Machiavellianism: The Godfathers and the Godsons in Nigeria (1999-2015)

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ABSTRACT
This paper critically investigated the preference for Machiavellianism among politicians in Nigeria. The study specifically aimed to explain the nature of politics in Nigeria. It also set out to describe the role of godfathers in ensuring that their godsons acquire political power. In addition, it sought to explore the godsons-godfathers relationship after acquisition of political power in Nigeria. Relevant data were obtained through secondary method and were analysed. The study revealed that the nature of politics in Nigeria is that of winner-take-all. The results also show that the godfathers operate by scheming to acquire political power for their godsons. The findings further showed that after the godsons had acquired political power in Nigeria conflict of interest often occur between the godson and the godfather. The study concluded that there is misapplication and misinterpretation of Machiavellianism among politicians in Nigeria. Recommendations were made as followed: introduction of power sharing arrangement that will address the current winner-take-all system, attention should be given to morality in politics, emphasis to be placed on the good aspect of Machiavelli's counsel, desperate power seekers should be checked, and the need to have morally sound cum patriotic leader.
Keywords: Godfathers, Godsons, Machiavelli, Machiavellianism, Morality and Politics.

1.0 INTRODUCTION
Political thinkers Cicero, Plato, Socrates, Aristotle and Machiavelli among others from time immemorial had propounded one theory after another, all geared toward resolving societal problems (Albert, 2005:81; Sotubo, 2015; Benner, 2013 in Lamus, 2016:5). Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), for example, has two great books: "The Prince" and the "Discourses". The Prince is a counsel by Machiavelli to intending ruler on a way to save Italy from ruin at a time when politics was deadly in Europe (Ball, 1999:29; Okomba, 2006; Kemabonta, 2014; Oyekunle, 2015:184). Kemabonta (2014) remarked that rulers during this era in Europe were known for deceptive schemes against their rivals and employing all necessary strategies in handling state matters both internally and externally. In the Discourses, Machiavelli represented democracy as the best form of government under normal circumstance. He advocated for republican ideals in terms of a mixed government, a virtuous citizenry and the rule of law (Ball, 1999:30; Oyekunle, 2015:185).
Benner (2013) in Lamus (2016:5) asserted that the underlying theme in the works of Machiavelli aimed to discover what is right and reasonable in politics. To Machiavelli therefore, no matter the means one adopts to acquire power, the success, retention and expansion is important (Oyekunle, 2015:179).

Many politicians all over the world directly or indirectly make use of the Machiavelli's counsel to the Prince. Nigeria appears to be a place to test Machiavellian politics. Just as some citizens have been employing any means, foul or fair, to sustain themselves. Some resort to bunkering and vandalisation of oil and gas pipelines, some into kidnapping for ransom (Shosanya & Alemika, cited in Oyekunle, 2015:180). The implication of this phenomenon if not addressed portrays far-reaching danger on the democratisation process in and survival of Nigeria.

This study, therefore, examines the influence of Machiavelli in the politics of some selected States in Nigeria from 1999 to 2015.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The counsel of Machiavelli to the intending ruler has attracted the attention of scholars. Some scholars viewed it as a suggestion that morality in politics is not necessary. Those who have this view noted Machiavelli's position that by nature, human beings are naturally greedy, prone to evil, self-seeking, wicked, without any possibility of redemption and that an intending ruler should first know the human condition, the true nature of the people he would rule, and therefore rule expediently (Okomba, 2006; Lamus, 2016:14). Lamus (2016:14-15) concluded that to Machiavelli, it amounts to foolishness to govern a community of demons with principles created for angels. Similarly, Okomba (2006) commented that some scholars believe that Machiavelli looked at the society based on his experience, and therefore, concluded that the first law of politics is expediency and not moral considerations.

Furthermore, scholars are divided as to whether there is moral basis on which to judge the difference between legitimate and illegitimate uses of power, especially on the counsel of Machiavelli to intending ruler. On the one hand are those who see him as the best political thinker. On the other hand are those who see him as an immoral political thinker (Ball, 1999:29 & Okomba, 2006).

Noting misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the counsel of Machiavelli, Rafiu, Owolabi, & Folasayo (2009:160) asserted that behaviours and actions in the counsel were to be directed at satisfying the interests of the state. Using a retrospective analysis of events, the study aims to critically determine the influence of Machiavellianism in the politics of Nigeria by answering the following questions:

1)   What is the nature of politics in Nigeria?
2)   How do godfathers help godsons to acquire political power in Nigeria?
3)   What are the godsons-godfathers relationships after the acquisition of political power in Nigeria?

