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Godfathers, political parties and electoral corruption in Nigeria

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Electoral corruption is mostly seen in Nigeria as a direct subversion of the electoral process by individuals, who are greedy for personal enrichment that electoral success underwrites in Nigeria. While not questioning the personal enrichment thesis of electoral corruption, as it is true, the paper adopts a more nuanced approach to the understanding of electoral corruption. It focuses on the realities of existence of godfathers, political parties and voters in Nigeria. It argues that electoral corruption is the result not just of the avariciousness of godfathers and politicians but of the logic of electoral competition (zero-sum) which demands that political parties in Nigeria, incapacitated by a weak voters' mobilization capacity derived from their elite/caucus nature, resort to individuals (godfathers) possessing of certain attributes such as an "intuitive grasp of and control of local voting structure," to effect electoral success through activities that distort the electoral process or through electoral competition. Electoral corruption is further entrenched by the political and social existential demands of the godfather, which can only be met by further exercises in electoral corruption, though this time in favor of the godfathers themselves.

Key words: Godfathers, political parties, elections, corruption, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Finally in the last decades of the Republic the trading *in* votes rose to such a height that the law was repeatedly strengthened... by an act of 67 B.C the "treating" of voters was made punishable... in 55 B.C a new law struck at what was probably the most flagrant form of corruption... the wealthy candidate would quietly arrange for his election to the desired office with a band of political "go-betweens" (interprets).

These professional gentlemen would proceed to mark out the roman tribes into smaller and more wieldy sections, arrange voters into clubs and fraternities, compound with each section for its votes, marshal the faithful henchmen to the electoral comitia, and duly pay over the stipulated honorarium upon delivery of the elections (Davis, 1910; Scott, 1973:).

The above quote describes the process of electoral corruption in ancient Rome but can substitute neatly for what goes on during elections in present-day Nigeria, where elections are habitually subverted by political parties and politicians through the illegal use of money, physical force and governmental patronage deployed through the intermediary of "perverse brokers" (Olarinmoye, 2007: 33) known as godfathers who can be seen as the direct lineal descendants of the Roman "interprets" or "go-between".

Furthermore, it establishes the intimate links between the subversion of the electoral process or electoral fraud and poor governance of political society as electoral fraud facilitated by godfathers or go-betweens deny voters control of a "valuable political resource; the giving or withholding of their votes" (Scott, 1973) which is at the core of indirect or representative democracy, where people "participate in taking and implementing decisions on the common affairs of the community indirectly, through their representatives, elected or selected for that purpose" (Agbaje, 2005).

The above means, ipso facto, that subversion of the electoral process leads to the installation of individuals who pursue private interests and desires rather than general interest or public good, hence the bad governance, poverty and economic underdevelopment that have characterized Nigeria public space since independence and especially since 1999 with the inauguration of the 4th Republic. It follows, logically, that an understanding of dynamics of electoral corruption, its forms and processes is essential to current quests for good governance and democratic consolidation in Nigerian and Africa as a whole. This paper argues that for any study of electoral corruption to be useful, it must take as its central variables: (a) the nature of political parties and the institu-

tional context they operate in and (b) the godfathers or political brokers.

Political parties in Nigeria are elite groupings. The fact of their elite nature has meant a reduced mobilization capacity as they are poorly entrenched in Nigerian civil society with a gap existing between them and the masses forming the electorate. To bridge the gap, parties adopted a number of strategies. The first is the mobilization of ethnic identity through ethnic movements and use of ethnic leadership at the grass root level. The consequence of ethnic mobilization for electoral purposes in Nigeria is an institutional context where elections are transformed into highly competitive zero sum games. To confront the uncertainties resulting from the acquisition of political power through mobilisation of ethnic identity, political parties have resorted to patronage and godfathers to effectively deploy patronage and overcome the problems of voters' compliance, which it generates.

Anchoring the godfather's brokerage function is what can be described as the godfather's intuitive grasp of the structure of the voting public in the sense of his knowing what appeals and what incentives are most appropriate to each group. They are thus brokers, go-betweens for politicians, seeking political power in a situation of voters' alienation and distrust in return for contracts and political appointments.

