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Patrimonial rule in Olusegun Obasanjo's Nigeria

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Since the fall of the Berlin wall or the end of the cold war in 1980s, many African leaders appear to be championing the cause of democratic transition in their states whereas in the real sense of it they directly or indirectly engage in systems that are quite antithetical or in contradistinction to the project in question. The paper, therefore, appraises the Obasanjo's eight years administration arguing that his regime was more of patrimonialistic than democratization he widely claimed to have adopted.

Key words: Patrimonialism, clientelism, prebendalism, dictatorship, rent-seeking.

INTRODUCTION

Nigerian 'politicians' are kleptomaniac, kleptomania is a mental disorder of manic proportion that triggers in the sufferers a compulsive urge to grab and grab everything they can find even if they have to steal the very life blood of others. They steal even when the object of theft is not of any use to them (This Day Newspaper, Nov. 20, 2002).

"well just two weeks ago, some people brought a proposal amounting to N3 billion for payment as their electoral expenses and I told them I will never sign it. I prefer to die than to sign the N3 billion from the state treasury. Also there was another man that wants to dominate the appointments in the state. He wanted to nominate people for commissioners, special advisers, special assistants including my aides but I refused ..." (Ngige, 2003 Daily Times, July 16, 2003).

One major problem confronting the postcolonial states in Africa is their inability to identify with a particular political ideology that will stand the test of time. Since the postcolonial era, most African states have been experimenting on various political ideologies or systems such as, democracy, militocracy, diarchy even including the age long traditional ruling system known as patrimonial rule. Of all these, most states appear to be more at home with democracy perhaps because in an ideal situation, it makes provisions for popular participation and

transparency and focuses on the ideals of liberty and political equality.

At the same time, many people distrust democracy because of its potentials for legitimising majority tyranny. Popular rule on all political matters is a recipe for majority tyranny, just as minority rule on all political matters is a recipe for minority tyranny, which is even worse because it promises greater tyranny and does not even attempt to honour the ideal of equal political liberty (Etzioni, 1995: 154). This confusion and crisis of ideological interest perhaps portend the notion of adopting patrimonial (neopatrimonial) rule by some leaders from the Third World countries, particularly the African continent.

In view of this, some African students hold that the whole essence of independence – the end of alienation, the raising of the standard of living, gaining control of both personal and national destinies of oneself and one's nation is highly regrettable. This is because the masses have been severely frustrated – neither their material nor moral conditions have improved. They still do not have peace of mind as most of the African leaders opt for patrimonial rule (N'Diaye, 1970; Markovitz, 1977; Fanon, 1968; Minoque and Molloy, 1974).

As Gero and Ulf (2006) argued, neo-patrimonialism is a label often used to describe African states, sometimes, as a way of explaining why they have 'failed' to effect neoliberal market reforms. Mkandawire (1998) captured it

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in thus manner:

'Another problem is that neopatrimonial states in and outside Africa have pursued a wide range of policies including some that are squarely developmental. In other words, other than indicating the style of governance, neopatrimonialism does not tell us much about what policies a state will pursue and with what success. In the African case, neopatrimonialism has been used to explain virtually everything – import substitution, export orientation, parastatals, privatization, the informal sector development. The result is that, in seeking to explain everything, it explains nothing except perhaps that capitalist relations in their idealized form are not pervasive in Africa.'

The point is that democratic transition has been successful in only a few African states. In most countries a mixed system prevails, which has prevented the beginnings of a national and legal administration asserting themselves against continuing patrimonial power structures. In this sense, decisions are taken not on the basis of institutionalized rules, but in favour of personal relationships and to personal advantage. It is against this background that the paper sets out to argue that the Obasanjo's eight years (1999-2007) of administration was roundly patrimonial both in nature and character against the widely acclaimed and expected democratic transition.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Central to this study are concepts such as: patrimonialism, dictatorship, clientelism, prebendalism and rent-seeking. Patrimonialism is a term originated by Max Weber. He used it to describe a system to rule based on administrative and military personnel who were responsible only to the ruler (Weber, 1968). In this case, the rulers' deputies are like delegated jurisdiction over certain domains, and given wide Leeway regarding how to act. These measures are mostly informal or off the record. Weber (1968: 1006-11) further argues that patrimonial domination is a special case of patriarchal domination. The root of patriarchal domination grew out of the master's authority over his household.