1.2   Objectives of the Study

Generally, this study focuses on Machiavellianism: the godfathers and the godsons in Nigeria. Specifically, the aim of the study is to:

1)   Explore the nature of politics in Nigeria.
2)   Describe the role of godfathers in ensuring that godsons acquire political power in Nigeria.
3)   Explain the godsons-godfathers relationships after the acquisition of political power in Nigeria.

2.0   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Theoretical Framework

The ideas of classical political thinkers have largely centred on how political powers were concentrated in the hand of a few in the society (Albert, 2005:81). Alluding to this, Welsh (1979:10) in Omonijo, Nnedum, Oludayo, & Anyaegbunam (2015:31) called it "elitism", a system in which the exercise of political control by a small number of persons is institutionalised in the structure of government and political activity.

The theoretical framework for this study is the elite theory. The key assumption of elite theory according to Nkwede, Ibeogu, & Nwankwo (2014:139) is that in every society there is, and must

be a minority which rules over the rest of society, and this minority forms the political class or governing elite composed of those who occupy the posts of political command and more regularly those who can directly influence political decision.

2.2 The Concept of Machiavellianism

Machiavellianism means a wide range of things to different scholars. Christie and Geis (1970) in Ináncsi, Láng, & Bereczkei (2016:137) described Machiavellians as manipulative and cynical people who follow utilitarian morals. Ball (1999:29) defined Machiavellianism as description for a cunning, notorious, and unscrupulous person. To Oladele (n.d.), it is an adjective for political manoeuvring marked by bad faith, betrayal, deception or treachery. Considering Machiavellianism as a product of political exigency, Okomba (2006) related it with any government that operates without adequate moral scruples.

However, Rafiu, Owolabi, & Folasayo (2009:160) noted that Machiavellianism is a misnomer due to misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the counsel of Machiavelli which have been the basis of the perpetuation of immorality and illegal termination of lives of supposed rivals by some intending rulers, which is contrary to the view expressed by Machiavelli that behaviours and actions must be directed at satisfying the interests of the state.

Personifying the concept, Mefor (2010) views it as a person who will present a cup of poison to a ruler so that the ruler will give it to his friends and enemies to drink. This implies the preference of subtle means like fraud over the use of physical force. Similarly, Kemabonta (2014) stated that Machiavellianism implies a cunning person or someone with the habit of manipulating others without feeling remorse. He was however quick to add that it also implies an individual who buries moral sentiments and handles situations in practical terms. This simply means that such a person weighs his/her decision based on circumstance rather than right or wrong.

Also, Sotubo (2015) described Machiavellianism as the use of cunning and duplicity in statecraft or in general conduct. According to Ináncsi, Láng, & Bereczkei (2016:137) Machiavellianism is a personality trait that is characterised by manipulative and exploitative attitude toward others, lack of empathy, and a cynical view of human nature. To Lamus (2016:2), Machiavellianism is an idea which is used to maintain power. In the context of this study, Machiavellianism relates to crafts deployed to acquire and retain political power.

2.3 The Concept of Godfathers

The concept of godfathers does not have a generally acceptable definition. Euphemistically, Ibrahim (2003) in Albert (2005:81) likens godfathers to party machine politics obtainable in developed countries like the United States of America and even Latin American countries where criminal underworld groups sponsor politicians during elections in return for the protection of contracts.

With particular reference to the Hausa nationality, Attah, Audu, & Haruna (2014:87) described godfathers as "Maigidas" or masters of the house. Similarly, Abner (1971), Polly (1966) and Pally (2004) as cited in Attah, Audu, & Haruna (2014:87) used the term to refer to those who provided brokerage services to traders in transit in different parts of West Africa.

Making reference to the Yoruba nationality, Attah, Audu, & Haruna (2014:87-88) remarked that godfathers are known as "Baba Kekeres" or the small great fathers, "Baba Isale" or the fathers of the underworld, "Baba Nigbejo" or a great helper in time of trouble.

Refering to the Igbo nationality, Dickson (2003) in Attah, Audu, & Haruna, 2014:88) simply liken godfather to "Nnam-Ukwu" or my master. To Omonijo, Nnedum, Oludayo, & Anyaegbunam (2015:31), godfathers are those who assisted others in gaining political power.

