

Patron-Client Politics: Democracy and Governance in Nigeria, 1999-2007

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Key Terms: Nigeria; patron-client politics; godfatherism; patron-client relations; democracy; governance; rentier state; rent seeking.

Abstract

This paper will examine patron-client politics in the context of democracy and governance in Nigeria with special focus on the first phase of the Fourth Republic, 1999-2007. This paper, which is essentially based on study of secondary source data, reveals that the politics is neither historically new nor peculiar to Nigeria. Its evidence abounds in older democracies, emerging democracies and even authoritarian regimes. In Nigeria, its evidence abounds in the pre-colonial political system through the colonial era to the previous civil administrations in the country since independence. This paper reveals that pecuniary motivation and the deployment of primitive tactics to settle political scores make the patron-client politics a unique phenomenon in the recent political history of the country. The paper will further reveal that the contemporary practices of patron-client politics negate the fundamental values and principle of democracy and governance. The plausible explanation adduced for the influx and changes in the patron-client politics include the structural character of the Nigerian state, which creates large stakes for the control of state power and other factors such as political decay, weak party structure and discipline, imperial presidency, political immaturity and lack of political charisma among office seekers.

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Introduction

In post-independent Nigeria, as in many African states, the political elites have deployed various instruments to gain relevance and have access to or consolidate state power. The most vital of instruments ranged from coercion to political patronage. Political incumbents have used patronage opportunities to purchase loyalty and consolidate their hold on to power. However, the dynamics of patronage generate adverse effects. It results in the manipulation of government policies in favour of political allies at the expense of common good (Mwenda and Tangri 2005). Patronage mechanisms also undercut and undermine the tenets of democracy and governance such as transparency, accountability, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, rule of law, and fair competition.

In Nigeria, as has become evident, patron-client politics was at the heart of the collapse of the democratic experiments and even authoritarian regimes in Nigeria. Yet, patron-client politics remains prevalent in Nigeria's nascent democracy since its inauguration in 1999, as this article attempts to show. The political elite who have access to state power and resources have used them to serve personal interest as well as enhance their political dominance. Nearly everywhere, top government appointments have been made based on patron-client connections. Governance has clearly been in the hands of close political associates and there has been virtual administration of the institutions of the state, largely in a chaotic and Hobbesian manner.

To set the tone of the discourse, this article raises two fundamental questions. Why do the political elite resort to destructive behaviors that undermined democracy and governance? What are the damaging effects of patron-client politics for the legitimacy of democracy and mechanisms of governance?

This paper specially focuses on the Fourth Republic, 1999-2007 because of the need to document emerging new data on the destructive dimension, dynamics and mechanisms of contemporary patron-client

politics and their adverse implications for the tenets of democracy and governance. It adopts as explanatory tools the rentier state, rent seeking and rational public choice theories to explain the dimension, dynamism, mechanism and destructive behavior of the patron-clients that undermine the tenets of democracy and governance.

To achieve this objective this paper is decomposed into the following six sections. The first introduces, the second examines the central concepts and theoretical framework of analysis, as well as patron-client politics and the nexus of mercenary in Nigeria. The third section examines the profile of patron-client politics in the from 1999 to 2007, the fourth section analyzes the implications of contemporary patron-client politics for democracy and governance in Nigeria. The fifth section centers on the explanations for the prevailing situation of patron-client politics in Nigeria, and the six section concludes.

Before we proceed to address the central issue of the paper, it is imperative to begin with the examination of the central concepts, patron-clients, democracy and governance.

1.0 Conceptual and Analytical Notes

Patron-client relations are associated with particularistic exchange transactions. It has been essentially conceived as a personalized relationship between actors or set of actors wielding asymmetric affluence, status or influence, based on qualified loyalties and involving political dealings (Lemarchand 1972; Chaine 2007). There are two main variants of patron-client relations, the traditional and modern (Chaine 2007, Folarin 2005). In the traditional perspective, patron-client can be decomposed into four sub-categories: patrimonial (king-chief), feudal (noble-serf), mercantile (trader-customer), and saintly (religious leader-follower). On the other hand, patron-client in the modern perspective deals with the relationship or exchange transaction between various actors in contemporary institutions such as bureaucracy and political party systems. The major features of patron-client exchange

transactions are summed up as follow: first, it assumes a kind of lopsided friendship. The exchange transactions between patron and client are highly asymmetrical and based on power differential. Also, it may involve reciprocity but not essentially two-way traffic communication, unidirectional and dyadic. The patron, with his social position, influence and other attributes offers protection and economic or material benefits to the client, while the client in return promises or exchanges loyalty and obedience. Furthermore, the number and extent or strength of the exchange transactions (benefits) is a function of the distributive capacity of the patron. The relationship between the patron and the client can become strain if the distribution of resources is lopsided and not mutually satisfying. The conflict between the patron and client arises quite often from control of state resources or political influence in government appointment rather than ideological difference. Also, the patron-client relation may cut across ethnic divide.