The concept of patrimonialism captures a distinctive style of regulation and administration that contrasts with Weber's ideal – typical rational – legal bureaucracy. The adjudication and administration of laws under bureaucratic rule are 'calculable' in Weber's terms, leading to governance that creates a better investment climate and encourages economic development whereas in a patrimonial system, there is an unspoken hierarchy with little specialization or specification of output and uncertain reporting channels. In other words, they have discretionary power and the line between persons and

offices notional (<http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrimonialism>).

According to Bratton and Van de Walle (1997: 61) in patrimonial political system, an individual rules by dint of personal prestige and power. Authority is entirely personalized, shaped by the ruler's preferences rather than any codified system of laws. To Roth (1968) and Clapham (1985) neo-patrimonialism is the most salient type of authority in the Third World because it corresponds to the normal forms of social organization in precolonial societies. As a result, scholars of African politics have associated the phenomenon with related theoretical labels such as 'personal rule', 'prebendalism' and the 'politics of the belly' (Jackson and Rosberg, 1982; Joseph, 1987).

As it were, many nations particularly from the Third World were markedly known to have one time or the other adopted patrimonial model to their system. For instance, Crouch (1979) argues that Indonesian society under General Suharto was plunged into a patrimonial rule. Under the General's 'Guided Democracy', army officers used their positions and state funds to further their own interests. And because of Indonesia's expanding resource base and revenue from oil, Suharto was able to widen his sphere of influence through judicious distribution of patronage. Thus, for Indonesia's masses, political participation is minimal and that which existed was carefully orchestrated from above.

In his study of Brazil, Roett (1972) argued that since independence, a minority has maintained a firm grip on Brazilian society even during the era of democratic politics between 1948 and 1964. By this, he emphasized that Brazil was (perhaps still) a patrimonial society that was based upon a highly flexible and paternalistic public order in which the spoils of office were used by ruling groups to reward friends, co-opt potential and actual opponents.

In some of the postcolonial Africa's states, personal rule has also constituted the heart of government administration. These hybrid systems represent an effort by elites to adjust to and manipulate the rational-legal arrangements they inherited from the colonial powers (Walker, 1997). To be sure, over time, rulers like Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia, Sekou Toure in Guinea, Mobutu in Zaire, and Felix Houphouet-Boigny in Cote d'Ivoire created personality based patron-client networks that consolidated power through the dispensing and withholding of nominally public resources to followers, and the identification of the leader as the symbol of the nation (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997: 64).

Regarding Mobutu's 'modus operandi' in Zaire, Ingham (1990) asserts:

Entry into the confrerie is validated by the granting of some spectacular presidential gifts (Mercedes cars, Luxurious houses...) which are the visible signs of membership; but the non-visible advantages are more

considerable, any new high official can upon installation freely embezzle massive sum. This tapping is so important and so mutual that the president knows about it which is part of presidential control system for political personnel.

This, however, brings us to the concept of clientelism. The most (arguably) famous definition of politics is the one confined to the art and science of 'who gets what and how' in society (Lasswell, 1958). To help understand 'who gets what and how', many political scientists in the 1970s and probably in the 21st century have begun to apply the concept of clientelism. They have come to realize that the phenomenon also known as the 'patron-client' model of politics, permeates contemporary political systems around the world (Schmidt et al., 1977).

Clientelism refers to a complex chain of personal bonds between political patrons or bosses, and their individual clients or followers. These bonds are founded on mutual material advantage: the patron furnishes excludable resources (money, jobs) to dependents and accomplices in return for their support and cooperation (votes, attendance at rallies). The patron has disproportionate power and thus enjoys wide latitude on assets under his control (Joseph, 1987; Kettering, 1988).