The rewards of the godfather puts him in a dependent and precarious position vis-à-vis those who he helps to gain power as his continued existence and relevance, which is depended on a continuous renewal of his knowledge of local terrain and networks is in turn dependent on resources he does not control. Like any entrepreneur, he engages in a resource restructuration process which relies for its success on deployment of electoral corruption. The cycle of electoral corruption continues to evolve, developing inertia of its own that is totally outside the control of the political parties that initially spurred it.

Political parties and electoral corruption in Nigeria

Democracy is about participation and representation. Participation is the extent to which individual members of society take part or get involved in the activities in their societies. Representation on the other hand, refers to the process by which people get chosen to act in the interest of the community or sectors thereof. In modern day where the dominant form of democracy is indirect or representative democracy, political parties are the principal mechanism for ensuring citizen participation and representation in public policy decision-making (Agbaje, 2005); and in fact through which individuals share the democratic values.

Thus, a political party is an organized group of individuals who share similar political beliefs, opinions, principles, aspirations and interests with the sole aim of capturing political power and exercising it through the for-

mation of government. In democracies, a political party is "a more or less permanent institution with the goal of aggregating interests, presenting candidates for elections with the purpose of controlling governments and representing such interests in government. It is thus a major vehicle for enhancing participation in governance" (Foley and Edwards, 1996)

Political parties are saddled with the responsibility of recruiting competent individuals for political leadership through periodic elections, educating the electorate through political rallies and dissemination of information about government policies as well as serving as a vehicle for the articulation and aggregation of the interests of people. Thus, they serve as the pivot upon which the entire political process revolves" (Babawale and Ashiru, 2006).

In other words, there can be no meaningful democracy without a properly functioning political party system. It is obvious therefore, that political parties constitute the heart of democracy. The more vigorous and healthy they are the better assured is the health of the democratic process (Agbaje, 1998). It is therefore difficult to imagine any modern democracy without political parties as they are the connecting links between diverse groups of peoples and governments.

The most common classification of political parties is that which emphasizes the degree of competitiveness in a political system. Hence, there can be one party, two party or multi-party political systems. A more basic classification of political parties is that which highlights the nature of the membership of political parties. Thus there can be:

- i. Branch/mass parties whose membership is composed of different sections of political society.
- ii. Caucus/elitist parties whose membership is drawn mainly from the upper class of society.
- iii. Religious parties whose membership is determined by nature of religious affiliation.
- iv. Broker parties with membership drawn from both the rich and poor classes in society.
- v. Charismatic parties formed around individuals with unique talents and whose membership cuts across identity and class lines.

As it concerns political parties in Nigeria, their history and evolution can be situated within the context of the two-party and multi-party political system (Adejumobi, 2007), which can be traced to the development of nationalist consciousness, awareness and political movements (Agarah, 2004), that began in Nigeria in the 1930s. This activity specifically, is what Coleman (1986:) described as the "second wave of nationalist movement which was "less militant and resistant" but mainly concerned with "sentiments, activities and organizational developments aimed at the self-government and independence of Nigeria".

A key distinguishing feature of the second wave of

Nigerian nationalism was the development of permanent political associations to pursue nationalist objectives (Coleman, 1986) with the various associations formed by nationalists such as Ernest Ikoli, Herbert Macaulay, Samuel Akinsanya, Nnamdi Azikwe and Obafemi Awolowo constituting the precursors of political parties in Nigeria.