Patron-client ties exist not only within the formal system of government or authority. It is essentially an informal relationship based on influence. It exists between persons with an unequal authority, yet linked through ties of interest and friendship, who manipulate their relationship with the bid to realize their ends. It may be characterized as a kind of relation between king or chiefs and subjects in a lineage society, landowners (feudal lord) and peasant or tenants (serfs), boss and worker in a bureaucratic set up, master (slave-driver) and slave in slave-driven society, religious leaders and followers in a saintly society.

Patron-client politics is analogous concept of political machines in America, Sicily and Mafia in Italy, big man or godfather in Nigeria.

Patron-Client in Nigeria

In Nigeria, patron-client denotes godfatherism. It can be understood when mainstreamed from the traditional and contemporary perspectives. In the traditional perspective, a political patron in Nigeria is essentially an experienced statesman expected to mentor, guide,

direct and counsel upcoming politicians on how to engage in political activities such as campaign and contest for election in civilized and constitutional manner, as well as manage the affairs of the state for the realization of common good if given the opportunity to serve. A political patron is a person with history, derivation and purebred. In the traditional sense, political patrons exert power and influence not for personal but group interest. Thus, the political patron is a benevolent, an altruistic, development oriented, and missionary and not mercenary politician. The patrons offer leadership, ideas, expertise, knowledge and wisdom to their clients. The relation they maintain with their political client is mutually beneficial and based on commonality of interest (Odivwri, not dated). The activities of the political patron are ideological, civilized and constitutional. The activities are intended to ensure the affairs of the state are managed in a manner that promotes necessary development in the interest of the ordinary man (Folarin 2005:37). The traditional concept of patron-client focuses on the enthronement of the principles and values of democracy and governance. It intended to arm or equip the political client with necessary expertise for management of the affairs of the state to ensure growth, stability and common welfare.

The contemporary conception can be regarded as a redefinition, distortion and transformation of the traditional conception. It perceived the political patron as a “mercantilist or mercenary politician” ready to offer sponsorship to office-seekers to the extent the individual accepts to be manipulated for the consolidation of his power-base and sustenance of his political dominance of the affairs of the state. Instructively, the power of the patron does not merely lay in his sponsorship of political campaigns. Largely, the power and influence stem from the ability to deploy primitive tactics, patronizing political violence, silencing of political opponents, electoral fraud and manipulation of state machinery in favour of the client. In reciprocation, the patron expect to largely determine how to run the government he helped enthrone by exerting pressure on the client not on how to formulate and execute people- and development-oriented policies but to siphon state resources

for the extension and consolidation of his political influence and control. The patron deploys various forms of political weapons such as propaganda, blackmail, thuggery, hooliganism, kidnapping, threat and political assassinations or other silent means in order to ensure the continued influence and control over the client and the machinery of the state (Folarin 2005:37). The patron-client connection in the contemporary era smacks of criminality, malevolence, oppression, selfishness, self-serving and parasitism (Obia 2004:c6). In some instances, political patrons are officials in government who deploy the resources and instruments of the political community in favour of their clients.

Democracy

Democracy is another concept central to this discourse. It is a very popular concept in the literature particularly of political science that yet has no generalized definition. It is defined variously to suit contextual usage. Thus, in the context of this discourse, democracy can be defined as a form of government and philosophy based on active participation of the largest possible number of citizens and intended to promote common good of every member of the political community. It is neither merely a government which exists for itself nor merely set of assumptions of the organization of government. It is a set of thought and a mode of action propelled by common welfare and directed by a large majority of the adult members of the political community. It is neither the ascendancy of self-serving interest nor unrestrained accumulation of public funds for personal aggrandizement of a select few smart thugs (Ehusani 2002:10)

Another aspect of democracy is that it entails the idea of constitutional supremacy. It is a government guided by laws and not the whimsicality of men. Furthermore, democracy emphasizes compromise in the face of diverse and desperate opinions. Also fundamentally essential about democracy is the active popular participation in the political process in terms of voting and

representation in government by qualified persons vide free, fair and credible election. Still, democracy is about freedom and protection of personal liberties, as well as affirmation and promotion of equality in politics and governance.