Typically, the poor and marginalised members of society are drawn into these problem-solving networks as a pragmatic means to find solutions to their everyday concerns since they often have limited access to formal sources of assistance. In other words, it is believed that a precarious economic system impels or compels people to focus on immediate consumption and to forsake more long-term and abstract gains (Auyero, 2001; Migdal, 1988).

Accordingly, Powell (1970) and Randall and Theobald (1985) have suggested that at the core of the patron-client relationship lie three basic factors which both define the relationship and help to differentiate between it and other power relations: First, the patron-client tie develops between persons who are unequal in terms of status, wealth and influence; second, the formation and maintenance of the relationship depends on reciprocity in the exchange of goods and services; and third, the development and maintenance of the relationship depends on face-to-face contact between the two parties.

Classic illustrations of political clientelism include, the 'Sicilian Mafia' (Gambetta, 1993; Della Porta and Vannucci, 1999) and the 'political machine' or machine politics. Beyond its purely criminal activities (theft, racketeering), the mafia performs quasi-political functions for deprived communities. It is an extra-legal source of legitimate services (contract enforcement, protection of property) that the formal state is supposed to provide, but does not. The machine politics relies upon what it accomplishes for its supporters in a concrete way and not on what it stands for. In other words, it is likened to a business in which all members are shareholders and

whose dividends are paid in accordance with what one has invested in terms of effort (Randall and Theobald, 1985: 59).

To Joseph (1987: 55) clientelism is as essential to a satisfactory analysis of Nigerian politics and society as are the features of ethnicity and class. It is, indeed, the very channel through which one joins the dominant class and a practice which is then seen as fundamental to the continued enjoyment of the perquisites of that class. He further relates the concept to what he termed, 'prebendal politics' or prebendalism. A 'prebend' is an office of state, typical of feudal Europe and China, which an individual procures either through examinations or as a reward for loyal service to a lord or ruler (Joseph, 1987: 56).

The existence of a prebendalised state, and the easy adaptation of traditional patron-client relationships to the pursuit of modern material goods means that these two features of the system-prebendalism and clientelism – are mutually reinforcing. To get and keep clients, one must gain a pre-bendal office, and to be sure that in the distribution of prebendal offices an individual or his kin have a reasonable chance of procuring one, clients must be gathered together to make their collective claims as well as to prove that the aspirant patron is a person of consequence whose co-optation would be rewarding to the political entrepreneurs (Joseph, 1987: 56-57).

Interestingly, prebendalism has a lot of things in common with the concept of 'godfatherism' which recently has become a 'buzzword' or household terminology in the Nigeria's political market. A godfather presupposes one who not only has the singular power to influence and determine both who gets nominated to contest elections and who win in a state, but also who dictates to the political godchild on how to run the affairs of the state. At the end of the day, he (the godfather) is rewarded or compensated. It is a common practice even in advanced democracies only that the real idea behind it was seriously abused in the last eight years of Obasanjo administration, a situation where many states were nearly bifurcated or balkanized as a result of the tussle between the 'father and the son'.

Some of the states that were infested with the godfather palaver include: Anambra (Mbadinuju and Emeka Offor; Ngige and Chris Uba), Benue (Ayu and Akure), Borno (Kachallah and Sheriff); Edo (Anenih and Igbinedion); Enugu (Nwobodo and Nnamani). Others include, Kogi (Ogbeha and Ibrahim); Kwara (Saraki and Lawal); Osun Late Afolabi and Oyinlola); Oyo (Adedibu and Ladoja) I Plateau (Dariye and Lar); Rivers (Late Harry and Odili) (TELL July 9, 2001: 22-30).

This is the manner some critics captured it:

They started off as allies, and they met in various places and plotted different strategies to win political power, and of course, how to share the spoils of office, then it was a sweetheart deal between the men who wanted to become governors and the men of means and influence

who could help them to realize their ambition. But now, the godfathers and their political sons are engaged in bitter feuds that could have far-reaching implication for the success ... and the survival of democracy. It is a war characterised by betrayals, blackmails and in some instances threat to life (TELL, July 9, 2001: 22).

