Chris Uba, then acclaimed godfather of Anambra State politics and the late Chief Lamidi Adedibu, the 'garrison commander' of Ibadan politics have often been cited as important points of reference in this regard. Added to the above mentioned are, the Saraki political family in Kwara state and Bola Ahmed Tinubu. The selection of these individuals as point of discussion is informed by the considerable influence they have wielded at the height of their reign as godfathers and the power they dispense within the context of local, regional and national politics then and now.

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4.1 *Godfather and Godson: 'Chris Uba', 'Chris Ngige' and the Garrison Process in Anambra State, 2003–2006*

Godfathers come in different shades; some brazen in the demonstration and expression of their total capture of state institutions in their localities while some are more circumspect and strategize carefully in their acts of state capture. Chief Chris Uba, a successful businessman from Anambra State, South-East Nigeria is arguably one of the most celebrated godfathers during the Obasanjo presidency especially from 2003 to 2007. The political relationship that existed between Chris Uba as godfather and Chris Ngige as his 'godson' who became the elected governor of the state was a spectacular drama. The breakdown of the relationship produced the most compelling narrative of the power of godfathers in Nigeria's politics under the Fourth Republic (Hoffman, 2010). As Hoffmann (2010: 287) argued, the Anambra case aptly demonstrates the debilitating implications that 'godfatherism' and patron-client politics has on the task of nurturing a truly representative democracy in Nigeria. The abduction of Governor Ngige by political hoodlums under the directive of Chris Uba at the height of the face-off aptly characterized as a civilian coup was an avid demonstration of the extent at which a godfather can go to undermine state institutions and disrupt governance.

In 2002 before party primaries were conducted, Chris Ngige had a modest ambition to contest the Anambra Central Senatorial ticket on the platform of the People's Democratic Party. However, his political fortune was boosted when his path crossed that of Chris Uba, a wealthy businessman, PDP caucus leader and party financier in the South-East who had strong ties to the Presidency under President Olusegun Obasanjo. With the support of Uba's political machinery and financial war-chest, Ngige's political aspiration was upgraded from contesting for a Senatorial seat to aspiring for the office of governor of the state. In an election characterized by fraud, Uba as the emergent godfather in Anambra State was able to deploy money, patronage and violence to secure the electoral victory of Chris Ngige as governor and that of other PDP candidates who contested for national assembly and state constituency offices across the state. Ngige and Uba had apparently entered into a negotiated agreement in which Uba was to have unfettered control over state resources and the exercise of considerable authority over governance affairs.

The purported contract referred to Governor Ngige as the 'administrator' and to the unelected Uba as 'Leader/Financier'. The contract of agreement also empowered Uba to 'avenge himself in the way and manner adjudged by him (godfather) as fitting and adequate' in case of any breach by Ngige that could not be settled through mediation (Human Rights Watch, 2007: 68). Given the

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context of this written agreement, it is no surprise that crisis soon ensued between Chief Uba and Governor Chris Ngige. For instance, Governor Ngige alleged that as soon as he was sworn into office, Chief Uba demanded for N3 billion for Ngige installation as governor and N860 million for a contract that was yet to be executed (Hoffman, 2010: 298-299). For his failure to accede to the monetary demands, Chief Uba felt that the condition was 'fitting' and 'adequate' for him to invoke the resignation letter pre-signed by Ngige (Hoffman, 2010: 298).

On this premise, Chief Uba orchestrated the forceful removal of Governor Ngige from office by using personnel of the Nigerian Police Force to effect the abduction of Governor Ngige. The abduction represented a glaring attempt at undermining the office of the governor and a breach of the Nigerian Constitution through an institution like the police that was supposed to uphold the Constitution and protect the governor. As Omotola (2007: 144) noted, the abduction of Ngige on 10 July 2003 was nothing but 'a coup of the godfather'. The illegal abduction and impeachment of Governor Ngige was reversed and the governor was reinstated to office. Though he won the first round of the constitutional and judicial battle, governor Ngige was besieged. The Ngige-Uba saga in Anambra came to a close in March 2006 when a Court of Appeal ruled that Ngige's electoral victory in 2003 was fraudulent and therefore null and void. The Court directed that Peter Obi of the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), be returned as duly elected and sworn into office (Human Rights Watch, 2007: 71). In their discussion of the Anambra saga, Oseni, Fatai and Saka (2015) pushed the position that the condition through which the godfather accesses state resources and controls the levers of state authority are synonymous to the ones that put the state for sale and promotes the personalization of the state as the estate of the godfather.

