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Electoral Process and Neo-Patrimonialism: An Appraisal of Quality of Governance in Democratic Nigeria

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Abstract- Since the restoration of democratic governance which heralded the Fourth Republic in 1999, the hopes and aspirations of the citizens for improved dividends of democracy for their material wellbeing have been truncated. This has given way to disillusionment and appalling state of living of the majority of the populace. The dwindling quality of government is not unconnected with influence of neo-patrimonial network and fraudulent electoral process. The electoral heist, which robs the political elites the much-needed legitimacy makes them, creates an amalgam of political network amongst major power merchants within the country for regime stability and political survival. The ruling elites are therefore not answerable to the citizens but to this network to the detriment of the common man. This work appraises the democratic governance in the country since the military disengaged from the nation's politics in 1999; it argues that the nature of Nigeria's electoral process and neo-patrimonial network ultimately result in the low quality of government. Credible electoral process is not only sine qua non for standard democratic governance but also a crucial element for the realisation of the much-desired dividends of democracy for the citizens.

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I. INTRODUCTION

“Democracy is the answer. Not because democracy is perfect. It is precisely because it is imperfect. We are not looking for another utopia; we are looking for an optional solution based on the system available to us. By that standard, there is no contest... and there is no justification for further delay.”

-SaadEddin Ibrahim
Egyptian Democracy Activist.

Obviously, Nigerian foremost nationalists were convinced of the validity of the argument thrown up by this Egyptian pro-democracy activist. Their opposition against colonialism was not just based on the dismantling of its yoke, but more importantly,

on the need for efficient and development-centered governance through electoral and representative democracy. Central to their logical reasoning was the functional utility of democracy in meeting the populace's material wellbeing and furnishing the government with legitimacy through a credible electoral process. “Elections”, as Darren Kew had contended, “are the apex of the political democratic system” (2010). Elections remain the basic ingredient of democratic system. Indeed, representative democracy relies on elections to answer the basic questions of who governs to adjudicate political misunderstanding among politicians and also furnish the regime with legitimacy. They are bastion of people-centered governance.

However, the reality of post-colonial Nigeria reveals that democracy in the country, in contradistinction to developed democracies, has been the harbinger of multiple of woes and visible lack of semblance of good governance. Critical to this seemingly intractable malady is the manipulation of the electoral process itself by political power merchants known in local parlance as godfathers through their neo-patrimonial network. In democracy, elections occupy central position, they are vital in deciding the ultimate wielder of power that the political elites rarely allowed it to operate according to the dictate of the relevant electoral law and constitution. The collapse of the former Republics was not only precipitated by massive corruption, as alleged by military while justifying their coups (Emma, 2012), but more importantly, those ‘democratic governments’ suffered legitimacy crisis. The civil society groups, pro-democracy activists and general public hailed the military when it sacked the governments of Alhaji Shehu Shagari (Fawole 2007) and Chief Earnest Shonekan because they lacked legitimacy among the people. The former came in through a fraudulent election with the connivance of the country's powerful political mandarins, while the latter was an imposition of Ibrahim Babangida in the dying days of his regime. It has to be acknowledged that most of the essential features of democratic systems (e.g., the recognition of all citizens as political equals and the right of the citizens to self-rule mainly through the election of their rulers) make the relationship between democracy and legitimacy very complex and extremely significant.

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a) *Legitimacy Crisis and the Neo-Patrimonialism*

Legitimacy is a political philosophy which is associated with the popular acceptance of the political leadership with its institutions. 'Legitimacy', according to Weber, 'facilitates the exercise of domination, a particular form of power' (1968, 212). Citizens tend to accept and even support a government deemed legitimate. In most cases, such authority exercised by political leader is derived from the populace through electoral process. However, over the years, legitimacy in African political systems seems to be eroding. Scholars are puzzled with this development. Therefore, various scholars have come up with different approaches to conceptualise the causes of poverty of legitimacy, leading to legitimacy crisis with its untoward results. Legitimacy crisis according to Friedrichs (cited in Ogundiya 2009) may be perceived as having a structural dimension. The structural dimension is critical in terms of the manifest existence of a legitimacy crisis. However, Lipset (1960: 78) did not agree with Friedrichs, perceiving legitimacy crisis as a crisis of change, that is, a change from tradition to modernity. Secondly, loss of legitimacy, according to him usually occurs when a political system no longer has the capacity to provide adequate access to the political process for new social groups arising from below. Another scholar, Bensman (1998: 15-85) contends that legitimacy crisis, is a problem emanating from the frustration of expectation of the governed. 'Modern society, according to him', is characterised by rising expectation and increasing demands for responsible leadership which in turn provide the basis for modern legitimacy. Yet leaders constrained by structural problems of jurisdiction, technical expertise and planning fail to solve the basic claims of the populace. Unable to admit 'structural competence, but faced with insoluble problems, they develop techniques of political deception that produced popular confidence. None of these techniques fully work. The result, the crisis of legitimacy is thus a natural consequence. Most scholars will without iota of doubt, readily agree with John Locke that a state compels obedience when the citizens perceive it to be representing their interests and pushing their common good (cited in Richard, 1991). In other words, it is only when people are able to relate to the state as their own that they are most likely to obey it.