Governance

Governance is an imprecise concept. Its meaning and processes are difficult to specify. Nonetheless, it is essentially synonymous with good government and sound development management (Osumah and Ikelegbe 2009). Essentially, governance is concerned with the management of the affairs of a state based on the organic or supreme law of the land for the purpose of realizing common good. This presupposes that it is governing based on constitutional provisions and statutory law rather than the whims and caprices of individual or groups. Also, it is aimed at serving utilitarian interest, which in the Jeremy Bentham's felicific calculus is referred to as "the greatest number of the greatest majority". Thus, governance is expected to provide the mechanisms, processes and institutions for changing and for citizens and groups to articulate their interest, exercise their rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences (Pryor 2003; B4).

It entails essentials attributes such as an efficient public service, an independent judicial system and legal framework to enforce contracts, transparency, the accountability of administration of public funds, compliance with due process, prudent management, popular participation, control of rulers through electoral process, effective separation of powers, decentralization of power, assurance of adequate and responsible representation in relevant institutions, and assurance of legitimacy in the conduct of rulers (Osumah and Ikelegbe 2009).

Conceptual Linkage

Having conceptualized the three central concepts in this discourse, it is necessary to show the links between them. Governance and democracy

have recognizable resonance. Governance signifies the employment of both legitimacy and authority derived from democratic mandate and normally entails a pluralist policy with responsible representative government and commitment to promotion of common welfare. The fundamental objectives of good governance and democracy are the championing of ethical behaviour in business transactions and promotion of greater transparency and accountability. These fundamental objectives are realizable when political contest is rooted in civilized and constitutional conduct such that will bring about necessary development in the interest of the citizenry.

In the traditional conception, political-client connection can be supportive in the building of democracy and promotion of the values of good governance as it repudiates arbitrariness, extremism, oppression, crass opportunism, insensitivity, irresponsibility, arrogance and corruption. The connection can engender systematic application of rules in the recruitment of political leadership and management of the affairs of the state for the fulfillment of common welfare. Indeed the philosophy of the patron-client in the traditional sense was driven by the desire to perpetrate democratic style and values of governance. However, when the patron-client connection assumes negative transformation as it is in the contemporary politics in Nigeria, it becomes dysfunctional to the interest of the whole. An in-depth understanding of the dynamics and costs of contemporary patron-client politics are illuminated through theoretical lens explored in the next section.

Theoretical Expositions

The proliferation, dynamics and mechanisms of patron-client politics in Nigeria can be explained within theoretical frames of rentier state, rent seeking and rational public choice.

The theory of rentier state holds that nations derived externally substantial amount of their revenue from oil on regular basis and thus

become autonomous and unaccountable to their citizenry. Oil dominates the economy. Only a few participate in the production processes in the oil economy while the greater majority participate only in the distribution and consumption of its revenue. Only a few are involved in the generation of the rents while majority are involved in its distribution and consumption. This presupposes that the leaders of the government make a deal and collect the rents then allocate it to the citizenry, which do not participate in the generation of the wealth. The government engages in public spending without recourse to the citizenry. In this way, the government is essentially an allocation state (Beblawi: 1987).

The rentier economies are under the control of the elites. They are in charge of the distribution of the accruable rents derived externally from oil, which translates into political influence. In the rentier economies, the sharing of oil rents is hardly based on any ethical rationality of work and meritocracy in representation. It engenders a rentier mentality, which violates the doctrine of hard work and encourages parasitic and predatory behavior (Yates, 1996).

Also, the rentier state is vulnerable to external price volatility and shocks. Account of its vulnerability to external shocks, it often experiences what is referred to as the Dutch Disease, which is the adverse effect of over expansion of and reliance on the exports of one sector of the economy of a nation leading to the distortion and relegation of the other sectors. Since those in the government in a rentier economy control the distribution of oil benefits, the opposition, rather than being concerned about the underlying rentier state dysfunctions, rattles on about how benefits are distributed (Yates, 211.) In a rentier economy labor suffers distortion. In the period of oil boom or windfall their wages are artificially jerked up rather than being based on market rationality.

The Nigerian state is an archetypical example of a rentier state. Since the discovery of oil, it has remained the mainstay of the nation's

economy. Agriculture, which, prior to the ascendant of oil as the kingpin, has been relegated to the background. This character of the Nigerian state strongly influences and shapes the image, dynamism and mechanisms of patron-client politics that have adverse consequences on the tenets of governance and democracy. Those who are in government or seek to assume its control are essentially driven by the desire to allocate and consume accruable rents from oil.