4.2 *'The Garrison Commander': Chief Lamidi Adedibu and Ibadan Politics in the Fourth Republic*

The political sojourn of the late Chief Lamidi Adedibu, often referred to as the 'strong man' of Ibadan politics dates back to the early 1950s. At one time or the other, in the early years of Chief Adedibu's foray into partisan politics, he had served as political hand to the likes of Chief Obafemi Awolowo (first Premier of Western Region); Chief Adisa Meredith Akinloye (former National Chairman of the defunct National Party of Nigeria in the Second Republic) and Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola (Awolowo's Deputy and later Premier of Western Region). Given his ability for organization and mobilization for mass political activities, the young Adedibu was first elected as the Publicity Secretary of

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the Ibadan Division of the Action Group and later as the first Chairman of the youth wing of the party in 1953 (Animasawun, 2013: 7).

During the aborted Third Republic, Chief Adedibu supported the candidature of Chief Kolapo Ishola under the Social Democratic Party (SDP) for the office of governor of Oyo State, the heartland of Southwest Nigeria politics. Mobilizing his political machinery, Chief Adedibu was able to secure the election of Chief Kolapo Ishola as the governor of Oyo State while he was installed the Chairman, Ibadan Municipal Government. Although there were spirited resistance to Chief Adedibu's control of the political space from within and outside his political party, he however, using the instrumentalities of his control of political thugs, notably members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), the support of his retinue of followers and connivance with security establishments, he was able to achieve his goal (Animasawun, 2013: 8). The middleman service he rendered for seekers of power invariably turned Chief Adedibu into a 'godfather' of repute in the politics of Oyo state starting from the aborted Third Republic (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

At the dawn of the Fourth Republic, Chief Adedibu pitched his tent with the All People's Party (APP). As the 2003 general elections approached, Chief Adedibu switched camp to join the People's Democratic Party (PDP) that controlled most states and federal power. To establish a political base for the national ruling party in the South-West, President Obasanjo teamed up with Chief Adedibu. While federal might was deployed through the use of state security forces, Chief Adedibu matched this might with patronage and violence. As such, President Obasanjo together with Chief Adedibu presided over the brazen perversion of electorates' will to deliver electoral victory for the PDP. The party won the governorship and state assembly seats across the South Western states with the exception of Lagos State. In the context of this perverted electoral process, Chief Adedibu was able to install Chief Rasheed Adewolu Ladoja as the governor of Oyo State, secured an unwavering loyalty of the deputy governor, Christopher Alao Akala and had substantial members of the state lawmakers under his control.

No sooner had Governor Ladoja assumed office when disagreement ensued between the godfather and godson. The bone of contention was an alleged reneging on agreed modalities for the control of state funds and distribution of patronage. In particular, Governor Ladoja was reported to have declined the request of Chief Adedibu for the monthly remittance of N15million from the Governor's 'security vote' fund (Human Rights Watch, 2007: 54; Omotola, 2007: 145). As the gulf between the godfather and godson widened, governance, peace and security of the state was thrown into the deep end. Members of the

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State House of Assembly were also drawn into the battle for the control of the state, as the Assembly split into two factions as 18 members vowed allegiance to Chief Adedibu while the remaining 14 backed the governor. After repeated attempts, the pro-Adedibu lawmakers were able to stage an impeachment of Governor Ladoja on 12 January 2006 and swore in his deputy, Christopher Alao Akala as the substantive governor. The impeachment was challenged in court and after eleven (11) months, the Nigerian Supreme Court ruled that the impeachment by a section of the State House of Assembly did not adhere to constitutional provisions, declared it as null and void and directed the reinstatement of Ladoja as the governor (Omotola, 2007).