Political parties in Nigeria display certain key features, which include:

i.) Their emergence and evolution has been closely tied to Nigerian Constitutional Development or evolution of Nigerian constitution. For example, it was the Clifford constitution of 1922 provision of four elective seats for Nigerian in the Legislative Council that stimulated the formation of the Nigerian Democratic Party of Herbert Macaulay. Similarly, political party formation enjoyed a boost from the Richard's constitution of 1944 provision of regional assemblies while retaining the four elective seats to Legislative Council. Similarly the Macpherson constitution's regional assemblies and regional executive councils and system of indirect elections to Nigerian Legislative Houses in 1951 strengthened political parties' activities in pre-independent Nigeria.

ii.) Most parties have ethnic and regional bases or display identity orientations. For example, the Action Group, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD) had their bases in the Yoruba dominated south-west of Nigeria. Similarly, the National Council of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC) and the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) had their political strong hold in Igbo land while Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), National Party of Nigeria (NPN) and All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) have theirs in the Hausa-Fulani heartland of northern Nigeria.

iii.) Only a few of the political parties in Nigeria can boast of having a national spread.

iv.) Political parties in Nigeria have been prone to serious inter-party conflicts, divisions, splitting and de-camping (Agarah: 2004; Adejumbi, 2007).

These features arise from what has been described by Rosiji (1992) as 'caucus or elitist nature of political parties in Nigeria, the direct outcome of thinking that "the educated minority in each ethnic group are the people who are qualified by natural right to lead their fellow nationals into higher political development (Olarinmoye, 2006). The Action Group/ UPN and AD were the handiwork of Yoruba middle-class business men and intelligentsia. The Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) was the creation of the Hausa-Fulani ruling class in northern Nigeria. Even the NCNC described in the literature as the only mass party in Nigeria was essentially composed of an elite core centered on an Igbo educated class and surrounded by Igbo grass root organizations.

The National Party of Nigeria and most of the parties of the Second and Third Republics as well as in Abacha's regime arose from caucus formations in the various con-

stitutional assemblies. For instance the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) were formed by administrative fiat of the Babangida government, while the parties of the present fourth republic follow the same elite orientation. For example, the Alliance for Democracy (AD) was the result of splits among political elites, first in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and later in the All Peoples' Party (APP).

In other words, political elites first create political structures then invite the mass to join. Political parties are created and directed by the elites in society who believe that control of government and of political power should be their preserve. They are thus, not mass or branch parties with membership drawn from across board and interests. They pursue interests that are parochial, centered on elite objectives and their actualization.

Elite parties are therefore "non-ideological organizations having less interest in political principles than in securing and retaining political office for its leadership and distributing income to those who run it and work for it" (Banfield and Wilson, 1965; Scott, 1973). The structural and ideological features of elite parties translate into a weak base amongst the masses. Most political parties in Nigeria parties are poorly entrenched in Nigerian civil society with a gap existing between them and the mass electorate.

To bridge the gap, parties adopted a number of strategies. The first is the mobilization of ethnic identity through ethnic movements and use of ethnic leadership at the grass root level. The problem with such a strategy was that it transforms elections into highly competitive zero-sum games and encourages what Richard et al. (2006) have referred to as 'ethnic-security' dilemma, a situation which arises:

When ethnic categories become the primary lens through which the public views political events, thereby constraining and aggravating the choices of political elites. In the absence of other viable social categories for the protection of group interests, one ethnic group's apparent political gain is viewed by others as a potential loss. This zero-sum prospect creates an incentive for elites to maximize their ethnic group's position, which in turn makes other groups feel insecure and forces them to follow suit. Consequently, Nigerian politics occurs within a broader context of ethnic insecurity and an ethnic calculus of "Who's up, who's down?" in terms of relative power within the federation".

Secondly, since elite political parties are "groups with access to economic resources able to translate such endowments into selective incentives to overcome collective action problems" (Weinstein, 2005: 602-603), they have also relied on massive deployment of material resources or "patronage" such as jobs, land tenancy, community construction, promotions, loans (Wang and

Kurzman, 2007a).

Patronage is expected to generate what can be described as “voter compliance” in the form of *instrumental* compliance where recipients change, or do not change, their electoral behavior in exchange for tangible rewards, *normative* compliance a situation where recipients change, or do not change, their electoral behavior because the offer convinces them of the goodness or worthiness of the candidate, or because they somehow feel normatively obligated and *coercive* compliance by bullying recipients into changing, or not changing, their electoral behavior (Schaffer, 2002).

