

POLITICAL MENTORSHIP AND GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: A REFLECTION ON THE ANAMBRA STATE POLITICS; 2003-2019

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Abstract

Political mentorship has become the most prominent feature in Nigeria's politics today. Their influence on the political system has had a negative impact on the politics of Nigeria, and is a potential threat to Nigeria's emerging democracy, development, and security. Political mentorship has been extensively discussed in literature, where it has been linked to loss of life and property, corruption, abuse of public funds, election fraud, stagnant development, and political insecurity. However, in this study, we focused on the problem of Political Mentorship in Nigeria by using Anambra State as our case study. We used qualitative research techniques, including Explanatory Research methodology, for qualitative data analysis. Our findings showed that the effects of Political Mentorship on security and development include loss of lives and property, proliferation of illegal weapons, threat to state institutions, and stagnant development in the state. Based on the results of the study, here are the recommendations: less emphasis should be put on money when it comes to candidates for political office. The immunity clause in the Constitution should be annulled. Choice of candidates for election 'unopposed' should be prohibited while INEC should introduce random electoral plebiscite. Provision should be made in the electoral law for independent candidate in order to reduce the influence of political mentors.

Keywords: Political mentorship, stagnated development, governance, Political Violence, and immunity.

INTRODUCTION

Mentorship is an institutionalized form of politics in Nigeria that has far-reaching effects on the political system as a whole. Mentorship was previously a religious concept, which meant that a young Christian would be placed under the guidance of an older, more experienced Christian. It's important to emphasize that mentorship isn't a new concept in traditional African societies because of the role that elders play. Parents and elders are respected because they are the keepers of custom and tradition combined with their experience. In Christianity, elders are seen as knowledgeable people who have been proven to serve God and humanity. For example, in the south-west Nigeria of the country, you could call a godfather 'baa nigbejo,' which means always available and ready to come to your aid. In Hausa culture, the landlord or the head of the household is known as the "maigida" and is considered a godfather. The same is true in Igbo culture where the relationship between the master and the servant is referred to as the "namu-ukwu" relationship and the phrase "namu ma du" or "man knows man" is used to refer to the relationship between a man and his servant (Albert 2005 cited in Familusi, 2012).

Traditional godfathers are considered mentors, role models, and leaders in the traditional Africa socio-

political system. However, the term has taken on political connotations because attention is no longer focused on the Christian godfather or traditional godfather but the political godfather. In the politics of Nigeria, mentorship is a benign father who has all the tools to support a candidate's political career and expects tangible and intangible benefits from the beneficiary. In this context, politics in Nigeria is seen as a process of accumulation of wealth rather than a process of service, and the concept of mentorship is very real. In the political system, mentorship is considered an ideology which is based on the idea that certain individuals have the power to unilaterally decide who gets party tickets to run for the election and who wins the election (Gambo (2006). In the words of Adeoye, "Mentorship in its simplest form is a relationship between a god and godson." A godfather, on the other hand, is a man who has earned the respect and loyalty of the community and has a well-coordinated political platform and a broad base of support among the electorate that can guarantee victory for his chosen candidates. In Ayoade's (2008), it is argued that the term 'godfather' is often confused with other terms like 'mentor', 'financier' and 'benefactor' among others. As a result, the term 'political godfather' is used to describe a rich man whose contributions to the campaign funds of certain candidates have secured their victory in the election (Albert (2005).