The contest for who would get to fly the flag of the PDP in the governorship elections in Oyo state largely became a battle of survival between Governor Ladoja and Chief Adedibu who had decided to back the deputy governor Christopher Alao Akala. In the party primaries, Adedibu with the backing of the federal government was able to ensure the selection of Akala as the party candidate. Using patronage, support from the federal government and violence amply supplied by political thugs and members of NURTW in Ibadan, Chief Adedibu was able to secure electoral victory for his new godson, Alao Akala and the PDP in the 2007 general elections (Omotola, 2007). Till his death on the 11 June 2008, Chief Adedibu was revered by those that have been the beneficiaries of his generosity, respected by those he aided their political ascendancy, despised by those he masterminded their political downfall and loathed by the Ibadan educated elite for his crude approach to politics and use of violence.

4.3 *Olusola Saraki and Bukola Saraki: The Making and Unmaking of a Political Dynasty in Kwara State*

The discourse on the influence political godfathers wield on the political process in Nigeria's Fourth Republic is incomplete without an analysis of Kwara politics and the towering influence of the Saraki dynasty. Sitting atop the Saraki family control of politics and governance process in Kwara State pre-1999 was Chief Abubakar Olusola Saraki, the Waziri of Ilorin. Olusola Saraki's political empire in Kwara dates back to the Second Republic between 1979 and 1983. During the Second Republic, Chief Saraki joined the then National Party of Nigeria (NPN), contested and won a seat to the Senate and emerged as the Senate Majority Leader. Olusola Saraki also deployed his influence to secure the state governorship position for the NPN by ensuring the electoral success of Alhaji Adamu Attah in 1979. However, Governor Attah's relationship with Dr. Saraki went sour in the course of his first term in office. Dr. Olusola Saraki

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supported Cornelius Adebayo of the Unity Party of Nigeria to win the governorship contest against incumbent Attah from his party, the NPN.

In preparation for electoral processes for this republic Dr. Olusola Saraki pitched his tent with the All People's Party (APP). In the 1999 governorship election, Senator Saraki supported Rear Admiral Muhammad Alabi Lawal (rtd.) to clinched the governorship position (Lawal, 2005). However, history repeated itself as the relationship between Saraki (the godfather) and Governor Lawal (the godson) turned sour two years into the latter's administration. Consequently, Dr. Saraki decamped to the PDP and fielded his biological son Dr. Bukola Saraki for the governorship position. In the ensuing political contest, the two competing political camps spared no efforts, weapons and tactics, inclusive of the deployment of violence to ensure that they won the electoral battle for the political control of Kwara State. At the end of the fierce electoral contest, Governor Lawal was defeated as Dr. Olusola Saraki not only ensured the electoral victory of his son as the governor but also went ahead to install his daughter Rukayat Gbemisola Saraki as Senator representing Kwara Central Senatorial district all in the 2003 general elections (Saka, 2010).

In the run-up to the 2011 general elections, Chief Olusola Saraki spearheaded the candidacy of his daughter, Senator Gbemisola Saraki as governor of the state. Contrary to the wishes of his father, the incumbent Governor Bukola Saraki supported Fatai Ahmed who had served in his cabinet from 2003 to 2011. The divergent positions between father and son generated rift in the Saraki family. The rift forced Dr. Olusola Saraki and Gbemisola out of the ruling PDP and into the Action Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), while Governor Bukola Saraki's candidate emerged the flag bearer of the PDP (Arowona, 2014). Deploying federal patronage, his own emerging political structure and state resources, Governor Bukola Saraki was able to secure electoral victory for his protégé, Fatai Ahmed and other PDP aspirants in the elections. Although Dr. Olusola Saraki tried to reconcile his son and daughter and by extension their loyalists after the 2011 general elections, the rift that emanated from the contest for power had left a fracture in the Saraki political structure in Kwara State. Dr. Bukola Saraki's 2011 electoral victory and the death of Dr. Olusola Saraki in 2013 signified the baton change in leadership of the Saraki dynasty.

In the run up to the 2015 general elections, Dr. Bukola Saraki along with dissatisfied members within the ruling PDP masterminded a factional breakaway and joined force with the newly formed mega opposition party, the All Progressive Congress (APC) (Saka & Amusan, 2018). In the contest for the 2015 general elections, the APC won all the three Senatorial seats, the six House of Representative seats, the governorship position and all State Assembly seats.