In Nigerian context, however, the endemic legitimacy crisis rocking the 'democratic government' is largely the function of electoral malpractices that have become the hallmark of the nation's electoral democracy since military disengaged from the country's political landscape in 1999. This clearly aligns with Richards' argument on the source of Nigerian erosion of legitimacy. 'Prebendal behaviour', in the view of Richards, (1983: 32) 'inevitably contributes to a serious crisis in the legitimacy and effectiveness of governmental authorities in Nigeria. In other words,

prebendal politics, which thrives on electoral malfeasance, benefits only the political class and its thieving political elites at the expense of generality of the people.

Patrimonialism was developed by Max Weber to describe a system of personal rule in which the ruler dispenses offices and benefits to subordinates in return for loyalty, support and services (Weber, 1968:1031). It is a political system in which 'elected officers' of the state use their offices for personal benefits and those of their supporters (Theobald, 1982: 248). In neo-patrimonialism, the political offices only serve the overall interests of patron and the client. That is, the political officeholders and those who corruptly facilitated their electoral victory to the detriment of the masses. Nigerian electoral democracy has further widened the scope and dimension of neo-patrimonialism. Like all developing nations, access to political power guarantees wealth and opulence in an environment of abject poverty. Consequently, from the beginning, elections were seen by power holders as too important to allow them to function correctly (Kew: 2010). In a neo-patrimonial system, political power is not held in trust on behalf of the people, but on behalf of the power merchants popular known in local parlance as 'god fathers. Political god fathers are a key asset and important in mobilising both financial resources and thuggery on behalf of their clients (elected representatives) for winning elections. It is doubtful to assert that neo-patrimonial network is a creation of the military government or a recent political development. Neopatrimonialism is one of the unintended legacies of Colonial conquest of Africa. Osaghae (1994: 21) argued that the root of legitimacy deficit in Africa lies in the fact that legitimacy was not vigorously pursued as part of statehood under colonial rule. The leaders that took over from the departing colonialists embraced the practice. In the First Republic, the response of late chief Anthony Enahoro to Dr. Jaja Wachukwu's Motion on Nigeria's Foreign Policy indicated that the practice is age-long in the nation's political process. Enahoro viewed the Sardauna of Sokoto, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello as the absentee head of the government (Prime Minister) not Sir Tafawa Balewa (Olusanya and Akindele 1986: 516).

Electoral malpractices in different forms put a bold question mark on the legitimacy of the government that emerged from such a heist to effectively govern the people. 'The question of the individual relating himself/herself to the state', according to Osaghae, 'is not simply one of identity but an acceptance by the individual that the state is capable of pursuing his/her goal' (1994:4). The understanding of this fact is not lost on the 'elected officials' too. Being rocked with legitimacy crisis, in their search for regime stability and political survival, the engine of patrimonial network, which worked for their victories in the previous polls, is lubricated with state funds. This in turn, further

delegitimizes their authority to govern. Ogundiya (2009: 137) corroborated this contention when he said:

'The state that has been under the control of corrupt civilians and military rulers who had fed ferociously on the economy and resources of the state with reckless abandon cannot enjoy the support of the people. The consequence is glaring: poverty of legitimacy. Therefore of all the problems that confront the state and its relationship to society, corruption has perhaps, the largest share in reducing state capacity to perform, create instability and lowering the level of state legitimacy in Nigeria.'

The rate of official sleaze in the country has greatly added a sickening dimension to legitimacy crisis rocking the boat of Nigerian state. While 70 percent, that is, 90 million Nigerians is subsisting on less than one dollar a day, a total of about \$380 billion have been allegedly stolen by former political officeholders whether military or civilian leaders (Watts 2007). In fact, it is estimated that this amount stolen is six times the American aid given to rebuild the war-devastated European economy under the Marshall Plan (Blair 2005). Transparency International has consistently rated Nigeria as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Notwithstanding the system of government institutionalised, be it democracy or non-democratic, a highly corrupt government cannot enjoy the support and acceptance of impoverished citizens. Consequently, such government is bound to suffer poverty of legitimacy.