Be that as it may, rent-seeking can also be associated with patrimonialism. Rent, is not merely an income earned by landlord but is in general a reward for ownership of all natural resources (Ibrahim, 1997: 157). In economics, rent-seeking occurs when an individual, organization or firm seeks to make money by manipulating the economic and/or legal environment rather than by trade and production of wealth. In modern use of the term, rent seeking is more often associated with government regulation and misuse of governmental authority (Tullock, 1967; Krueger, 1974).

Interestingly, all these informal institutions – clientelism, pre-bendalism, rent seeking often use state resources to achieve their objectives and goals. State resources in this context refers to public coffers and state treasury. To be sure, Bratton and Van de Walle (1997: 66-67) note that president Ahiljo of Cameroon kept a large proportion of his country's oil revenues in a personal offshore bank account to be spent during the course of the year as he saw fit. Houphouet-Boigny of Cote d'Ivoire regularly pocketed a tenth of his country's cocoa exports, spending it on grandiose prestige projects that flattered his image as the country's founding father. Mobutu amassed a huge personal fortune, widely assumed to be roughly equivalent to Zaire's national debt, which was extracted from the country's diamond and copper exports (Newbury, 1994; Schatzberg, 1989).

Beyond this, patrimonialism is as well characterized by dictatorial, authoritarian and despotic acts. The term dictatorship may signify not only the governing principle of a political system but also an ideology underlying a way of life and a normative expression of political behaviour. Instances of dictatorial rule are found in all epochs and civilizations. In contemporary usage, the concept refers to the unrestricted domination of the state by an individual, a clique, or a small group (Sills, 1972).

The repeated incidence of coups – military and otherwise, is evidence of the magnitude of the problem, though coups occur more often with the aim of installing dictatorial regimes as well as toppling them. However, the means by which these despotic regimes are able to maintain themselves in power are well-known: the basic rights of individuals are set aside and opponents of the government are rounded up, imprisoned, or shot. In addition, government propaganda dominates the media, thus ensuring that information is restricted to the news which the regime wishes to broadcast in the hope that at least, the minds of the population will be influenced in the direction which the regime favours (Blondel, 1990).

In essence, the dictator's formal monopoly of political

power provides him with some unusual incentives or constraints, compared to those facing democratic politicians. To put it bluntly, his most basic dilemma is the assumption that, today he is the dictator, someday, he could be assassinated. Hence, to ensure or at least prolong his survival in office, the distribution of rents (income) in exchange for loyalty becomes his major means for developing political support or trust.

Dictatorships such as Pinochet's Chile and South Korea under Park essentially redistributed rents through shifting the property rights of labour to management backed by the state, raising the cost of job loss to workers, removing or not allowing collective bargaining rights. Pinochet at first banned unions and union activity and then severely restricted their freedom of action with the labour code promulgated in 1979. Related reforms in health care, social security and other areas had the effect of raising the cost of job loss to workers (Wintrobe, 1990; 1998).

AN ASSESSMENT OF OBASANJO'S EIGHT YEARS ADMINISTRATION

The Fourth Republic was widely and enthusiastically embraced by Nigerians who were by this time completely frustrated, disenchanted and disillusioned with military rule. With the transition to the Fourth Republic, many Nigerians looked forward to the end of the authoritarian and tyrannical rule of the military, a constitutional democracy that would broaden popular participation in governance.

More importantly, most Nigerians felt that with the experience, and track record of General Olusegun Obasanjo (retired) who was elected president on the platform of the Peoples Democratic party (PDP), Nigeria was set on a course of change for the better; and coupled with the fact that he was the Head of State that midwived the transition to civil rule that led to the 2nd Republic in 1979. In his inaugural speech on May 29, 1999, Obasanjo stated inter alia:

Nigeria is wonderfully endowed by the Almighty with human and other resources. It does no credit either to us or the entire black race if we fail in managing our resources for quick improvement in the quality of life of our people... This is a challenge before us ... Let us rise as one to face the tasks ahead and turn this daunting scene into opportunities in the new dawn. Let us make this the beginning of a genuine Renaissance (The NEWS, May 29, 2006: 14)

Little did people know that Obasanjo would not match his word with action or practice what he preached – as Nigerians found themselves, in the eight years of his administration desperately plunged into patrimonial ruling system or another round of (civilian) dictatorship. In the

words of Fawehinmi (2007: 28): Obasanjo's eight years of administration was characterized by 'self-centred disposition, deception, creating a few rich people, anti-masses programmes, lack of coherent policies, so much wealth coming to the hands of government out of which Nigerians received aggravated poverty and economic pain'.