Thus, mentorship in politics is a form of political behavior where economically, politically and socially well-connected individuals in a society exercise their power and influence over political and economic processes, which can be beneficial or detrimental depending on the godfather's intentions. Mentorship in politics is simply a new term for political patronage, and by extension paternalism. In Nigeria, the Godfather phenomenon has played a historic role and has largely shaped and refocused political and governance practice. In Nnamani's (2003), the godfather is perceived by Nigerians as a looming and domineering guardian figure who provides his godson with a lifeline and guidance. The godson lives a life of total subservience and subservience to protect the interests of the godfather

The concept of political godfather dates back to Nigeria's first republic when the leading nationalists of the country such as Zik, Awa and Tafawa Balewa (Alabi, Sakariyau (2013)) controlled and influenced political activities in Nigeria. They were the leaders of Nigeria's three main political parties; the northern people's congress (NPC), the action group (AG) and the national congress of Nigerian citizens (NCNC) who carefully nurtured godsons that they believed would improve the standard of living of the nation's citizens. "Godsons were not used as proxies for parochial interests but to advance the developmental interests of the people" (Uzoamaka, 2010) (Majekodunmi, Majelawo (2013).

The godfathers of the first republic were essentially good and progressive because unlike today, they did not take advantage of their godfather status by making unreasonable demands on their godson. In a way, the first Republic political godfather was attracted by the community's sense of duty to influence the electorate to vote for certain candidates. It was sufficient for them to have a great deal of power in the society, and this inevitably led to a great deal of goodwill and respect for them because their positions on political matters were rarely challenged in their areas of the country.

It is worth noting, however, that the interests of today's crop of political Godfathers differ significantly from those of the old ones in the Christian faith. "Mentorship" as we know it today has been corrupted by the word "godfather". "The word godfather" no longer means "caring, loving and kind". Instead, "mentorship" has been "bastardized" and has come to mean "the boss of a particular political party acting against the interests of the people". (Anakwenze, 2004) The main difference between today's Godfather and the old ones is that today's godfather gives his godson advice and guidance on how to become a moral person in society, while the old one sees himself as a benefactor and gives favours only when it suits his own interests. The political godfather now has a personal prerogative over the godson. This personal prerogative is what defines a godfather in Nigeria. Former Enugu State Governor Nnamani defines a

godfather simply as “a selfish individual who seeks to exploit the government for his personal gain.” (nnamani, 2003) . Anakwenze (2004) also opines that:

“The present day godfathers lack the basic understanding of the fundamental concept of government. However, they believe that government is there to be hijacked to serve personal political interest and to enrich them”.

The dust had not yet settled when Chris Uba emerged as a godfather. Uba was responsible for installing Ngige in office. Ngige had pledged loyalty to Uba, vowing to cooperate with him. Today, the godfathers have made politics a money-making venture, where elections are manipulated with the aim of forcing predetermined candidates into office, and the office-holders are subjected to all kinds of indecent manipulation by their mentors. Nigeria's godfathers view their support for their godsons as a form of economic investment, which must yield high returns by any means necessary. Anambra State is one of Nigeria's federating units that is synonymous with godfather politics. In the years 1999 to 2003, Emeka Ofori was the godfather of the State. The Governor of the State, Chidinujo (godson), defied the godfather and lost the PDP governorship ticket and was unable to stand for re-election in 2003.

Based on this, Uba financed the governorship election at a cost of three billion Naira. Ngige refused to return the commission and patronage to his godfather after the election. What was supposed to be a 'cold war' came to light with the abduction and alleged resignation of Ngige in 2013. Peace did not return to the state until Ngige was impeached by the election petition tribunal on charges of rigging the governorship election by the APGA candidate Mr Peter Obi. This study attempted a scientific investigation of phenomenal cases of political war between political mentors and mentees, most of which occurred after political-power had been gained through mentorship by a superior party.

Roles and Implications of Political Mentorship

Corruption: Political mentors are highly ambitious and Machiavellian individuals who have been able to manipulate their political sons, i.e. the governor or the council chairmen, to follow their orders. As a result, there has been high levels of official and financial nepotism in government..

Allocated Revenue: Revenue for states and councils is often mismanaged with unreasonable and unreasonable amounts of contracts being given to godfathers or other political cronies under various guises for fear of being impeached. Some get monthly payments from state purse for unfinished work, all to please godfather at the expense of the people.

Political Patronage: Unfortunately, public funds are often used for political patronage in the face of decaying or inadequate social infrastructure, particularly in the states and local governments. Public officials in this situation will always remain in office as long as their godfathers approve of their performance, even if it is poor..