In democratic arrangement, accountability is very essential. Citizens' vote is on the basis that the person or group of persons being voted for will only represent their interest in government. That is, they are reposing their confidence in their representatives with the expectation of being represented well. They invariably want the political officeholders to be accountable by keeping their promises of making available the dividends of democracy. However, the forces of neo-patrimonial network in cahoots with political thugs, consisting of unemployed graduates and school leavers, bus drivers, that is, members of Transport Road Workers, touts and street urchins have rendered government unaccountable to the masses. In advancing the yearnings and aspiration of the people, Nigerian government, over the years, is first and foremost, preoccupied with how best to please not the masses but the neo-patrimonial agents that worked for their 'victory'. The government is not answerable to the people but the power merchants. This is necessary for two main reasons: Firstly, the stability of the regime. Regime stability is a function of pacifying the agents of neo-patrimonial networks with state fund. This phenomenon is better illustrated with the event that happened in Oyo State. The late garrison commander of

Ibadan Politics, Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu, orchestrated the impeachment of the former Governor of the state, Alhaji Rashidi Ladoja, for his refusal to share state fund with him. The cold relationship between the two degenerated to serious political crisis in the state (see Osaghae, 2010). To avoid this ugly incident, the 'elected' officeholders must share the state income with the network that secured him victory in the previous poll. Secondly, the continued patronage of the network is crucial for 'winning' the next election especially for the first timers. It has to be understood that since gaining independence in 1960, no elected official in Executive arm of government is satisfied with a single term of office. Winning elections thus become a matter of life and death. The violence and bloodshed that attended the 2011 elections made the former president Goodluck Jonathan to propose a single term of seven years to any person seeking election into Executive arm.

b) *Neo-patrimonialism and Governance in Nigeria*

As it has been stated elsewhere in this study that neo-patrimonialism has been a recurring challenge in the consolidation of democratic governance in the country. Elections seem to have become mere exercise to fulfil constitutional requirement not necessarily to genuinely choose representatives to political offices. 'As it were, the prospects of the governor's re-election did not depend on how well he had performed in his first term as governor and how citizens of the state were going to vote but on the structure the godfathers had to make things happen' (2010: 417). From independence, especially since 1963 general elections, this have always been the case and it had and would continue to have serious implications on accountability for the governed. A cursory examination of governance in the country since independence would reveal that the crisis of legitimacy, occasioned by forces of neo-patrimonialism and corruption have not only left the citizens of the country bereft of good standard of living but has equally put the country on the keg of gun-powder.

The second general polls of 1963 conducted for the First Republic were reflective of the patrimonial cleavages. After the Northern People Congress (NPC) won the 1959 general elections, it soon embarked on 'Nothernisation' policy with a view to solidifying its position within the Northern region, and it also sought to make powerful inroad in other regions of the country especially in Western region, the stronghold of opposition. The opportunity soon presented itself, when NPC seized upon a 1964 crisis in the Western Legislative Assembly to imprison the opposition leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The NPC-led Federal government, in an attempt to consolidate its gain, split the Action Group (AG) through patron-client tactic and carved the Mid-West from the Western Region. Consequently, opposition to the government was

effectively decimated. Everything was calculated to ensure that NPC have a landslide victory in the 1964 election without requiring coalition with other smaller parties. Meanwhile, with the jailing of the leader of AG, upheaval in the West remained a serious concern with unparalleled corruption under the emergency rule. NPC-orchestrated defectors from AG, known as Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) joined the ruling party at the centre with the defectors promised juicy political appointments and "help" during 1965 elections. NPC did not stop at that, it also manipulated census and voter registration exercises. Opposition parties were hounded and intimidated; other forms of electoral malpractices were committed in the NPC's drive for hegemony. Both 1964/65 elections were complete charades. The elections revealed Northern agenda at dominating Nigeria politically through patron-client tactic. The situation became so precarious that the military had to intervene.