Noting that godfathers reign across all spheres of the society including academics, environments, legal and religion, Chukwuemeka, Oji, & Chukwurah (n.d.:208 & 211) also supported that godfathers are individuals with the ability to deliver a desired outcome in an electoral contest.

Ajayi as cited in Chukwuemeka, Oji, & Chukwurah (n.d.:210) compared a godfather to a kingmaker, boss, mentor and principal. Similarly, Gambo quoted in Chukwuemeka, Oji, &

Chukwurah (n.d.:208) observes that godfathers are men who have the power and influence to decide both who get nominated to contest elections and who wins in the election. Abdullahi & Sakariyau (2013:10) asserted that the godfathers can make and unmake. In the context of this study, godfathers refer to individuals or powerful figures with the ability to help others to acquire political power.

2.4   The Concept of Godsons

According to Chukwuemeka, Oji, & Chukwurah (n.d.:208), godsons refer to political office seekers who benefit from the benevolence of a godfather during a political contest. Ajayi as cited in Chukwuemeka, Oji, & Chukwurah (n.d.:210) described godson as the beneficiary and recipient of the legacy of a godfather.

Refering to the Igbo traditional concept, Dickson (2003) in Attah, Audu, & Haruna, 2014:88) simply liken the godsons to the "Odibos" or the servants. This refers to people of lesser social status who attach themselves to people of higher social status usually for benefits. Edigin (2010) in Omonijo, Nnedum, Oludayo, & Anyaegbunam (2015:31) defined godson as protégé. Chiama (2015) defined godsons as younger-breed political office seekers who need the political anointing of the godfathers to receive the baptism to belong and dominate.

In the context of this study, godsons simply relate to the Prince, intending ruler, political office seeker, leader or politician who rely on the goodwill of another person of higher status to acquire political power.

2.5   Machiavellianism and the Godfathers-Godsons Clash

Abraham Lincoln as cited in Udoh (2014) quipped: "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power". The relationship of the godfathers and the godsons at first appears to be harmless but subsequent realities shows otherwise. Udoh (2014) observed that any godson who comes to the power through a godfather typically has an easy time gaining power but a hard time keeping it thereafter because his power is dependent on the goodwill of the godfather. This implies that if such a godson does not command the loyalty of the armies and officials that maintain his authority which means that it can be withdrawn from him at any time. The counsel of Machiavelli to such a godson, is to quickly build his (own) fighting force lest he will realise that it is a matter of time before he loses his political power (Udoh, 2014).

Omonijo, Nnedum, Oludayo, & Anyaegbunam (2015:31) wrote that without manipulations, the godfathers will not be able to realise the money they spent in ensuring that the godsons acquire political power and that when the manipulation becomes too much, the godson often react by refusing to be further manipulated.

More so, Okomba (2006) observed the counsel of Machiavelli suggesting that the use of force is indispensable but the godson should act in such a way that when the act accuses him, the result will excuse him. The godson is advised to make his virtues and vices appear good. It is the end that justifies the means (Bull, cited in Okomba, 2006).

The clash between godfathers and their godsons often degenerate into severe crisis (Chukwuemeka, Oji, & Chukwurah, n.d.:211) which are not directed at satisfying the interests of the state (Rafiu, Owolabi, & Folasayo, 2009:160).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study is a qualitative research. Secondary data were basically employed. The methods used include review, comparative, critical and evaluative. Using a retrospective analysis of events, the critical method dominates the work.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 The Nature of Politics in Nigeria

Oluwasanmi (2014) was of the view that the political history of Nigeria shows that politics revolves around Machiavellian style based on (what he described as) amorality, deception, power, ego, and personal advantage which he called a politics of self-preservation rather than self-giving. More so, Oladele (n.d.) revealed that the incentives of winner-take-all system have hindered attempts for a free and fair elections as well as the humility to accept defeat. What this means is that a winner-take-all system can be reduced down to either holding office and thus having power or being in opposition and having none.

Omonijo, Nnedum, Oludayo, & Anyaegbunam (2015:31) stated that the structure in Nigeria today ensures a typical political godfather to manipulate state officials, institutions and resources to the detriment of the common man. Shosanya & Alemika as cited in Oyekunle (2015:180) wrote that political office seekers in Nigeria give pretence to morality when seeking for power but do the opposite in their bid to retain power. Mefor (2010) viewed politics in Nigeria as that of inept, Machiavellian elite and that Nigerian leaders place emphasis on power without morality, they therefore abandoned the good aspect of Machiavelli's recommendations that says the intending ruler should abhor corruption and not see the state as mere property.