Like Machiavelli stated in his popular book – 'The Prince', to secure his own leadership, a dictator should not hesitate to wipe out both his opponents and his opponents' family. He has to have recourse to the methods of 'men' as well as 'beasts' to his actions – to kill, maim, suppress, hoodwink and cheat as the situation demands (Mba, 2006; Berki, 1977). Intolerance to all forms of opposition, Obasanjo directly or indirectly opened up the insecurity of the country in November 1999 when he gave orders to shoot on sight in Odi where a lot of people in that community were slaughtered because some policemen were missing as a result of the protestation of the Odi people in Bayelsa state (The NEWS June 4, 2007).

Since then, police followed the queue, extra-judicial killings became the agenda of the government. Thousands of Nigerians within this period had been killed or maimed without recourse to the judicial process by the police and other security agencies. The roll call of assassination or politically motivated killing in Nigeria has also widened astronomically. The Bola Ige of December 23, 2001; Marshall Harry of March 5, 2003; Funsho Williams of July 27, 2006; Ayodele Daramola of August 14, 2005 (TELL Oct. 23, 2006; The NATION Aug. 15, 2006; The NEWS, March 17, 2003).

The profundity of the crime committed in Anambra state on July 11, 2003 was not in debate, nor was it something that could be wished away. It was a situation where the Executive Governor – Dr. Chris Ngige was abducted by the PDP power brokers in Anambra state. The question is, in any democracy, would a ranking police officer arrest a serving governor who has immunity without probable cause of an extreme crime and a warrant duly endorsed by a judge? What form of democracy subsists in Nigeria in which one individual and his cohorts freely arrogate to themselves the prerogative of deciding who should rule Anambra state? In fact, what happened in Anambra and the levity with which it was being treated at the highest level of government confirms one of the sorry paradoxes of our nation. It was a federal system but at a point in time like a Unitary state. If not, why should a Federal Police Force be used to breach a state's right and not draw the desirable opprobrium?

A corollary of this, was the struggle to control the National Assembly which led to an instability particularly in the Senate. During this period, five senators: Evans Enwerem, Chuba Okadigbo, Anyim Pius Anyim, Adolphus WAbara and finally Ken Nnamani, came to occupy the position of president in the Senate. Most were either appointed (indirectly) by the president of the Federal

Republic on the basis of their willingness to be subservient, or alternatively deposed as a result of their tendencies to assert their independence even against the wishes of the president.

Suffice it to say, that it was in the same fashion the president took complete control over his political party, the PDP, a setting where opposition against all independent-minded members or candidates of the party was mounted, using all available means in favour of those who were willing to submit to the dictates, whims and caprices of the president. Hence, the president's insistence on a total and unalloyed loyalty from all members of his party culminated in the emergence of Umaru Musa Yar'dua as the 'consensus' presidential candidate under the platform of PDP in the 2007 presidential election (Vanguard, Dec. 16, 2006; Punch, Dec. 16, 2007).

In the spirit of Machiavelli- 'The Prince', who claims to uphold morality but not take it seriously himself, Obasanjo's government embarked upon anti-corruption crusade whose Bill was the very first one which the president sent to the 1999 National Assembly for processing into law. The Bill, which has since become law, has hardly made a dent on corruption perhaps because the law was seen as a 'prescription without diagnosis' (Adejare, 2004). On the one hand, attempting to fight corruption by Obasanjo's government was noble since it has become a social evil in the system. On the other hand, the government was perceived to be double-dealing.