Threat to electoral process: Political mentors will use all means at their disposal to install their sons in positions of power, using their wealth and influence, to disrupt the electoral process of the country, to steal ballot papers, and to manipulate the election results to the benefit of the sons who do not represent the people's choice..

Indiscipline: Their attitude towards party infighting is disgraceful. As a result, popular intra-party decisions that run counter to their interests are often cut short, making party leadership effective.

Mediocrity: The fraudulent methods by which they get into power. The promotion of mediocrity over

merit. Today, the problem of governance in Nigeria is the result of official and financial corruption, and the misappropriation of public funds by politicians, rather than people's loyalty. The sons of the gods are loyal to the godfathers. So long as the godfathers are around, our electoral processes will continue to be manipulated regardless of any scientific method of counting and reporting the results.

Victimization of the opposition: Mentors are part of the elite class in Nigeria. They use their sons in positions of power to victimize, terrorize and stifle political opposition within and outside their parties. The vicious cycle of violence between godfathers and opposition parties has created a state of insecurity and threat to lives and properties of innocent people.

Political Empire: With the growing tension between mentors and political sons, we have now entered a new era of our politics. Mentors are forcing their biological children to serve as elected or appointed representatives of the people, even if they are not the most qualified, all in order to create political empires for themselves that are devoid of the people's interest.

Political instability: From the beginning, the mentors are highly irregular and illegal in the way they carry out their schemes. This is more obvious in the attempt to depose their treacherous political sons. Uba (the godfather) engineered the abduction of Anambra governor Ngige in 2003. In Oyo state, the ouster of the governor by the military in 2006 threatens to bring political instability to the state.

Higher Authority Support: There is no doubt that godfathers have the backing of the highest levels of government, such as the presidency, and they often find willing accomplices or tools in the Nigeria Police Force, various State Justices and the House of Assembly, who are more than willing to go beyond the normal procedures for the removal of elected public officials, such as governors and council chairmen, in order to serve their vested interests in a country governed by a Constitution.

Mentorship, Political Violence and Governance in Nigeria.

The world's recognition of democracy led to the re-establishment of democratic governance in Nigeria on 29 May 1999. Since then, Nigeria has not been free from the godfathers' role in defining the process of democracy. Scholars have often linked mentorship with governance in Nigeria's 4th republic (see Sadeeq (2008), Nkwede (2014), Omotola (2009)). Despite the differences in conception and practice, all the aspects of governance, according to Osage (1992), have one common goal: to "govern the society in a manner that power truly belongs to all persons". According to Chafe (1994), democracy is the "involvement of people in the management of the political, social, economic and cultural activities of their society".

According to Sadeeq (2008), democracy is the extent to which the people have full control over their polity, under the rule of natural law, which determines the democratic nature of the political system. This follows closely from Barry (1992), who argues that the special quality of democracy lies in the fact that only government can promote the interests of all members of a politically constituted community. Therefore, in a democracy, political parties play such an important role that neither democracy nor non-democracy can exist without them (Omotola (2009)).

The survival of democracy depends on parties because political parties organize the electoral process, from the participation of citizens to the election of candidates and the presentation of competing political platforms. Political parties become viable when an orderly political succession takes place in society. Political parties bring order to the political process by regularizing the process of leadership succession

and the integration of new groups in the political system. Political parties serve as a foundation for stability and regularity rather than for instability. (Huntington 1968).Katz (1980) always concluded that: "Modern democracy is party democracy. The political institutions and practices which constitute democratic government in the West were created by political parties and would not be possible without them." Political parties are expected to have the following characteristics in order to consolidate democracy. Adejumbi (2007) suggests that political parties must be made up of likeminded people with similar world views. They must promote a series of programs that reflect the version, purpose and manifestos of the party and are designed to satisfy the needs of the people. They should be mass based to legitimize them. Over time, they must evolve gradually and systematically with identifiable leaders who are their focal points. Political parties must have characteristics of internal democracy. However, this has not always been the case in Nigeria's political system as frequent internal crises within political parties often lead to political violence within the Nigerian society..As for how political parties have operated since 1999, so far, they have failed to engage in matters that would strengthen Nigeria's democracy. Similarly, godfathering political parties renders them ineffective in the discharge of their duties.