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Dr. Bukola Saraki defied the APC hierarchy by contesting and winning the election for the office of the Senate President. The rancor generated by his collusion with opposition to win the coveted Senate Presidency failed to subside after all the attempts to mend fences by both parties. Given the seemingly irreconcilable differences, Senator Bukola Saraki returned back to the PDP, taking along with him the Saraki political structure in the state. Sequel to his defection, Senator Saraki contested for the PDP presidential primary and lost to former Vice President Atiku Abubakar.

Having lost his presidential ambition, Senate President Bukola Saraki became the Director- General of Atiku's campaign organization coordinating all activities of the main opposition, PDP nationally. In Kwara state, he nominated all aspirants that contested for various federal and state positions in the PDP. In the 23 February 2019 presidential and national assembly elections, Senator Bukola Saraki was roundly defeated at the poll by Dr. Yahaya Oloriegbe of the APC in the contest for the Kwara Central Senatorial seat. The PDP under Saraki also lost the remaining two senatorial seats (Kwara North and South) and the six House of Representative seats to the APC. Senator Saraki's candidates were also defeated in the 9th March 2019 governorship and state assembly elections by aspirants in APC. Senator Saraki's defeat and the obvious loss of the Saraki political dynasty in Kwara state may be attributed to a number of factors, prominent of which is disenchantment and frustration of the people of Kwara to the years of bad governance under the Saraki dynasty. The disaffection against Senator Bukola and the political establishment was given voice through the *Ot'oge* slogan (enough is enough), which was the battle cry of the people of Kwara state and the APC. The electoral defeat of Senator Bukola Saraki might signifies the end of an era, possibly the crumbling of the Saraki political dynasty and the demystification of a seemingly untouchable Kwara political godfather.

5 Can 'Godfatherism' Promote Development? Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Progressive Politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the enigmatic two-term governor of Lagos State (1999-2007) undoubtedly has a place in the discussion of godfathers in the politics of Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Tinubu's foray into partisan politics started during the ill-fated Third Republic when he was elected Senator from Lagos state on the platform of the Social Democratic Party (SDP). When the Republic was aborted, Tinubu joined the league of democracy activists as a staunch member of the famed National Democratic Coalition (NADECO). At the height

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of NADECO's activism against the reign of the late General Sani Abacha and the fight for the restoration of democracy, Tinubu ran into exile in the United Kingdom. Following General Abacha's death and the unfolding of the General Abdulsalam Abubakar's transition program, Tinubu returned to Nigeria and joined other political actors in South West Nigeria to form the Alliance for Democracy (AD).

Tinubu contested for and won the governorship seat of Lagos state on the platform of the AD in 1999. He was re-elected to the same position in the 2003 general elections on the platform of the AD. However, it is instructive to note that he remained the only governor elected on the platform of the AD as the party's incumbent governors in five of the six South West states lost their re-election bids to opponents from the People's Democratic Party. Tinubu as the governor of Lagos state during his tenure had engaged in a running constitutional battle with President Olusegun Obasanjo-led Federal Government over the creation, control and management of the local government system among other political battles with the Federal government. On the basis of the numerous face-off, Lagos state was the first on the list of South-West states and their governors that then President Obasanjo targeted to effect their electoral loss. That Tinubu was able to withstands Obasanjo's political onslaught was one of the first testaments of Tinubu's political dexterity.

In the 2007 general elections, Tinubu ensured the electoral success of Babatunde Raji Fashola, his Chief of Staff and anointed candidate for governorship seat in Lagos state under the newly formed, Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), which he midwifed. Although the ACN candidates in other South West states lost their governorship elections, Tinubu leading the charge was able to use the court to reclaim the mandate of his disciples, Rauf Aregbesola and John Kayode Fayemi as the elected governors in Osun and Ekiti States respectively. Aregbesola had earlier served as Tinubu's Commissioner for Works in Lagos state. In the 2011 general elections, Tinubu-led the ACN to more electoral victories in the South West as the ACN won the governorship position in all South Western States with the exception of Ondo State. By this time, he has cemented his credential as a political leader of repute and godfather to many politicians in South West Nigeria.