The rent seeking theory holds that public officials are inherently vulnerable to the use of institutions of the state for extraction of rent for self-seeking goals rather than collective interest. All over the world bureaucrats and people in authority manipulate their position for personal gains. The manipulation of the bureaucracies is intended to acquire access to or control over opportunities for earning rents. It does not totally characterize the engagements of public officials as illegal, illegitimate and unethical action. The behaviors of public officials are not naturally illegal or even immoral. In a more general sense, their actions are both legal and illegal attempts to obtain and create monopoly rents. The behavior of public officials is fuelled by the search for personal gains can significantly influence the level and type of government intervention in economy. There is link between official desire or personal financial gain and the creation of opportunities for rent seeking.

The study of rent seeking is reflected in the public choice theory, which ascribes the features of government on the self-interest of politicians, bureaucrats and private individuals. The sources of rent include tradable regulatory system, financing capital projects, support for corruption in bureaucracy, privatization and subsidies with high pay offs for rulers, price distortion and foreign exchange restrictions (Dia 1996:25). Rent seeking results in waste of resources and can lead to economic inefficiency.

Patron-Client Politics and the Nexus of Mercenary in Nigeria

Patron-client politics is not historically new in Nigeria. In Nigeria, the phenomenon of patron-client politics predates the advent of colonialism. Evidence of patron-client relation abounds in the traditional political systems of Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani. In the traditional political system, political patrons played several roles ranging from settlement of disputes to provision of training in the art of warfare, politics and administration to their client. In reciprocation for such services, their clients pay tributes, taxes, respect and pledge allegiance (Nnamani 2007). Clearly, the patron-client relation in the pre-colonial era was symbiotic and mutually beneficial. Thus, the relation was hardly disruptive to the process of politics and development.

This nature of patron-client in traditional political system was perhaps shaped by the subsistent nature of the economy, and several principles of legitimacy such as primogeniture (ruler-ship based on inheritance), divine vocation of legitimacy an understanding that rulers are ordained by God, and charismatic powers of the leaders.

These notions of legitimacy were distorted following the introduction of colonial rule. Colonialism redefined the traditional patron-client politics through the adoption of indirect rule, which eroded the influence of traditional rulers (the traditional ruler where reduced from being patrons to clients). However, during the period of colonial rule, the former patrons (traditional chiefs) were merely turn instruments for the administration of law and order in the fulfillment of the exploitative mission of the colonialists. In the course of time, particularly owing to the emergence of western education, the old patrons were gradual pushed to the background and replaced with new ones comprising the educated elite. The educated elite consolidated their political dominance unlike the traditional rulers based on modern institutions and structures such as party structure for their political dominance and control over their clients.

By the 1950s when active party politics began a new set of patrons emerged. At independence, the politicians of old such as Alhaji Ahamedu Bello, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Aihaji Aminu Kano and Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe became the political patrons. Respectively, they were patrons of Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, Lateef Jankande, Alhaji Balarabe Musa, and Jim Nwobodo. Only in few cases were deep rifts generated between the patrons and their clients as a result of the struggle for the sharing of state resources. A famous example of patron-client politics with pecuniary undertone in the First Republic was the struggle between Azikwe and Eyo Ita of the NCNC. The Sir Strafford Foster-Sutton Commission of Inquiry revealed the former had attempted to get the latter to lodge local government fund in the Africa Continental Bank where his relation were shareholders (Odiun 2007). It has been suggested that the accumulative tendencies of the political elite at independence was on account of the inherited colonial structure, and weak economic base of the political class (Szeftel 2000, Osoba 1996). However, there is no available record to the knowledge of this author that indicates relationship between them assumed Hobbesian character. This is perhaps because Azikwe, the dominant political leader in the region did not want to make it vulnerable to strong external political influence from the other regional political parties. It was almost at the same time that the Action Group crisis of 1962 paved way for the NPC-led federal government to penetrate and weaken the party.

During the Second Republic patron-client politics maintained virtually the same modular frequency with that of the First Republic (Odiun 2007). Only a few cases of rifts between patrons and clients were recorded. A classic reference was, in Kwara state Chief Olusola Saraki helped installed Governor Adam Attah. However, before the 1983 general election they had serious disagreement over sharing of state resource, which cost Attah his re-election. Sarki supported the candidacy of the opposition UPN, late Josiah Olawoyin.