Political godfathers, therefore, have a negative impact on democracy by preventing citizens from participating as a citizen or as a candidate. Omotola (2007) defines political godfatherism as the practice of imposing candidates' right from local to national level on the understanding that they will surrender to them the state treasury. Political mentorship (Omotola, 2010) argues that political godfatherism is both a cause and a symptom of violence and corruption which co-exists in the political process of Nigeria. Political godfathers who owe their position to their political godfather owe a debt of service to the public which they must repay without interruption throughout their term of office. They monopolize state resources and state policies regardless of whether the state exists or not. In fact, their activities help to frustrate the fundamental democratic values of society and impede the development of true democracy by obstructing the choice of good and competent candidates in the election process thus making the development of democracy a difficult task. These kinds of agreements explain why the dividends of democracy become a delusion in our society.

It is in this context that Albert (2005), in the context of mentorship in Nigeria, argues that elitism is a conflict between democracy and elitism. According to Welsh (1979), cited by Albert (2005), elitism is a system in which a limited number of individuals exercise political control over the structure of governance and political activity. In Nigeria, the typical godfather seeks to manipulate government officials and state institutions for his personal gain. Conflicts only arise when their clients resist being manipulated. Such a situation does not bode well for the growth and development of any democracy. Democracy is concerned with safeguarding the interests of the whole of society and should not be limited to the interests of the few.

The common defining property of a democracy is an electoral contest and a framework in which political parties contest for the votes of the citizens on a regular basis. Indeed, the quality of the electoral process is one of the criteria for evaluating the consolidation of new democracies in the 21st century. However, the functioning of free and fair electoral processes remains a major challenge for new democracies across West Africa, particularly in Nigeria. The political process that leads to democratic governance is often misinterpreted by most Nigerians as a way to improve their lives. As a result, politicians are often seen as the gatekeepers of paradise on earth. On the other hand, this lifestyle, which is based on the looting of taxpayers' funds, has made the process of seeking elective office a very dangerous affair. Politicians today are responsible for a large number of deaths through acts of violence and thuggery, political assassination and crimes related to the quest for power. Animasaun (2010). In the process, many crimes are committed.

Security forces are often used to harass or terrorize political rivals and voters, or to participate in the suppression of free, fair, and credible elections (Idowu (2010).

In this context, in Babatunde's (2011) opinion, elections result in the choice of decision-makers by the majority of the citizens. Babatunde points out that prior to the advent of the Fourth Republic democratizing experiment in Nigeria, previous elections in the country were not conducted in a perfect manner and there were many allegations of fraud and irregularities. However, compared to recent elections, in particular the 2003 and 2007, the conduct of these elections showed a commitment to participate in a legitimate, democratic process. Studies have shown that the conduct of the 2003 and 2007 electoral processes was very worrying and the credibility of the process was seriously challenged by domestic and foreign observers. The Fourth Republic of Nigeria's (1999, 2003, 2007, and 2011) elections were not free from thuggery, ballot box theft, armed robbery, kidnappers, assassination, confusionists and arsonists who often have a great deal of fun during these elections (see Hounkpe (2010), Omotola (2010), Bekoe (2011), National Democratic Institute (2012).

According to the European Union Observers' report, there were also widespread cases of electoral malpractice in several states in the middle belt, south-east and south-south regions of Nigeria (see European Commission, 2003, cited by INEC (Babatunde (2011)). Thus, electoral malpractice and violence have become a recurrent decimal point in the political history of Nigeria and are a major cause of concern for the survival of democracy in Nigeria (see INEC (2011), cited by Oni (2013)).