Similarly, Wole Soyinka in what he described as "the destructive-creative principle" in the Paradoxical Essence of Life, as seen in Umukoro (2009), lamented that Nigerian politicians do not create or produce wealth but only destroy and consume. Furthermore, he added that the Nigerian politicians are guilty of destructive one-sidedness. Mefor (2010) declared that Nigerian politicians combine both fraud and physical force effectively and thereby making their wrongs less obvious to citizens. He explains that the suggestion by Machiavelli that the intending ruler should crush all opposition with an iron hand simply tells why "political godsons" turn against their "godfathers" in Nigeria, visiting so much violence on their benefactors to achieve elimination. Mefor further submitted that Nigeria is not developed because the funds meant for development have been wiped out by political elites who pursue power as merchandise and politics as a profession as well as source of livelihood and as such cannot afford to let go. According to Edigin (2010) in Omonijo, Nnedum, Oludayo, & Anyaegbunam (2015:31) conflicts between godfathers and godsons have become one of the greatest problems facing the Nigeria political system. The godson becomes a stooge to his godfather because he that pays the piper also dictates the tune.

The godfather-godsons politics, according to Edigin (2010) in Omonijo, Nnedum, Oludayo, & Anyaegbunam (2015:31) clearly undermines the process of development in an underdeveloped society like Nigeria. It is therefore a well-known fact that no meaningful development can be achieved in an atmosphere of wars of attrition, crisis and people who are perpetually and diametrically opposed to one another (Edigin, 2010 in Omonijo, Nnedum, Oludayo, & Anyaegbunam, 2015:31). In the course of conflict between the godsons and godfathers, Nigeria has recorded unnecessary breakdown of law and order, which should have been avoided if the godfathers-godsons had not been instituted (Omonijo, Nnedum, Oludayo, & Anyaegbunam, 2015:31).

Nkwede, Ibeogu, & Nwankwo (2014:142) considered the godfathers and godsons in Nigerian politics as a dangerous contradiction to political development. They added that the solution to this menaces is the serious problem facing Nigeria until a morally sound, committed and patriotic leader emerge to lead the people honestly with the attribute of transparency, openness, people oriented policies and programmes. Noting misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the counsel of Machiavelli, Rafiu, Owolabi, & Folasayo (2009:160) asserted that behaviours and actions in the counsel were to be directed at satisfying the interests of the state.

4.2   The Role of Godfathers in Ensuring that Godsons Acquire Political Power
Udoh (2014) showed that some former governors (playing the godfathers) imposed their (anointed) successors or godsons on the state. Alluding to this, Omonijo, Nnedum, Oludayo, & Anyaegbunam (2015:31) described the role of godfathers in ensuring that godsons acquire political power as a political battle which the elite class had been wagging against democracy, the masses and the entire nation in order to fulfill their economic self-interests. Chukwuemeka, Oji, & Chukwurah (n.d.:211) wrote that the godfathers operate by scheming, manipulating and the use of aggressive politicking to foist godsons on the generality of the people by any means. This simply suggests that the primary motive of the godfathers from venturing into politics is to make money from the coffers of government to which the godsons will take charge.

The issue of criminalisation of politics and politicisation of crime is another case. Rafiu, Owolabi, & Folasayo (2009) commented that unresolved murder cases including that of Mr. Jesse Arukwu, Engineer Funso Williams and Dr. Ayo Daramola among others who were all gubernatorial aspirants in their respective states raises doubts of the likelihood of their being eliminated to clear the political coast for others in the race. Oladele (n.d.) noted that even though, existing laws are adequate to unravel the cases, the government does not have the political will to investigate let alone prosecute these politically motivated murders because most of the perpetrators belong to the class of godfathers (Oladele, n.d.).

4.3 The Godsons-Godfathers Relationships after the Acquisition of Political Power in Nigeria
Exploring the nature of relationship between godsons and godfathers after the acquisition of political power in Nigeria, Udoh (2014) declared that most of the godsons have made visits to government house very difficult to most godfathers which once had and exercised unlimited powers. The godsons appeared to have played the Machiavellian's Prince coming to the throne with borrowed troops who quickly moved to establish his authority and assemble his (own) troops and loyalists. Notwithstanding, Ajanaku cited in Oyekunle (2015:180) also noted few cases where godfathers were making and unmaking the godsons (see also Abdullahi & Sakariyau, 2013:10). Udoh (2014); Chiama (2015); Ajanaku cited in Oyekunle (2015:180); Chukwuemeka, Oji, & Chukwurah (n.d.:213-214) gave the following experiences in the these 12 states.