The long time of the military rule could not have obliterated neopatrimonialism in the body politics of the nation for the military junta itself operated a neo-patrimonial system to a very large extent. 'Military rulers, as Ikpe has argued, 'are personal rulers who depend for support, on the distribution of state largesse to favourite and kinsmen' (2001, 147). This factor has made military regime in the nation a neo-patrimonial agent. Barely six months after the first coup, had the second one occurred: the military junta of Gen. J. T. U. Aguiyi-Ironsi was dislodged and replaced by a new one headed by Gen. Yakubu Gowon. The coup makers recounted the traditional justifications for coup making: the Gen. Aguiyi-Ironsi-led military regime was accused of various political and economic crimes. After almost a decade in power, Gen. Gowon's regime was toppled in a bloodless coup in 1975. Drawing upon tradition, the succeeding regime accused the Gowon regime of an assortment of political, economic and social crimes (Garba: 1987). The new military junta promised to restore sanity to the political process and to consequently relinquish power to civilians. It established a transition program to usher in a new civilian government by October, 1979. The junta closely supervised the process that led to the election of a civilian government, and the consequent birth of Nigeria's Second Republic in 1979.

However, the military showed little interest in the structure of the political parties, such that the leading parties largely resurfaced under new names. For instance, the NPC re-emerged as the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), absorbing some of its Western NNDP allies from the First Republic alliance and in the Niger Delta as well. Action Group transmogrified into Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and as expected, had its staunchest adherents from the Yoruba in south-western part of the country. Nigerian People Party emerged from the debris of NCNC while People Redemption Party (PRP) metamorphosed from old NEPU. Therefore, the

neo-patrimonial forces and corruption that undermined the First Republic also replicated itself in the Second Republic with more vengeance. The two general elections conducted in 1979 and 1983 were massively rigged in favour of NPN. In the Second Republic, manipulation ethnicity had become the hallmark of governance. In fact, throughout the Second Republic, ethnic contract remained intact as the parties sought to channel development policies and patronage to their ethnic basis particularly at the state level, where social policies were expanded (Ayeni and Soremekun 1988).

After a little over four years of civilian rule, the military re-intervened in politics through a coup d'etat in December, 1983: the civilian government of President Shehu Shagari was overthrown, and a new military junta was installed under the leadership of Gen. Muhammadu Buhari. Characteristically, the Shagari government was accused of a litany of political and economic improprieties (Zainab 1987: 133-138). The regime had no intention to return the country to democracy. Although, the regime took a hard stance against corruption which it believed was responsible for lack of visible development in the country. His stance on corruption did not go down well with the entrenched neo patrimonial network that had plundered the resources of the country for its benefits. Buhari was so certain that fighting corruption through the instrumentality of normal courts would not yield the much-needed fruit. It has to be noted that court was not left out in the rottenness that had eaten deep into the national fabric. Some of the lawyers and judges are equally members of the network that rendered the country unworkable (Owete 2014). Tribunal was set up to try accused politicians of corruption to the chagrin of the network. Consequently, Buahri's regime was toppled by Ibrahim Babangida in cahoots with the network. Immediately he gained the rein of government, Babangida inaugurated what Abdul Raufu Mustapha describes as the "season of transition without change (1999). For seven years, he involved the country in a political transition whose cost has been put at about 30 billion naira (Raufu). Almost as soon as it came to power, the military regime of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida announced that it would disengage from politics, and hand over power to an elected civilian regime. Since the announcement was made, the ruling military junta was developing and implementing the modalities that would usher in Nigeria's Third Republic by December 1992. Babangida proved more personal and corrupt than any of his predecessors, utilizing an extended transition to a Third Republic as a mean to prolong his stay in office (Kew: 2010). From all indications, Babangida's transition programme was engineered to fail so as to allow the regime to continue. Attesting to Babangida's network of neo-patrimonial his regime benefitted, Diamond *et al* said, Babangida personalised dependency by routing much of the available patronage through the presidency, which he

spread liberally to extend his network of clients (1997). As Babangida consolidated his regime, corruption assumed unimaginable dimension. During his period, \$ 12 billion earned from the windfall of 1990-1991 Gulf War was completely looted by the regime and all information about it including the famous Okigbo's Panel Report on the fund disappeared. The imposition of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), despite the masses' aversion to it, worsened people standard of living. The level of poverty in the country increased astronomically. The economic condition of the land afforded the influential individuals, who had access to state's income to grow more powerful such that they had little interest in the constituencies outside their immediate support network.

Babangida's austerity measure had unintended consequences for the masses and the country, for it led to the complete loss of regime's legitimacy and credibility and the people now clamoured for democratic change. In the face of mass-based protests and the threat of sanction from the international community, after multiple of dates shifting, the presidential election finally held in June 12, 1993. However, despite being hailed as the fairest and freest election in independent Nigeria, Babangida annulled the election. The real reason(s) for such decision remains in the realm of conjecture. Babangida may have thought that the presumed winner of the election, Chief M.K.O. Abiola may rock the boat of the entrenched neo-patrimonial network which had sustained his junta for eight years.