Political godfathers cannot be separated from the role they played in the democratisation process in Nigeria's 4th republic, and, as Babatunde (2011) rightly points out, Nigeria's political parties are controlled by party bosses whose primary concern is to control the party machinery rather than to nominate the best candidates for competitive political positions. In addition, Babalakin's (1983) Commission of Inquiry rightly observed that Nigeria's political and political parties are so deeply embedded in the fabric of society that many people of good character and ability simply avoid national politics. This is largely due to the fact that political parties are largely controlled by influential men who view the financing of political parties or candidates as a form of investment that must produce high returns, regardless of how these returns are obtained (FRI, 1986, p. 348; Babatundede, 2011). As a result, democracy becomes meaningless once it does not improve the quality of life of the people. The credibility of leaders whose selection process falls outside of democratic standards is highly problematic and has consequences for the stability of the country (ICG 2007).

Theoretical Framework

Mentorship and Political Violence in Anambra State, Nigeria can be analyzed through the lens of Relational Theory and Theory of Economy of Attraction. Theoretical framework provides a platform for the researcher to analyze data. According to Encarta (2004), a theory is an idea or a belief about something, arrived at through an assumption, and in some cases, a collection of facts, propositions, or principles, analyzed in relation to each other and used, particularly in science, to explain phenomena. Political power, and the privileges it confers, is a major source of conflict between different interest groups in a political system. When multiple groups share a fixed resource, the likelihood that each group will attempt to destroy, neutralize, injure or monopolize the other, or the tendency to engage in a negative relationship is as high as that of Moaz (1982).

The relational theory and the economy of affection provide a theoretical framework for the researcher to

analyze the data. Relational theory is a set of ideas or beliefs about something that are derived from an assumption. Economic of Attraction is a set of propositions or principles that are analysed in relation to each other and used, particularly in science, to explain a phenomenon. GoranHyden (2006) argues that informal institutions play an important role in African politics, and that formal rules are often bent to serve these informal institutions. In Anambra State, Nigeria, the dynamics of political violence can be explained by the dynamics of informal institutions. It is essential to understand the dynamics of these informal institutions in order to understand the phenomenon of political mentorship. An example of this is the political godson of chief Chris Ubaof Anambra State. Uba's political godson was not interested in the people of the state, but only in achieving his personal goals and interests through political godson with no due process.

The economy of affection is further explained by Hyden (2006) as a personal investment in relations with others as a means of achieving objectives that are perceived as unattainable without engaging in an economy of affection. People engage in economies of affection because of desired goods: material or symbolic goods such as material goods, prestige and status that may be attainable but not accessible to everyone. According to Hyden (2006): (a) who you know is more significant than what you know. (b) sharing your personal wealth is more satisfying than investing in economic development. (c) giving a helping hand today will yield returns tomorrow. (Hyden (2006, cited by Animasawun (2013). Under the economic theory of love or affective behaviour, the mentorship phenomenon in Nigeria's political system shows that godfathers expect; gain, position, favour and the allocation of state funds or benefits in return for their contribution to the governorship's electoral victory. These ideologies result in the disintegration of the relationship between godfather Chris Uba, and godson Chris Ngige, which culminated in the governorship DrNgige's abduction from office and forced resignation from office.

Hyden's theory of 'economy of affection' further emphasizes and illustrates the political culture of mentorship in Nigeria. Mentorship has penetrated deeply into Nigeria's political system, governance structure, and social fabric where: who you know matters more than who you know; sharing personal wealth is preferable to investing in economic development; the conflict between Godfathers and Godsons resulted from the godson's non-fulfilling promises; the violence escalated to the point of thuggery; the people were disenfranchised; and the fundamental rights were denied to them. The fact that the federal government failed to take action at the time of the crisis further illustrates the extent to which mentorship has penetrated the system.