The use of patronage to ensure voter compliance is not fail-safe as there always exists a difference in how political party and voters conceptualize patronage. Political parties see patronage as establishing a contract between the voters and the political party or a form of patron-client relation, while for the voters, the act of accepting an offer may hold a variety of meanings. It might constitute making a contract, securing amends, receiving a gift, accepting an auction bid, recognizing power, compromising one's principles, acknowledging goodwill (Schaffer, 2002).

In other words, “buying votes is an inherently risky proposition because of *“slippage”*—the possibility that voters will take the money and run. Unlike parties, voters have an interest in making some money and then voting for whom they want anyway. Indeed, voters would love to get paid to vote for the candidate they support anyway” (Lehoucq, 2002).

The problem of voter compliance can be resolved in a number of ways as follows:

- i.) Direct *monitoring of how individuals vote* as either a condition for post-voting payment, or as a prelude to post-voting retribution if the recipient does not do as instructed.
- ii.) Paying voters to abstain from voting altogether, thereby *preventing* them from casting ballots for one's opponent, a strategy often called “negative vote buying.”
- iii.) Instill in recipients a belief that the candidate is *good or worthy*. This is often accomplished through giving gifts or dispensing favors which demonstrate the benevolence, kindness, responsiveness, or respect of the candidate. A belief in the goodness or worthiness of the candidate might also be created by paying the recipient wages for rendering some nominal service for the candidate (poll watching, distributing ballots, hanging posters, delivering messages, playing music), the goal of which is to generate gratitude towards the candidate or cognitive dissonance were the recipient to vote for another candidate.

These strategies effectively demand institutional and human resources that are beyond the capacity of African political parties as they are poorly institutionalized and lack the political discipline associated with the ideological parties that exist in developed western countries of the world. More over, they are constrained by electoral rules

and regulations from engaging in such practices. But they have to contest and win elections to remain relevant as political actors. A very effective solution adopted by political parties in Nigeria since independence is the use of individuals who have the knowledge of the political terrain and the capacity to deploy such knowledge to enhance voter compliance. These individuals are the Godfathers.

The godfather and electoral corruption

The best way to make sense of godfathers is to see them as service providers, persons who resolve the voter compliance problem facing political parties in their quest to control political power in Nigeria. The godfather's role as a service provider is amply reflected in the following quotes,

“One thing in politics is that you must believe in godfatherism. If I did not believe in it, I would not be in daddy's place,” Reverend Jolly Nyame, the governor of the northern Taraba State, told Nigeria's The Sun newspaper.

“Whether you like it or not, as a godfather you will not be a governor, you will not be a president, but you can make a governor, you can make a president.”

“I am the greatest godfather in Nigeria because this is the first time an individual single handedly put in position every politician in the state.” (Ibrahim, 2006).

The above quotes underlie the key role godfathers as brokers or go-between between political parties and the voting public and political power. The godfather is a broker or go-between, a professional manipulator of information who brings about communication (that is, between political parties and voters) for a profit. The godfather “makes merchandise out of other people's expectations, anticipations and hopes” (Boisseran, 1974).

Anchoring the godfather's brokerage function is what can be described as the godfather's “intuitive grasp of the structure of the voting public in the sense of his knowing what appeals and what incentives are most appropriate to each group”. He has in his possession knowledge of the sort of incentives most likely to “move” people with such knowledge being contingent on the kinds of loyalty ties that are most salient to the potential voter and resulting only from an intimate knowledge of the terrain or intuitive grasp of the structure of the voting public (Wang and Kurzman, 2007b).