As the nation learnt of the annulment of the election, massive protests mainly organised by pro-democracy activists forced Babangida to 'step aside' and quickly arrange Interim National Government (ING) headed by Chief Earnest Shonekan. The protests continued after Shonekan's illegal government was installed, consequently, the ING could not function as it was largely seen as an attempt to divert attention from the June 12 mandate, to create an opportunity to continue military rule in the name of an interim arrangement, and to allow neo-patrimonial interests to regroup.

Having apparently schemed to become Head of State several months earlier, Abacha had few problems in consolidating his new regime after unseating Shonekan. Who had just spent barely three months in the saddle. At the onset of his junta, Abacha promised to return the country to constitutional democratic rule at the earliest opportunity. He promised that the length of stay of his junta would be determined by the constitutional conference he was about to establish. (Ihonvbere 1994: 206) When the conference set the date of January 1996 for the hand-over, Abacha embarked on an all too obvious secret campaigns to undermine the conference. In the end, the conference capitulated and reversed itself, giving Abacha a blank cheque to decide the length of his tenure.

Despite promises to the contrary, the so-called 1995 constitution drawn up by the conference was released to the public. Abacha set up yet another transition process which was supposed to lead to an elected constitutional government in October 1998. The institutions that were to midwife the transition were the National Electoral Commission (NECON) and the Transition Implementation Committee (TIC). Both were loaded with Abacha apologists. The five parties formed under the transition were rightly described as the "leprous fingers of the same hand (Raufu). The arrow-heads of these parties were powerful members of the neo-patrimonial network that are more or less political hawks. In the April, 1998, all the five parties dutifully nominated Abacha as their sole candidate for the scheduled August 1998 elections. Abacha's transition programme could only result in an Abacha presidency. Amidst the confusion that engulfed the nation on account of Abacha succession bid, a calm atmosphere descended on the nation when Abacha suddenly died of yet-to-be-known ailment. His unexpected death on June 8th 1998 put paid to his transition programme. Abiola equally mysterious death in July 1998 put paid to the agitation for the restoration of the June 12th 1993 mandate.

c) *Re-democratisation and influence of the neo-patrimonial network*

The demise of General Sanni Abacha, on June 8, 1998, ushered in the regime of General Abubakar Abdulsalami. Thus, he became Nigeria's Head of state over a nation on precipice. The Yoruba speaking of the south west of the country were threatening secession over Abiola's denial of mandate and subsequent imprisonment. Immediately on assumption of the reins of power, Abdulsalami began a new democratisation course for the country. The greatest and most important task for the regime was how to return the country to civil rule after several futile attempts by his predecessors. In doing this, General Abubakar embarked on reconciliation and consultations with different people and groups in the country. He admitted the failure of past attempts at democratisation in the country. In his national broadcast of Monday July 20, 1998, he said:

While recrimination and buck-passing would be unhealthy, we must admit that mistakes have been made, particularly as our most recent attempt at democratisation was marred by manoeuvring and manipulations of structures and actions. At the end, we have only succeeded in creating a defective foundation on which a solid democratic structure can neither be constructed nor sustained. This is an overwhelming verdict from our consultations (Guardian 1998).

In the light of this, he dissolved the five political parties registered by the Abacha regime. Similarly, all

previous elections conducted under these parties were cancelled, for lack of credibility. In a bid to convince the world that the country has finally turned to the path of democracy, Abubakar pledged not to interfere with party formation. Consequently, Abacha's electoral commission, the National Electoral Commission (NECON), was dissolved and a new electoral body was established. This he called the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). In light of the foregoing, political activities resumed in all parts of the country, the electoral commission opened the floodgate for party registration, with some specific guidelines.

An amalgam of some of the nation's highly influential neo-patrimonial network came together to form Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), the party is without doubt, the largest political party in the country with large followings in North West and central, Niger Delta region and South East Middle Belt. The party is completely devoid of ideology and well-articulated manifestoes. It was largely a political platform of neo-patrimonial political jobbers with powerful network across the nation. In fact, most of its members had become very rich via their association with the military governments. They never fought for the restoration of democracy; indeed, they collaborated with military to oppress the pro-democracy activists. The two other registered parties, the defunct All Peoples' Party (APP), and Alliance for Democracy (AD). These parties eventually contested the 1999 elections.