The patron-client politics with pecuniary nexus particularly underwent rapid changes during the military administration of General

Ibrahim Babangida. These changes came as a result of the move by the administration to rid the political turf of old breed politicians whose political activities were believed to be detrimental to the promotion of good governance. The administration introduced the politics of newbreedism, which further galvanized the upsurge of corruption, entrenched interest and moneybagism in politics (Isekhure, 1992:25). As soon as the ban on politics was lifted for the transition to the Third Republic Isekhure (1992: 17&50) noted that “certain categories of Nigerians who themselves constituted persona-non-grata to the politics and collapse of the previous republics were desperately looking for associations to buy...” Others sponsored delegates to participate in conventions of some associations while the activities of certain individuals contaminated and hijacked “the formation of the political parties from their infancy through the avenue of money to install themselves in power...” “The group solidarity was mortgage for personal reward and propensity to make quick money and unholy alliance”. This laid the fertile ground for reinforcement of patron-client politics with commercial undertone after the exit of the military in the Fourth Republic, 1999 to 2007.

S/No	Date	State	Patron-client	Forms of Relation
1	1999-2003	Kwara	Chief Olusola Saraki vs Governor Mohammed Lawal	Strained, involved deployment of violence, and eventually resulted in the deposition of Lawal in 2003 poll
2	1999-2003	Enugu	Chief Jim Nwobodo vs Governor Chimaroke	Strained
3	1999-2003	Anambra	Chief Emeka Offor vs Gov Chinwoke Mbadinuju	Strained, involved the deployment of violence and dropping of Mbadinuju in 2003 poll due to performance failure
4	1999-	Bornu	Modi Sherif vs	Strained, Modi deposed

S/No	Date	State	Patron-client	Forms of Relation
	2003		Gov Mala Kachalla	Kachalla in the 2003 poll to become the governor
5	1999-2003	Kano	Alhaji Abubakar Rimi vs Gov Rabiu Kwankwaso	Strained
6	1999-2007	Edo	Chief Anthony Anenih vs Gov Lucky Igbenedion	Warmed but later turned cold after Anenih single-handedly endorsed Igbinedion for the 2003 poll. Involved recrimination, accusations and counter-accusations
7	2003-2007	Oyo	Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu vs Gov Rasheed Ladoja	Strained and involved the deployment of violence, impeachment of Ladoja but later reinstated by the court
8	2003-2005	Anambra	Chief Chris Uba vs Gov Chris Ngige	Strained and involved the deployment of violence, police abduction and deposition of Ngige through the court ruling based on the confession of election fraud by Uba
9	2003-2007	Osun	Chief S.M. Afolabi vs Gov Olagunsoye Oyinlola	Warmed
10	2003-2007	Benue	Chief Barnabas Germade vs Gov George Akume	Strained and resulted in the sack of Germades political loyalties from the state executive council.
11	1999-2003	Adamawa	Alhaji Atiku Abubakar vs Governor Bonu Haruna	Warmed and resulted in the re-election of Haruna in 2003 poll

Source: Compiled by the author from various Nigerian Newspapers

3.0 Profile of Patron-client Politics in the From 1999 to 2007

Since the exit of the military from governance and with the enthronement of civil rule in 1999, the patron-client politics with strong commercial alliance and networks witnessed a re-emergence, mushroomed and become a permanent presence in the country's political turf. Evidence of patron-client political phenomenon abounds at various levels of government and in many of the dominant political parties in the federation. The phenomenon of patron-client politics is also practiced at the senatorial districts, federal constituencies, local government and ward levels. In a non-exhaustive search of literature the table below shows some of the states where patron-client politics has been a seemingly permanent presence.

Instructively, the table above only showed some representative cases of patron-client connections between political godfathers and state governors. The relations between the acclaimed patrons and their clients have largely been crisis-ridden characterized by disagreements, antagonism, accusation and counter-accusations, blackmail, bizarre manipulation of party and state machineries, uncanny and weird manipulation of electoral process with aid of thugs, threat and actual deployment of violence and brigandage to secure and consolidate political advantage. The major sources of most of these crises are the sharing of public funds, political patronage and personality cult. The patrons usually desire to secure absolute loyalty, political patronage in terms of appointments of key political officeholders, award of contracts and enjoyment of a large share of the financial allocation to the state from the clients. Notably, it is only in few states such as Lagos, Osun and Adamawa that there was a semblance of sanity. These were states in which the patrons (godfathers) have not been overbearing (Williams 2009:7 Emphasis Mine).