It is his intuitive grasp of the structure of the voting public that enables the godfather to engage in election voter compliance activities such as:

- i.) Compilation of fictitious names on voters' registers, illegal compilation of separate voters' list, abuse of the voter registration revision exercise, illegal printing of vot-

ers' cards, illegal possession of ballot boxes, collaboration between polling officials and agents to subvert the electoral rules, late or non-supply of election materials to opposition strongholds, delay in opening polling centers located in opposition strongholds (Pre-election voter compliance).

ii.) Stuffing of ballot boxes with ballot papers, falsification of election results, Illegal thumb-printing of ballot papers, stuffing of ballot boxes, under-age voting, multiple voting, illegal printing of electoral result forms (as in the case of Form EC 8 and EC 8A used in collation and declaration of election results in 2003 and 2007 elections), deliberate refusal to supply election materials to certain areas, announcing results in places where no elections were held, unauthorized announcement of election results, harassment of candidates, agents and voters, change of list of electoral officials, box-switching and inflation of figures and long delays or manipulation of election tribunals to protect stolen verdicts, inducement of voters with food and money, threatening voters with the use of force (FRN, 1986; Kurfi, 2005; Ibrahim, 2006).

The pre and post election activities of the godfathers effectively ensure that voters keep their contract with political parties and that political party and politicians gain control of political power. But in the process of carrying out his broker activities, the godfather engages on behalf of political parties and politicians, in activities that constitute electoral corruption because they are illegal interference with the process of elections.

From Godfather-broker to Godfather-patron: the transformation of electoral corruption in Nigeria

The link between the godfather and electoral corruption is a dynamic one, one that is subject to the changes that occur in nature of relations between the godfather and his clients: the political parties and politicians. The "godfather is a broker", a middle-man who offers to political parties and politicians seeking to control political power his ability to enforce voter compliance based on his intuitive grasp of voting structure in return for economic profit.

The godfather is therefore an active mediator between two social units who benefit from such mediation in the form of contracts and political appointments. Such rewards from political parties define the "dependent" status of the godfather as someone whose existence entails a nurturing of strategic contacts with actors who control what Boissevain (Bierschenk et al., 2002: 10-14) has called "first degree resources (land, money, work force)-the politicians or the patrons. He is therefore totally dependent on the goodwill of politicians and political parties (patrons) for his continued existence and relevance.

The second degree resources which the godfather derives from his brokerage activities for the controllers of first degree resources is of fundamental importance to his

existence as a broker as he requires it to nourish and extend his knowledge and control of the structure of the voting public. As such knowledge and control of the structure of the voting public is the basis of his ability to act as a broker, the resources he gains as reward for his actions on behalf of political parties and politicians is of crucial importance to him.

The position of the godfather is therefore a very unstable one. Brokerage is not a status which one attains once and for all as the experiences of godfathers such as Adedibu have shown. Alhaji Adedibu explained his decision to join the NPN, the arch-rival party to the Awoists in Yoruba-land thus,

"in 1978 after I joined the National Party of Nigeria, a lot of people especially journalist (sic) had always asked me that since I was in Action Group from 1951 through the moment of its tribulations and until all parties were banned by the military after January 15 1966 coup, why didn't I follow Awo into the UPN? I have immense respect and reverence for the late sage, however when the "Committee of Friends" which later metamorphosed into the UPN was formed around 1975, some of us who had stayed with the A.G during its trying moments were not invited into any of its meetings neither were we invited when the UPN was to be formed. Since politics is a business of interest where players had to look for where they would be accommodated or where they were wanted, some A.G loyalists like myself...had no option but to join other political parties" (Agbaje 2002).

The need to protect themselves against disappointment in their relationship with their clients who become controllers of first degree resources through their brokerage activities has pushed godfathers into taking initiatives that has had the consequence of entrenching electoral corruption in Nigerian politics.

In other words, godfather-brokers in order to face-up to the possibilities of constant re-arrangement of power configuration in their relationships with political clients and the negative impact which such has on their existence as brokers have been forced to restructure their modus operandi, that is evolve from individuals reliant on second degree resources to individuals who control first degree resources in their own right. In other words, transforms themselves from being 'godfather-broker' to becoming "godfather-patron".

The godfather-patron is the dominant form of godfatherism in Nigerian politics today. The godfather-patron deploys his knowledge and control of structure of voting public to capture the party machinery for himself. With his control of the party structure he becomes the sponsor of politicians and no longer their broker. He uses his control of party machinery to impose his clients as party candidates for elective office and ensures their electoral success through activities which have been characterized as electoral corruption. Success of the party at elections translates into direct access of the godfather-patron to

first degree resources controlled by the state.