As the 1999 presidential election drew near, the question of who to field as the presidential candidate of the PDP generated some controversies. Eventually, former military Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo was preferred above others. Three factors played crucial role in the nomination of Obasanjo: Firstly, the fear of prosecution by military for excesses during military rule made the military regime of Abubakar to settle for one of their comrades. Secondly, the need to pacify the Yoruba who had suffered political persecution in the hands of the military rulers from the Northern extraction. And thirdly, Obasanjo was a man who handed power to Alhaji Shehu Shagari against his own kinsman, Obafemi Awolowo. Thus, Obasanjo commanded some level of confidence among Northern neo patrimonial politicians and the some conservative class in the country.

In the history of elections in the country, 1999 presidential election stood out as one the most rigged elections. All the external election observers and civil society groups condemned the poll. Although, it was obvious that the PDP would win the poll, but the irregularities tainted the 'victory'. There was no protest; the public was willing to accept the result of the election to deny the military to once again annul the election, thereby elongating the military rule. Obasanjo's main challenger, from the merger of APP and AD, Chief Olu Falae, went to court to challenge the result of the

election. The court confirmed the Obasanjo mandate, hence the beginning of Fourth Republic.

Obasanjo did not have a neo patrimonial network when he was elected as president of the country. In fact, he was brought from detention to contest the election. However, his deputy, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar runs one of the most powerful neo patrimonial networks in the country. He was not only compensated with the position of Vice Presidency for surrendering his 'political structure' for Obasanjo, he was given substantial role in managing the economy, especially, the corruption-tainted privatisation policy of the government. He was so powerful in the government that his army of supporters encouraged him to contest 2003 presidential election. Atiku was said to have given serious thought to this suggestion. The issue pitted Atiku and Obasanjo in different camps (Kew 2010). Both of them reconciled and won the 2003 election. However, Obasanjo never forget nor forgive Atiku.

At the state level, some states in the federation almost become the fiefdoms of the neo-patrimonial network. In Kwara state, the Second Republic governor Olusola Saraki maintained a vice-like grip on the politics of the state for his benefit. He single-handedly determined who became what in the state. He orchestrated the election of the former governor of the state, Alhaji Lawal and when the latter fell out of favour with him, he boasted that he would not get the second time in office. Saraki did not only remove him, he equally made his own son, Sen. Bukola Saraki governor of the state. His daughter, Gbemisola Saraki became member of the upper chamber of the National Assembly courtesy of her father neo-patrimonial network.

In Anambra and Oyo states, the neo-patrimonial network had a field day as the chief executives of these states and the network openly clashed resulting in political upheaval. The fact that the then president did not do anything worthy of note to bring the situations under control showed that the president hoped to build his own network involving both Chris Uba and Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu, the power merchants in Anambra and Oyo states respectively. Chris Uba publicly admitted to have rigged governorship election in favour of Chris Ngige of PDP. When the governor was not forth-coming in fulfilling his own side of the 'agreement' (sharing the funds of the state), Uba used the state security apparatus; the Nigerian Police force to abduct the governor with of course, the tacit support of the president. In the same vein, the garrison commander of the Ibadan politics, as Adedibu was popularly known, single-handedly used the state House of Assembly members to impeach the governor Rashidi Ladoja for failing to remit part of the state's largesse to his account. During this political turbulence in the state, Obasanjo was secretly working hard to get the aspiration of the Adedibu realised. The latter would later install the deputy governor, Alao Akala, as governor of the state. To all the

aspirants to political offices, the lesson of the unfolding political imbroglio was not lost on them: reneging on your agreements with the neo-patrimonial network would result in political suicide.

President Obasanjo emerged from his 2003 electoral triumph with a strong determination to have absolute control of the PDP's machine by surreptitiously constructing his own neo-patrimonial network. Two scenarios lend credence to this: Firstly, he aimed to sabotage the presidential aspiration of his vice, Atiku and remove two-time limit on the presidency through constitutional amendment to allow him to elongate his tenure. It was for this purpose that a Senate Constitutional Amendment Committee chaired by Senator Ibrahim Mantu, a pro-Obasanjo Senator. Secondly, both anti-corruption agencies, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Commission (ICPC) and state largesse were mobilised to whip non-compliant political officeholders in PDP especially, governors into line. However, pro-democracy-led demonstrations compelled National Assembly to reject the Mantu's Committee on the constitutional amendment. With this rejection Obasanjo's unconstitutional ambition suffered serious setback from which it never recover. Immediately it became obvious that the Third Time project had become stillborn, the president tinkered with the PDP's constitution by making himself chairman of the Board of Trustee (BOT) of PDP with a view to control his handpicked successor, late Umaru Musa Yar'Adua.