State	Date	Godson	Godfather	Relationship before the acquisition of power	Relationship after the acquisition of power
Abia	1999-2015	Theodore A. Orji	Orji Uzor Kalu	Godson served as Chief of Staff to the godfather and was in detention during election	Godson hurriedly drove godfather out of the state
Adamawa	1999-2003	Boni Haruna	Atiku Abubakar	Godson inherited godfather's governorship seat as godfather became running mate to presidency	After the first term, the relationship between the two collapsed
Akwa Ibom	1999-2007	Godswill Akpabio	Victor Attah	Godson was the Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs to the godfather	During 2015, the two were in different political camps
Anambra	1999-2003	Chinwoke Mbadinuju	Emeka Offor	Godfather played a huge role to bring godson to power	The two were on parallel sides
Anambra	2003	Chris Ngige	Chris Uba	Godfather played a huge role to bring godson to	The two were on parallel sides

					power
Bayelsa	2007-2011	Timipre Sylva	Goodluck Jonathan	Godson inherited godfather's governorship ticket	Godson failed his second term bid due to fall out with godfather
Benue	1999-2007	Gabriel Suswam	George Akume	Godfather played a huge role to bring godson as his successor	Before 2015 general elections, both men operate in parallels
Borno	1999-2007	Kashim Shettima	Ali Modu Sheriff	Godfather played a huge role to bring godson as his successor	Godson locked the gate of government house against the godfather
Enugu	1999-2007	Chimaroke Nnamani	Jim Nwobodo	Godfather played a huge role to bring godson to power	Just a year after 1999, godson forced godfather to flee the state for safety
Enugu	2007-2015	Sullivan Chime	Chimaroke Nnamani	Godson was the Attorney General and Commissioner of Justice to the godfather	Godson later drove godfather out of government house
Kwara	1999-2003	Mohamed Lawal	Olusola Saraki	Godfather played a huge role to bring godson to power	Differences between the two led to the expulsion of the godfather from the ruling party in the state
Oyo	2003-2006	Rashidi Ladoja	Lamidi Adedibu	Godfather played a huge role to bring godson to power	Godson was impeached by the State House of Assembly due to differences with godfather
Rivers	1999-2007	Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi	Peter Odili	Godson was State House of Assembly Speaker	The two were on parallel sides due to events before godson got to power
Zamfara	1999-2007	Mahmud Shinkafi	Ahmed Yerima	Godson was deputy to godfather as governor	Godson severed all cordial relationship with the godfather

Compiled from Udoh (2014); Chiama (2015); Ajanaku cited in Oyekunle, 2015:180); Chukwuemeka, Oji, & Chukwurah (n.d.:213-214)

5.1   CONCLUSION

The focus of the study was on Machiavellianism: the godfathers and the godsons in Nigeria (1999-2015). It specifically explored the nature of politics in Nigeria, described the role of godfathers in helping the godsons to acquire political power in Nigeria, and explained the godsons-godfathers relationships after the acquisition of political power in Nigeria. Elite theory was used as theoretical framework. Qualitative design and basically secondary data were employed. The study did suggest that the Nigerian politics revolves around Machiavellianism. Also, the study showed that godfathers scheme to help godsons to acquire political power in Nigeria. It was also revealed that the godsons-godfathers relationship after godson had acquired political power mostly end with conflict. The study concludes that there are misinterpretation and misapplication of Machiavellianism by Nigerian politicians.

5.2   RECOMMENDATIONS

It is hereby recommended that:

1.   A reasonable power sharing arrangement should be employed to address the current incentive of winner-take-all in the Nigerian political system so as to reduce the stakes and check desperate power seekers with murderous instincts in the political arena.

2.   Attention should be given to morality in politics in order to bring about the culture of self-giving rather than self-preserving.

3.   Emphasis should be placed on the good aspect of Machiavelli's counsel that intending ruler should abhor corruption. Therefore, those at the helms of affairs must fight corruption beyond media war.

4.   Measure should be put in place to check desperate power seekers with schemes but without genuine interest to serve the people and the nation.

5.   There is need for a morally sound, committed and patriotic leader that will lead the people honestly with the attributes of transparency, openness, and people oriented policies cum programmes.

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