Simply put, the godfather in his bid to secure stable access to state resources and ensure his continued existence as a "Bigman" engages in electoral corruption. For example, in his bid to hijack control of political parties he engages in acts which are flagrant violation of electoral laws in Nigeria. Such acts include;

i.) Making a declaration that those entitled to vote must support one candidate and other aspirants must withdraw. Since these people are very powerful and feared in their communities, their declarations carry much weight.

ii.) Engaging in zoning and other procedures that exclude unwanted candidates by moving the party zone out of the seat or position in question to an area where the excluded candidate is not local.

iii.) Deploying violence by thugs or security personnel against candidates who oppose the godfathers protégés

iv.) Money, a significant factor in party primaries, is used to bribe officials and induce voters to support particular candidates. Since the godfather generally has more money than the "independent" candidates, many of the latter are eliminated because they cannot match his spending.

v.) What Nigerians call "results by declaration": An aspirant wins a nomination or election, but polling officials disregard the results and declare the loser the winner (Ibrahim, 2006b; Ibrahim, 2007).

The case of Chris Uba graphically describes the dynamics of the godfather-patron. Chris Uba is notoriously known to have brazenly orchestrated the arrest, using an assistant inspector-general of the Nigerian Police, and subsequent resignation of the elected governor of Anambra State, Chris Ngige. Chris Uba had initially been a political broker and aide to the chief godfather-broker in Anambra State during the regime of General Sanni Abacha, Arthur Eze.

In the succeeding Fourth Republic, He capitalized on the break down in relationship between the new chief godfather-broker in the state Emeka Offor and his client-governor, Dr. C. Mbadinuju and on his contacts within the presidency in the form of his brother, Andy Uba, President Obasanjo's Special Adviser on Domestic Matters, to seize control of PDP machinery in Anambra state and install Dr. Chris Ngige as the party's governorship candidate. He also used his control of party machinery to install his clients as party candidates for the State House of Assembly, Federal House of Representative and Senate elections.

His hijacking of state PDP machinery did not make him in any way different from godfather-brokers before him such as Emeka Offor and wouldn't have in any way protected him from sharing the uncertainty that characterizes the existence of the 'Godfather-broker'. What distinguished Uba and other 'godfather-patrons' from 'Godfather-brokers' is the manner they have gone about ensuring their unfettered access to first degree resources. For example, during the hey days of the standoff

between Offor and Governor Mbadinuju, Uba was known to snicker that Offor was acting like bumbling illiterate in the way he sought to remove the governor from office. He was said to have boasted that if he were to move against the governor, he would adopt different tactics that would be more effective. He vowed that the humiliation Offor subsequently experienced would not be his experience and thus set about doing things differently.

Specifically, he had his clients sign legal agreements which explicitly identified him, Uba as the "patron" and the person calling the shots in the relationship between the godfather and his clients. He further buttressed his access to first degree resources by having his clients swear to abide by their agreement with him before priests of a dreaded local traditional shrine based in Okija, Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra state (HRW, 2007: 67).

For example, Ngige was said to have agreed among other things that he;

i.) Recognize the fact that God in using Chief Christian C. Uba to prepare me for this great task ahead through his sponsorship; I will never tell him lies but the truth at all times even if I am at fault; will never pick a quarrel with him unduly; will take a keen interest in Christian's welfare and the welfare of the family as long as the interest is not against the welfare of his state;...and will also accept and abide by those pieces of advice aimed at peace and progress of the state from chief Uba as well as other wise counsel from elders of the state and beyond

ii.) The incoming government will revolve round the caucus leader, Chris Uba and where he so expressingly (sic) directs, members of the caucus. The governor-elect must ensure he clears in advance all policy routine administrative issues including all contracts, appointments and decisions with the caucus leader, Chris Uba before implementation.

iii.) To obey all instructions from chief Uba and never disagree with him on any issue of state including my position as governor-elect/governor and the general administration of Anambra state...from now till the end of my tenure as governor in 2007 (HRW, 2007).