In the bid to widen his reach and political clout, Tinubu took the charge and led the ACN into merger talks with other opposition parties notably the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) and a faction of All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA). The political discussion between these parties resulted in the formation of the APC in late 2013 (Saka & Amusan, 2018). The newly former party was later joined by a breakaway faction of the ruling PDP that was referred to as the NPDP. Under Tinubu's

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direction, the APC successfully prosecuted its presidential campaign and won the Presidency in the 2015 general election. The party also won majority seats in the National Assembly, more than half of governorship seats and control of state house of assemblies. The success of the APC in the 2015 general elections marked the first time in Nigeria's electoral history that an opposition party will defeat an incumbent party and president.

Tinubu is not only hailed as a shrewd, consummate and deft political leader but is also noted to be a strategic hunter and manager of talents. He is believed to have a rooted philosophy of "Growing Our Own Timber", a strategy that is anchored on growing the career of his disciples in the expectation that they will in-turn help to raise the career of others. Towards this end, it is on record that at the formation of the APC government in 2015, Tinubu's disciples littered important political positions at the federal level while still retaining his clout in the South West. The Vice-President, Profesor Yemi Osinbajo was his Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice from 1999-2007. Babatunde Raji Fashola his Chief of Staff, 1999-2007 and former Governor of Lagos State, 2007-2015 is the current Minister in-charge of merged ministries of Works and Housing. Lai Mohammed from Kwara state that served as his commissioner, is the current Minister for Information. Femi Gbajabiamila is the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the 9th National Assembly while Ahmed Lawan from Borno, a disciple of Tinubu from the North East is the current Senate President. Tinubu's wife Oluremi Tinubu, is a serving third time Senator representing Lagos Central Senatorial District. Willaim Babatunde Fowler, the former Chairman, Federal Inland Revenue Service, FIRS is also one of Tinubu's many disciples. He was appointed as pioneer Permanent Secretary and Executive Chairman, Lagos State Board of Internal Revenue on 24th November, 2005 and stayed on the position till 2015 when he was appointed to head the strategically important parastatal, FIRS by President Buhari. Adeola Rahman Ipaye, the current Deputy Chief of Staff to President Muhammadu Buhari is also one in the endless list of Tinubu's disciples in power.

Given Tinubu's penchant for raising talented disciples and growing their ascendancy in public service whether as political appointees, elected leaders or administrators, Tinubu has come to be associated with been an astute godfather with a vast political network that crisscross the arteries of power in Nigeria. Contrary to the scenario of godfathers engaging in battles of wits and supremacy with their godsons as noted in the three cases above, there are no celebrate case of Tinubu's showdown with any of his disciples, possibly with the exception of the current twist in his political camp created by Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo decision to contest the APC presidential primary with Tinubu his political benefactor and godfather. While there are numerous rumors of

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in-fighting, misunderstanding and cracks in the relationship between Tinubu and his disciples at one point in time or the other, it is instructive to note that none of this was allowed to become full blown as to threaten the relationship he maintains with those he facilitated their rise into power and prominence. This clearly marks Tinubu out among political godfathers in Nigeria's current republic. Love him or hate him, a fact that cannot be denied by political watchers and analysts is that Tinubu sits atop one of the most compact and successful political empires under the current Fourth Republic. It is also important to note that the tenacity, stability and vibrancy of his brand can be attributed to his pattern of leadership as godfather, a leadership pattern that promotes merit, ability to deliver on responsibility, versatility, intellectual sagacity and the deployment of position for community development objectives.

As noted in earlier sections, almost every *de facto* institution has the potential for benefit as well as harm. However, what is central is the degree of reciprocity, or how much citizens get back from a particular pattern of organizing political relationship and the system that emanated therefrom (Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 2002). To this end, the question of whether clientelism and godfather politics can berth development becomes important. The position that this study advance was that political clientelism (godfather), though anathema to the tenets and principle of democracy and democratic practices and governance system, however, as reiterated above, all societies, whether democratic or authoritarian contained doses of clientelistic politics oiled by patronage system. To this end, while clientelistic politics anchored on godfather (patron-clients) network is bad for democratic purpose but can the same system advance societal development aspirations even if marginal?