The phenomenon of patron-client politic is not peculiar to Nigeria. It is a global phenomenon. Evidence of patron-client abounds in older democracies, emerging democracies and even authoritarian regimes. Several countries where strong patron-client connection exists

include Mexico and Kenya in the 1980s and 1990s (Grindle 1996), Bangladesh (Kochanek 1993), the Soviet Union in the post-revolutionary period (Ackerman 1999), the Sicilian Mafia in Italy patronize and sponsor candidate for elective positions and in return get compensation in the form of patronage (Gambetta 1993), America in the pre-world war II era (Odion 2007:75), in South Africa in the post-apartheid regime (Folarin 2005). Other democracies where patron-client politics has evolved are Australia and Bolivia. Instructively, the patron-client politics in most of the old and emerging democracies has positive value of accountability, citizenship consciousness and equality. In most of these countries, the citizens have avenue to supplant a party that fails to perform up to their expectations with a rival party (Philp 2001, Lazar 2004, Omobowale and Olutayo 2007: 425-446). Also in those societies, those who want to belong to any of the dominant party have equal chance of joining the party and being given the post they are qualified. Neither the godfathers nor moneybags are allowed under any guise to dictate to others as far as the policies are concerned. Thus, their politics are able to prop up the best candidates for public offices and governance (Daniel 2008:64). In Nigeria, the patron-client relation is based on master servant relation and motivated by commercial interest at the detriment of public interest. The patrons foist charlatans or hooligans on the rest of the people and help to ensure that they stay in office for as long as they desire. The clients in return device perfidious schemes aimed at boosting the residual interest of the cabal (Daniel 2008:64).

4.0 Implications of Contemporary Patron-Client Politics for Democracy and Governance in Nigeria

Patron-client relations serve as veritable means to consolidating the position of political incumbency, maintaining active political party organization, promoting intra-party cohesion, attracting political loyalty and allegiance, and maintaining support, financing political party and its candidates and creating discipline in policy making (Mwenda and Tangri 2005, Weingrod 1968). In advanced democracies such as America

the political machines strengthen democratic culture. In Nigeria, particularly in the current democratic dispensation, the dimension and dynamics of patron-client politics has proved highly damaging, uncommon and antithetical to democracy and good governance.

Although the phenomenon of patron-client politics is not peculiar to Nigeria, the dimension it assumes seem quite unique and uncommon and antithetical to democratic growth and survival. Democratic principles involve among other things free and fair elections, constitutionalism, and the right of majority to choose leaders and mandate them to make decisions and perform functions aimed at realizing common good. The contemporary notion of patron client politics negates such principles. Elections are said to be free and fair when devoid of electoral malpractices. According to Folarin (2003:37) the political patrons in contemporary Nigeria educates the political clients “to engage in perfidious and treacherous acts in winning elections – gaining the mandate of the people, silencing oppositions, patronizing, purchasing and lobbying stakeholders, orientation on looting”. In Nigeria’s Fourth republic the patron-client politics resulted in the brazen manipulation of state machinery in the process of political recruitment in favour of preferred candidates of the patrons. For example, Chris Uba openly confessed in the court how he masterminded the rigging of the Anambra state governorship election held in 2003 in favour of erstwhile governor Chris Ngige. While it may be difficult to ascertain the veracity of his claim but the subsequent annulment of the election and declaration of Peter Obi as the legitimately elected governor by the court tells the tale of how the electorate have been shut out from democratic interaction and limitedness of their ultima ratio of power due to patron-client political relation in the contemporary times.

Furthermore, the contemporary increasing dysfunctional patron-client politics stifles electoral contests, as the patrons are willing to do anything to frustrate and neutralize opposition from securing seats in government in order to get maximum return for their

investment. Although political violence is not historically new in Nigerian political contest, the swift from the traditional weapons such as accusation and counter accusations and use of light weapons to huge deployment of sophisticated guns and the establishment and use of armed gangs is new and unique development. The heightened political violence and extremism that characterized the general elections held in 2003 and 2007 are rooted in the dysfunctional patron-client politics. In fact, the July 10, 2003 political gangsterism against Governor Ngige in Anambra state with the aid of police led by AIG Raphael Ige is clearly a new development in the patron-client relation in Nigerian politics.

The pervasiveness and increasing dysfunctional of contemporary patron-client politics heat up politics and threaten democracy through the show of brinkmanship. The various political weapons they deploy explain this. They deploy political weapons such as propaganda, thuggery, hooliganism, kidnapping, abduction, blackmail, threat, and political murder against their clients when they renege on agreement. A case of the extremism of the patron-client politics is exemplified in the July 10, 2003 political gangsterism against Governor Ngige in Anambra state with the aid of police led by AIG Raphael Ige.