The study could also be based on elite theory, which was developed by Suenu, 2004 (Suenu 2004, cited in Nkwede et al., 2014). The basic premise of elite theory is that, in any society, there is and must be a small group that dominates the rest of society. This small group is the political class, or governing elite, which is made up of those who hold political power and, more often than not, those who directly influence political decisions. The political class changes over time, usually by recruiting new members from the lower social strata, sometimes by incorporating new social categories, and sometimes by replacing the established elite with counter-elite members. The way in which each individual is assigned an index in every sphere of human activity is very similar to the way grades are scored in various subjects in school examinations.

Suenu (2004) is one of the most prominent proponents of this elite paradigm. Suenu sees an elitist connection between the concept of mentorship and the concept of the elite. Mentorship, according to Suenu, is synonymous with the political elite. In Suenu's view, the political elites in Nigeria are known as godfathers, and they are the ones who rule. Godfathers are also known as kingmakers, notables, and often see themselves as strongmen who dominate politics in their domains. According to Suenu (2004), in a political environment characterized by godfatherism, individuals are "colonized" by godfathers. Put

another way, godfathers govern by proxies. (Suenu, 2004, cited in Nkwede et al., 2014). The significance of this theory in the context of the present study cannot be overstated. This is due to the fact that it is closely related to the theory that explains political mentorship as well as governance.

The Problems of Political Mentorship in Anambra state.

This section presents the results of the analysis of the issues related to political mentorship in the state of Anambra. The findings are derived from the questionnaire administered and the interview conducted in the study area. As shown in Table 3 below, the majority of respondents (77%) considered that the politics of Anambra State in the past 15 years had been violent, while the minority (23%) disagreed. The majority of key informants interviewed was of the opinion that although the politics of the state in the past had been violent, there has been a consistent decrease in violent activities in recent times.

The table above shows that 95% of respondents said they are aware that there are political godfathers involved in the politics in Anambra State, while 5% said they are not aware of any political godfathers. On the other hand, 95.3% of respondents said political mentors are a negative factor and have an impact on the political system of Anambra State. While 4.7% rejected the idea. Respondents also mentioned interference in governance, freedom of expression during the party primaries among the political parties, and disruption of the government policies as some of the godfathers' activities.

Conclusion

Political mentorship is one of the major threats to the development of democracy, security, and development in the state of Anambra, Nigeria. Based on the findings so far, political mentorship has a deep-rooted presence in the state's political system. Therefore, in order to adequately address the problem of mentorship, it is necessary to involve every political stakeholder in a proactive and sustainable manner. From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the respondents were overwhelmingly opposed to the threat of the political godfather in the state of Imo. The majority of the blame for this lies with elected government office holders who should have a strong sense of accountability, transparency and responsibility towards their people. The study also revealed that the members of the general public need to be reoriented and properly involved in the political process in order to be able to challenge government policies and come up with strategies with unity to defend their fundamental rights, without compromising their integrity.

5.4 Recommendations

In order to overcome the challenges of political mentorship in Anambra State, the study identifies the following as urgent actions to consolidate democracy, peace and development in the state of Anambra

- Do not put too much emphasis on money. Put too much emphasis on credibility. Candidates who want to run for political office should put their credibility first. This would discourage aspiring political office holders from relying on sponsors that turn out to be godfathers and relying on their ability to persuade voters to vote for them. It would also strengthen their sense of accountability to the people rather than to a few godfathers who manipulated them into power.

- Existing sentiments and cultural and religious divisions should not be a prerequisite when it comes to finding qualified candidates to run for public/political office and political parties should create and enforce rigorous discipline among members.
- The immunity clause in the Constitution should be annulled in order to ensure that any public official who breaches or abrogates any part of the Constitution should be held accountable..
- In order to loosen the grip of political mentors, a provision should be included in the electoral law to allow independent candidates to run.
- Eliminate the abuse of the power of incumbency by appointing an Interim Government in place of the President, the Governor and the Chairmen of Local Government in the run-up to the next election. This will put an end to the practice where the above-mentioned public office holders chair the election in which they stand as candidates, colluding with the godfathers to rig the election in their favour with their symbols of office.

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