If the 2003 general elections were full of irregularities, 2007 elections especially presidential election was a complete mockery of electoral democracy. It was worst that USAID withdrew its support for democratisation process in the country. Other monitoring agencies both national and international condemned the election, labelling it a charade. Even Appeal Court alone nullified ten Governorship elections, most of them from the ruling PDP. To the chagrin of pro-democracy activists, civil society organisations and academia, Supreme Court, in a split 4-3 decision upheld the Yar'Adua victory. Thus, Yar'Adua became president with heavy baggage of illegitimacy. His predecessor, Obasanjo, who had declared in the countdown to 2007 poll that "this election is a-do-or-die affair for me and the PDP" (Tenuche, 2007; 171), had increased the prices of petroleum products in the twilight of his administration with a sole purpose of solving legitimacy crisis Yar'Adua's regime may encounter. Consequently, immediately Yar'Adua became president, he reduced the pump prices. This move apparently made his government likeable among the masses. More importantly, to assuage the feeling of the people over the electoral heist that produced him, the president, while acknowledging the fraud in the 2007 presidential

election, promised to overhaul electoral process in the country by setting up Electoral Reform Committee headed by the retired Justice Muhammed Uwais. By the time the committee submitted its report, the tension in the polity had subsided. Hence, it was easier for Yar'Adua to jettison the recommendations of the committee.

President Yar'Adua, though from politically powerful family, did not have a nationwide support network. Obasanjo in cahoots with some political heavyweight within the ruling PDP were instrumental to his presidency. Like his predecessor, Yar'Adua decided to consolidate his hold on power by setting out to gain the control of the party through a familiar neo-patrimonial tactics. The stronghold of the network on Yar'Adua's presidency soon began to manifest itself. For example, the trial of some ex-Governors and top government functionaries for alleged corruption was said to have been frustrated because they belonged to the network. Prominent among these ex-governors was James Ibori, a former Governor of Delta state, 1999-2007, who enjoyed a sort of "presidential immunity" that shielded him from prosecution notwithstanding plethora of evidence against him. In fact, the appointment of the chairman anti-corruption agency: EFCC, Mrs Farida Wasiri, was influenced by Ibori. However, Yar'Adua health crisis and the subsequent health trip to Saudi Arabia exposed, more than anything else the sinister activities of the neo-patrimonial network.

The health crisis of Yar'Adua apparently revealed the nature and dimension of the neo-patrimonial network as it afforded it to weigh enormous political power to influence official decisions of the government in a more direct way. For the network, Yar'Adua's presidency must be protected till the end, come what may and at all cost, even if it means subverting the constitution. The network succeeded in piloting the affairs of government for over four months the president was away to Jeddah (Omotola 2011). The network relied heavily on propaganda, distortion of facts, official secrecy, executive threats against perceived opposition and litigations. It was at the high point of this crisis that one of the arrow heads of the network, the then Attorney General of the Federation, Michael Aondoakaa declared that the president could govern from any part of the world (Aleem 2010). This probably provided justification for taking the supplementary budget to Jeddah for Yar'Adua's signature.

The National Assembly woefully failed to leave to its constitutional responsibilities by invoking the relevant sections of the constitution to resolve the matter. It was not until it became obvious that David Mark and his loyalists in the Senate had lost control over the majority that he decided to act by invoking the Doctrine of Necessity to make Jonathan an Acting President. In order to checkmate Jonathan from

exercising presidential power, the network, in the cover of darkness brought Yar'Adua into the country on 23 February 2010, it was without the knowledge of Acting president. Yet, the military was deployed to the airport both in Lagos and Abuja without Jonathan's knowledge, let alone approval. Yar'Adua remained invisible president even to the Acting president till his death in May 2010. Thus, Jonathan was sworn in as president the following day.

Jonathan's presidency was welcome with gladness among the pro-democracy activists for one reason: a sort of triumph over neo-patrimonial forces. Jonathan had never been identified with a particular neo-patrimonial network that had dominated the politics of the country since independence. He endeared the masses to himself when he sacked the INEC chairman, Maurice Iwu and replaced him with a distinguished scholar, Prof. Attahiru Jega. Nigerians heaved a sigh of relief, believing that the subsequent elections will be credible. Almost immediately he assumed office, the Northern based neo-patrimonial network started issuing out threats, telling the president that he cannot contest the 2011 presidential poll because of alleged zoning formula in the PDP. Adamu Ciroma-led Northern elders presented former vice president, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar as Northern nominee. Jonathan, supported by Obasanjo and his former colleagues in the Governors forum defeated Atiku in the PDP Convention in Abuja. In the presidential election, adjudged relatively credible in comparison with previous elections, Jonathan defeated his main challenger in the poll, General Muhammadu Buhari of the defunct Congress for Progress Change (CPC).