Like democracy, the contemporary practice of patron-client politics in Nigeria subverts principles of accountability, transparency, prudent management and common good, which is a vital to governance. It lays the foundation for the privatization, ransacking and personalization of public funds and failure to utilize state resources to meet the genuine and legitimate needs of the people. The patrons offer their clients assistance as capital investment to which they expect high returns. This orients the political clients to looting, corruption and sleaze in the management of the affairs of the state at the expense of the electorate. In the 1990s, the World Bank ascribes poor performance of public enterprises in Africa to political patronage, which drains off public finances (Mwenda and Tangri 2005). In Nigeria, as in many African countries, the state resources have been used to consolidate

political support by apportioning benefits and economic preferences to politically influential. Evidence abound that a number of decisions within the purview of government especially relating to political appointments, creation of new specialized agencies, award of contracts, granting of credit and concession have been made in favour of the politically connected persons who contribute to generously to campaigns, and mobilize support for the incumbent in several other ways.

Thus, it can be asserted that the pervading underdevelopment, collapse of infrastructure and service, socio-economic deprivation, anxiety and insecurity have been more acute in the states where the patron-client politics became a major feature. An instance may suffice. In Anambra state, crisis of development and governance under governor Mbadinuju manifested in owing of civil servants and teachers several months of salary. The situation resulted in protracted strike action by the civil servants and teachers in the state. It also generated critical comments and agitations by the civil society. The Anambra state chapter of the Nigerian Bar Association was very critical of the sordid state of affairs during this period. This cost the lives of the state chapter of the association, Barnabas Igwe, and his wife who were murdered by suspected political assassins (Uwehejewe-Togbolo 2005).

The dysfunctional patron-client politics in the recent times increased the cost of governance. The crisis, power play, intrigues, bad blood, antagonism between the patrons and their clients cost a lot of fortunes in terms of waste of state resources, disruption of government business. The destruction and burning of government properties in Anambra state is a case in point. Besides, the patron-client relation led the constitution of top-heavy executive councils in most states with not less than 50% of the appointments as protégés of the patrons. The public appointments have not been given on the basis of merit but principally on the consideration of loyalty. Thus, many of these appointees who have been the hands of the patrons serve in the government of the state with an eye to engender political advantage as much as possible. Some of the appointees, in the face of power struggle between the patrons and

their clients initiate and superintend projects aimed at embarrassing and frustrating the clients. An instance may suffice to justify this assertion. Governor Gabriel Suswan of Benue State blamed some members of his executive for several non-performing projects. These non-performing members of the executives are loyalities of his godfather, Senator George Akume, the immediate past governor of the state. It is only in few instances the clients are able to muster the political will to sack such non-performing nominees of the patrons (Nwakaudu 2009:73).

The pervasiveness and increasing dysfunctional patron-client politics spawn catastrophic consequences on the institutions such as the political party, police, legislature especially the state legislative assemblies and the judiciary that are required to strength democratic growth and effective governance. Political party is a critical element of democracy. It is in fact the political machine for nurturing democratic growth. Patron-client political relation fuels intra-party squabbles and wrangling as well as political crises in the steering of the affairs of a state. In most states, there was the establishment of parallel party secretariats and proliferation of party officials at the ward, local government and state levels. More so, the dysfunctional patron-client politics was essentially a symptom and a major cause of the factionalization and conflict between the executive and legislature that permeated the process of governance in the country. Legislature-executive conflict is not a recent development in politics and governance in Nigeria. However, the parliamentary irresponsibility and rascality in the greater part of the period between 2003 and 2007 in several states which crystallized into unwarranted change of leadership in the state assemblies in Anambra, Oyo, Plateau, Edo and Delta and impeachment of the chief executives in Plateau and Osun States were function of the dysfunctional patron-client politics. The dysfunctional patron-client relation also resulted in the use of the police as instrument for achieving self-serving end. A case in point is the July 10, 2003 police involvement in the coup and political gangsterism against Governor Ngiye in Anambra state. The a team of police personnel led by AIG

Raphael Ige was said to have acted on the script of Chris Uba without consultation with the Inspector General of the Police to abduct Governor Ngige.

Also, the kind of structure, social norms, mindset and cosmologies developed in the patron-client relation that has prevailed under Obasanjo presidency is capable of discouraging people suffused in the public interests, problems, and needs from indicating interest or vying for elective positions. Given the instruments and extremism involved in the patron-client political relations in the first phase of the Fourth Republic people of integrity are abound to steer clear from politics and governance. This may rob the nation of patriotic leadership and allows for the enthronement of a larger number of mediocre, treasury looters and kleptomaniacs. Thus far in the current dispensation, the mismanagement, wastefulness, licentiousness, parsimoniousness and squanderism of state resources could be adduced to lack of credible and responsible representatives in government.