Ngige also swore to exhibit utmost good faith with regards to any matter to which the agreement relates and agreed that should he renege on the terms of the agreement without any acceptable excuse, the caucus leader may avenge himself in any manner adjudged by him as fitting and adequate including demanding for him immediate resignation from office of governor by the "administrator", Chief Uba (HRW, 2007).

Furthermore, all clients of Chris Uba agreed that *any person in this caucus holding a public office must see himself as working for the caucus and the caucus leader and must therefore clear with him all matters of state interest and be completely loyal to Chris Uba and Mr. President and C-in-C of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (HRW, 2007).*

With such agreements, Uba secured his access to first

degree resources controlled by the state as it established in an undisputable manner, the fact that he, Uba was the “administrator” of Anambra state resources, which his political clients were simply managing on his behalf. The agreements established a patrimonial system of governance in Anambra state. The strategy of Uba has been adopted by godfather-patrons in other parts of Nigeria. Thus in Kwara state, Olusola Saraki has adopted the Uba method with the slight difference that it is his son who is securing his access to state resources through his occupying the seat of governor.

God father-patrons certainly existed before the coming into being of the Fourth Republic in 1999 and were distinguished from godfather-brokers in the sense that they sponsored candidates (provided them with money and political backing through control of party machinery) and were able to secure a fairly decent access to first degree resources. But they just like the godfather-broker suffered from possibility of been denied resources by their political clients as was the case with Chief Olusola Saraki in his relationship with Adamu Attah (2nd republic governor of Kwara State) and Mohammed Lawal (4th republic governor of Kwara State). So, just like the godfather-brokers, they have been forced to restructure their repertoire of political tricks and adopt the Uba strategy which is what has come to distinguish the post-1999 godfather-patron from the pre-1999 godfather-patron.

As it concerns electoral corruption, the transformation of the godfather-broker into godfather-patron can only lead to an increase in the volume and nastiness of electoral corruption in Nigeria because the more godfathers come to the conclusion that their existence as godfathers is closely linked to their securing of access to first degree resources controlled by the state in Nigeria, the more they will rely on strategies that subvert the electoral process and constitute electoral corruption. This conclusion helps to explain the high level of electoral corruption that characterized the 2007 elections in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Electoral corruption is mostly seen in Nigeria as a straight forward exercise in subversion of the electoral process by individuals greedy for personal enrichment that electoral success underwrites in Nigeria. While not questioning the personal enrichment thesis of electoral corruption, as it is true, the paper adopts a more nuanced approach to understanding electoral corruption, one that focuses on the realities of existence of godfathers, political parties and voters in Nigeria.

It argues that electoral corruption is the result of not just the avariciousness of godfathers and politicians but of the logic of electoral competition (zero-sum) which has demand of political parties in Nigeria, incapacitated by their elite/caucus nature, weak voter mobilization capacity

and consequent inability to ensure voter compliance even with the use of patronage as inducement, to resort to individuals possessing of certain attributes such as an “intuitive grasp of voting structure” in order to effect electoral success through activities that distort the electoral process or through electoral competition. Electoral corruption has therefore becomes a factor in the dynamics of ‘godfather’s existence as a Bigman in Nigerian politics and society, an existence which is precarious/uncertain due to his dependence on the continued goodwill of political actors for the resources he requires for nurturing and expanding his knowledge of local voting structures.

The quest to reduce uncertainty pushes the ‘godfather-broker’ into becoming a ‘godfather-patron’, someone who controls “first-degree” resources and therefore not dependent on other politicians for his existence as a Bigman. To achieve his objective, the godfather relies on his knowledge and control of the structure of the voting public to carry out activities labeled as electoral corruption that help him to secure control of political parties, use such control to sponsor candidates and ensure their success in elections, success which translates into direct access to state resources. Thus, with the existence of the godfather been closely linked to his ability to engage in electoral corruption and the zero-sum context of Nigerian politics, electoral corruption can only become more entrenched.

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