The answer to this postulation largely depends on one's political inclination and ideological position. However, with the benefits of hindsight, the clientelistic politics and patronage network of Bola Ahmed Tinubu, had no doubt berthed the enthronement of successive governors of Lagos, that have been more developmental minded even while servicing the patron and the clientelistic and/or patronage network that underpins their enthronement. Aside, the successive governors, the network had emplaced notable clients in prominent national leadership positions and thus widened the political reach of the network. In the same way, the patron (Bola Ahmed Tinubu) had been able to use the resources at the disposal of the network to cultivate political alliance and build cross-cutting political friendship across Nigeria's regional, ethnic and social divides. Other than the above, and more importantly, in all governance indices, Lagos state seem to be better governed and the political leadership more proactive, even while the political recruitment structure can be said to be governed by a clientelistic political network of a godfather.

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A similar scenario can be said to be playing out in Borno state, North-East Nigeria where Kashim Shettima, former governor, a serving senator and now APC vice-presidential candidate, clearly supported the emergence of the current governor, Professor Babagana Umara Zulum. Zulum served Shettima as commissioner for reconstruction and was praised by the emergent godfather as dedicated, goal driven and passionate about the task of post-conflict developmental agenda for Borno state. While there are enormous national and international resources pouring into Borno to aid the post-conflict reconstruction process, the general perception is that the resources are being deployed for the intended purposes by Governor Zulum. Borno's reconstruction drives and the humane bend of Zulum's governance style have becomes a topical issue in national discourse on sub-national political leaders and service delivery. Like Lagos, the godfather and patron, Senator Shettima has shown greater deference to the authority of Governor Zulum as the political leader at the state while maintaining cordiality in political relationships. While what will happen after Zulum completes his second term in 2027 will determines the trajectory of clientelistic politics in Borno what is not doubtful is the fact that the clientele and patron are in concert and the developmental blue-print of Borno is on track.

This then brings back the question of whether clientelism and godfather politics can berth developmental politics. For the case of Lagos and Borno, clientelism and patronage politics is delivering development even if marginal. This brings us to the fact that, corruption linked with politics (clientelism, patrimonialism and patronage politics) is more a feature of politics in Africa but the continent is not archetypical in the manifestation of this phenomenon. In the same vein, while patronage and political clientelism is detrimental to democratic practice and development, there are exceptions to the rule. Indeed, as it relates to intrinsic connections between politicians, bureaucrats and political corruption in Africa, Lekvall (2013: 52) aptly captured this study's position when she averred that, "many politicians and civil servants try to serve the general public while also engaging in patronage and corruption. Implicit in Lekvall's (2013) position is the understanding that patronage and service to the people can be delivered at par by governing patron and their clients in a manner that servicing and/or oiling the patronage network will not derail purposive delivery of public goods.

Thus, the possibility that clientelism will berth development, even if marginal will be contingent upon the developmental perspective, initiative, policies, and programmes advanced by leaders that attained political positions through clientelism. Thus, the personalities of the patrons, competencies of the clients they elevated into positions of power and the forms, nature

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and characters of the relationship becomes highly essential in determining whether clientelism will deliver development and advance social cause. To this end, it can thus be stated that as our cases highlighted, godfathers, the clients' they implanted in power and patronage network they maintained need not necessary constraint the pursuant of development agenda. What is needed is doggedness, political maturity, personal disposition and political will to craft a development blueprint and doggedly stay the course for the actualization of the development aspiration they had crafted with the active participation of the larger civil society. To that end, godfather and clientelistic political network can indeed delivers development for society, subject to personality, developmental disposition, political tenacity and the extent to which political actors can rein-in their rapacious intent for corrupt enrichment.

6 Conclusion

Politics and governance in Nigeria since independence has revolved around the distribution of patronage to networks of courtiers and followers by the power elite. In the context of politics in the First Republic, the power elite deployed the instrumentality of ethnic contract as modality for the distribution of prebends and patronage. However, in the dawn of the Second Republic, ethnic contract began to give way for a more personal pattern of patronage distribution that revolved around powerful individuals (Busari, 2020). This pattern referred to as neopatrimonialism entails the distribution of prebends through networks of relationships based on personal loyalty between the 'Big Man' often referred to as political 'godfather' and his godsons, disciples, courtiers, and followers as the case maybe (Kew, 2010: 504). This pattern of patronage distributions that revolved around godfathers remains a dominant feature of Nigerian politics and governance process. Rather than abate, the phenomenon of godfatherism and the overbearing influence/control they exert on party politics and governance process has been topic of public discourse since Nigeria's return to civil rule in May 1999.