5.0 Explanatory Notes

The pervasive and increasing dysfunctional patron-client politics since 1999 is not an independent phenomenon. Several explanations, some structural and others behavioural can be constructed for the nature patron-client politics. To recapitulate the patron-client politics because of the commercial nexus during this period was characterized by destructive intense violence, brinkmanship, gangsterism, illegality, maliciousness, accusations and counter-accusations, intimidation of opposition candidates to gain unfair advantage, abuse of office, corruption and failure to dispense democratic dividends to the people. At the root of these tendencies and deployment of crude and primitive tactics in the contest for political office is the structural character of the state. As Claude Ake (1996:7) observed much of what is uniquely negative about politics in Africa arise from the character of the state, particularly its lack of autonomy, immensity of its power, its proneness to abuse, and lack of autonomy and lack of immunity against it. The

character of the state rules out a politics of moderation and mandates a politics of lawlessness and extremism for the simple reason that the nature of the state makes the capture of state power irresistibly attractive.

The rentier and structural character of the Nigerian state creates high premium for state power and so much reliance on the state for access to the good things of life. In Nigeria, political office offers the possibility of ransacking the public treasury for the benefit of a select few. As Larry Diamond posits power has replaced effort as the basis for social reward. The net result of the high premium of the state power as the quickest gateway to accumulation, progress and cheap popularity conditions political profiteering, investment of huge capital for political campaign with the anticipation to plough back the invested capital as well as turnover. It also encourages the deployment of primitive tactics in the face of disagreement or renege in negotiated terms in order to secure for capital investment and selfish interest

The Nigerian state is extremely authoritarian and repressive in nature. Governance of the state is seemingly a privatized and personalized rule. It revolves round the personality cult of the chief executives at various levels of government. The state hardly keeps faith with the constitution. It is not guided by the norms of democracy such as negotiation, consultation, accommodation and compromise. By its nature, vast majority are politically powerless and sidelined from the mainstream of political activities. It lacks commitment to democracy, nullifies democratic processes and enthrones the regimes of the privileged few (Ojo 1996)

These distinctive character and tendencies of the Nigerian state creates an enabling environment for commercial alliance and network such as patron-client connection in the process of political recruitment, acquisition and control of state power. The game of politics attracts the investment of the moneybags and patrons because the state serves as the surest avenue to accumulation of wealth and actualization of fame.

Furthermore, the weakness and ineffectiveness of party structure and lack of party discipline contributed to the influx and change in the patron-client politics. The prolonged military dominance of politics have murdered the development of political ethos, party system, structures and discipline and matured and charismatic politicians required for true democratic interactions. Studies have suggested that attitudes are conditioned by regimes and historical experiences and political socialization As Larry Diamond noted the cognitive, attitudinal and evaluation dimensions of political culture are to regime performance, historical experience and political socialization (Ikelegbe 1995). The primitive and uncivilized political tactics and weapons that have characterized the patron-client relations in the first phase of the Fourth Republic admirably reflect the level of political amateurish and pre-maturity as well as undigested orientation of democratic values and conduct perhaps due to long years of military rule.

Other factors, which can be ascribed for the growth of pecuniary motivated patron-client politics between 1999 and 2007, included imperial presidency, political decay and corruption.

6.0 Conclusion

Recent history and development of patron-client politics with mercenary nexus in Nigeria have been a growing concern. Nigeria is familiar with isolated cases in the past; the current democratic order enthroned in 1999 has awakened the reality of highly organized dimension of destructive or chaotic patron-client politics. It involves the huge deployment of primitive tactics in the face of disagreement. As a result the development of the nascent democracy has been exposed to ominous dangerous threats. The personalized rule, privatization of state resources, deployment or adoption of primitive tactics, lack of accountability and exclusion of the civil society or vast majority in mainstream of politics coupled with insensitivity to common welfare

nullify the democratic possibility and effective governance. Several factors have been identified as plausible cause for growth of the pecuniary motivated patron-client politics since 1999. These include rentier or structural character of the Nigerian state which creates large stakes for the control of state power and other factors such as political decay, weak party structure and discipline, imperial presidency, political immaturity and lack of political charisma among office seekers. Thus, it is the position of the author that it is only in the context of a reconstructed and legitimate state and re-orientations of the political actors to the minimum values of democratic governance that the pervasive and increasing destructive dysfunctional practice of patron-client politics in recent times that our nascent democracy can be consolidated and the problems of effective governance frontally resolved

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