While the pro-democracy activists and civil society groups were celebrating the clean cut from the neo-patrimonial politics with the emergence of the Jonathan government, the president was busy plotting to consolidate his hold on government by courting the same old tactics. Four factors lend credence to this tactics: emergence of three governors forums, Rotimi Amaechi-led governor forum, David Jonah Jang-led governor forum and PDP governor forum led by Godwin Akpabio of Akwa Ibom state; and his running battle with Rivers state governor, Amaechi for his perceived political ambition; state pardon granted former Bayelsa state governor DSP Alamiesegha and withdrawal of corruption charges against son of late military head of state, Gen. Sanni Abacha and the inheritor of Abacha's loot, Muhammed Abacha.

Central to the failure of the Jonathan's regime to defeat the Boko Haram insurgency is the government's preoccupation with the re-invigoration of the neo-patrimonial machinery for the purpose of winning elections. Although, the emergence of this Sunni Islamic sect predated the government of Jonathan, but the group became an insurgent group during his regime. The government made much noise about fighting the

insurgent but deployed its energy, governmental machinery and financial resources to its re-election bid. In other words, the re-election bid of the president took primacy over the need to defeat the insurgents. As at the time Boko Haram had seized sizable territories in the North-east, declared Gworza as the de-facto capital of the Islamic State's West African Province, pledged allegiance to Islamic State's Caliph, Ibrahim Abu al Baghdadi, kidnapped thousands of people and precipitated thousands of internally displaced persons, the need to oil the neo-patrimonial network overshadowed the urgency required to deal with this nihilistic group. It is a known fact that if \$ 2.1 billion allocated for the procurement of arms to engage the insurgents had been utilised as planned, a devastating blow would have been dealt to the group. But with the tacit approval of the president Jonathan, the fund was callously diverted and shared among the members of the network to pave the way for the electoral success of the president. What Nigerians lost through neo-patrimonial network, was a huge gain for the terrorists who readily outgunned the ill-equipped Nigerian soldiers.

d) *Gains and Pains of Neo-patrimonialism*

No political scientist or Social Scientist would ever contend that neo-patrimonialism is a desirable system capable of engendering political stability and meeting the material wellbeing of the masses. The system only serves the interests of the patron and his/her clients at the detriment of the citizens. Be as it may, the only thing that seems to be the gain of neo-patrimonial network is the fact that Nigeria still remains a political entity in spite of the forces that are hell-bent on disintegrating it. In a system where neo-patrimonialism has become deeply entrenched, almost becoming a political culture, it is pretty difficult, if not impossible to dismember such a country since the members of the network (political elites that cut across ethnicities, religions, regions and political persuasions) profit maximally from the country's unity. It is therefore the sacred duty of the networks to fight for the unity of the nation for their benefits.

However, most of the ills plaguing Nigeria can be blamed on the neo-patrimonial network. For ordinary person, becoming the member of the network is a herculean task. It is exclusive preserve of the high-ranking politicians and their family members. This explains the reason why the sons and daughters of politicians of the First and Second Republics are today more relevant politically than other citizens. Thus, the politically marginalised and disempowered persons see the country, not the network (whose operations they cannot comprehend) as the reason for their penury. An abandoned citizen is a dangerous citizen. Neo-patrimonialism has crippled the electoral process in the country through the use of thugs, political

assassinations, manipulation of elections results and political god-fatherism. As neo-patrimonial networks jostle to maintain their hold on power, control of elections became an even matter of survival, since political office brings easy access to the largesse of the state. Consequently, the need to deploy all machineries to ensure favourable electoral outcomes explains the use of all sorts of uncivilised tactics during election. In desperate move to cater for their wellbeing, large army of unemployed youths have embraced criminalities. This is manifesting in robbery, prostitution, kidnappings and terrorism. The common wealth of the nation has been cornered by the neo-patrimonial forces, leaving the citizens to languish in poverty and to take solace in arming the nation.

Redressing this ugly situation will entail the overhaul of judiciary to effectively adjudicate electoral issues without fear or favour. The strength of the neo-patrimonial network lies in the electoral malpractices. Since the democratisation that started in 1999, despite electoral irregularities, no riggers have been convicted through the process of law court. It has equally become imperative to redefine the institution of the state through fiscal federalism. Over-concentration of power at the centre to the detriment of federating units only serves the interests of the network, not Nigerian citizens. Lastly, thieving political elite and other political officeholders should be appropriately sanctioned through court process.

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