The rancor, instability and violence that had characterized political fallouts between godfathers and their godsons had reinforced the negative perception of the phenomenon of godfathers in the Fourth Republic. Instances of fallout abound especially since 2003, Olusola Saraki versus Muhammad Lawal, Kwara State; Offor versus Mbadinuju and Uba versus Ngige, Anambra State; Kachalla versus Sherif, Borno State; and Adedibu and Ladoja in Oyo State are important reference points (Animasawun, 2013). Powerful as the godfathers might be, maintaining the stability of godfather's hegemony over their political turfs has

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remains problematic. The power and influence of the Uba family in Anambra politics has waned. After the death of Adedibu, the political dynasty has fizzled out, and the hegemonic hold of the Saraki's political dynasty that Bukola Saraki inherited from his father has been dismantled. While there has not been much discourse on the political control and influence of Bola Ahmed Tinubu as a godfather in Lagos State and the extension of his political tentacle/clout to other states in South West Nigeria, there is no controversy about his expanded network in the geo-political zone and his influence on national politics. There is also not much controversy about his special brand of godfather politics that tends to give primacy to competency, refinement and progressive ideology. However, the jury is still out on how long he will be able to ensure hegemonic stability of his political empire.

Without much doubt, power elite, herein referred to in this article as 'Political Godfathers' have had tremendous influence on the nature and dynamics of party and electoral politics and by extension governance process in Nigeria since the commencement of the present fourth republic. That said and more importantly for the benefits of enriching comparative literature, the position of this article is that the whole gamut of governance process in democracies are control by and largely revolves around the dictates of 'power elite'. Thus, the phenomenon of godfather superintending over politics and governance process in democratic Nigeria ought not to be seen as 'arch-typical'. Therefore, the Nigeria case is not unique as politics and governance in democracies has largely been elite driven. Much as the 'power elite' in mature democracies sought to push the narrative that state policies and the setting of agenda are publicly driven, for the benefits of the public and thus guided by 'national interest' considerations, the reality has been that governance process in practically all human societies is elitism and elite driven.

To this end, what constitute the nature of governance especially in democracies is largely a matter of the extent of control and influence that 'power elite' have over the process and the extent at which public policy serves public interest. Thus, the difference between mature democracies and developing democracies as it relates to elite and their control over governance is a matter of degree. Indeed, the origin of the modern idea of democracy in philosophical and theoretical terms can be viewed as essentially intertwined with a normative critique of the role played by power in political societies. Thus, the democratic ideal as can be gleaned from the work of Locke, Montesquieu and Rousseau, is intrinsically linked to a certain interpretation of the ideal of a 'limitation of power'. The idea of limitation is largely to constraint the tendency for abuse of power and authority. In this context, the idea of dispersion

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of power central to the practice of democratic process is anchor on the need to prevent abuse of power by 'power elite'. It then means that despite the equal possession of political rights that is the cornerstone of democratic participation, certain individuals in our societies are seen as more powerful than others, and benefit more in the advancement of their own interests than others (Pansardi, 2016: 91).

Thus, despite the presence of representative institutions and civil and political liberties, contemporary liberal democracies are far from being describable as relying on an equal distribution of power. Contrary to the position held by Mills (1956), it is instructive to note that the observable inequality in the distribution of power does not seem to depend on the presence of a particular power elite, that is able to intentionally constraint the advancement of the interests of less powerful in societies (Pansardi, 2016: 92). Indeed, the inequality seems rather to be an intrinsic feature of our societies, in which democracy, rather than being a system of procedures for the equal advancement of the interests of all citizens, seems instead to amount to a method for the replacement of one ruling elite with another. Thus, democracies in all intent and purpose are governed by the logic of elite rule and the power elite, irrespective of it outlook mostly control the levers of power and the logic of rule across democratic societies. Therefore, the main distinguishing feature as it relates to power elite and/or godfather's influence in democracies is the extent of the control wield on democratic institutions and governance process by the subsisting ruling elite in a given democracy and at a particular point time. Thus, elitism and/or godfatherism is prevalent in all democracies.

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