Recently, the National Assembly discovered some hidden accounts amounting to billions of naira which were lodged by the executive of Obasanjo government. Amongst these secret accounts was the Petroleum Trust Development Fund (PTDF). Under the Act that established the Fund in 1973, one percent of all payments from oil block sales were supposed to go to fund meant for activities in man-power development for the petroleum and gas sector. However Obasanjo did not allow all accruals from the one percent to be paid to PTDF but rather pegged it at \$100 million per annum. At the same, he never sought the approval of the National Assembly to divert the excess from the one percent to other matters (Newswatch January 28, 2008: 15).

An observer captured the situation thus;

Under Obasanjo, the government was not run on the basis of budget. He did not consider himself bound by the budget. He was the budget. He provided figures and allocations and spent money as he liked without any evidential accountability to the National Assembly. Nobody knew what the revenue was. The national Assembly didn't know, he was not revealing anything. How much came into the government coffers from the oil sales? Nobody knew except himself. He was the sole minister of petroleum (THE GUARDIAN, January 13, 2008: 42).

The truth is that since the return to democracy in 1999, there has been a continual looting of the federal, state and local government treasury. Public money was salted away by government officials with 'itching palms' as William Shakespeare puts it. The bulk of this sum was carried abroad by state governors, deputy governors, ministers with diplomatic immunities at the airports. For instance, in September 15, 2005, the former governor of Bayelsa State, Dieprieve Alamiyesigha was arrested in London on allegation of money, laundering. He was found with £1 million cash (TELL Oct 3, 2005: 28).

Buttressing this, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, former Minister of Finance under the government of Obasanjo asserted:

'every month immediately after the sharing of federal allocation, governors and/or their aides go abroad to stash away a good chunk of their states money in coded foreign accounts. Some who are smarter salt the money away through companies which are awarded contracts whose components are sourced abroad. This is the character profile of a wealthy country that is going cap-in-hand, begging for debt relief' (TELL Oct. 3, 2005: 29).

In 2007, the Revenue Mobilisation and Fiscal Allocation Commission (RMAFC) in a 77 page report argued that the excess proceeds account was illegal. It condemned the way the federal government was running the Federation Account particularly in the aspects of unilateral deduction and withdrawals. Corroborating this view, Farouk Lawan argued that in the last eight years it had been very difficult for the National Assembly to discover the so-called special account. Efforts were made to get the executive arm to disclose all those figures but to no avail (Newswatch January 28, 2007: 7).

It is common knowledge that most personalized rulers or dictators are averse to rule of law or constitution. This also applied to Obasanjo in his war against corruption.

As Nwabueze (2008) opined:

The question is not whether we should wage a war against corruption or not, my quarrel is that the fight should be waged within the context of the constitution... This is what the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) under Nuhu Ribadu did not appreciate perhaps because Obasanjo did not believe in the constitution. Hence, the commission was viewed as an instrument vendetta. It was so selective that if you were a friend no matter how corrupt you may be nobody would touch you, and if you were an enemy – real or imaginary, the commission would go after you.

Apparently, Obasanjo's administration was never prepared to carry out any project that would not directly or indirectly benefit its immediate clients, cronies and allied political forces. A classic case was the 'Iyabo-gate' whereby Obasanjo's daughter went to Russia, Australia to do business with fake names probably because her

father was in the helm of affairs and ready to protect her (The Source, Feb. 25, 2008: 16). Mojisola, wife of Gbenga Obasanjo recently revealed that during Obasanjo's administration, Gbenga collected oil allocations from Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC); and had substantial investment in some oil blocks (Newswatch January 28, 2008: 20).

In her (Mojisola) words:

'Gbenga used his position to the maximum. He has the goodwill of being the son of the serving president of the largest black nation in the world which gives him access to all state governors in Nigeria... top executives in the public and private sectors of the Nigerian economy, and business personalities all of which he has utilized to earn considerable income' (Newswatch January 28, 2008: 20).

Again, the government of Olusegun Obasanjo undertook what it called 'reforms' in various areas. The economic reform programme for instance, simply picked and chose from various sources those issues which would appeal to foreign 'donors' and facilitate the achievement of the economic ambitions of the few privileged Nigerians in control of the government. To be sure, the major sectors of the economy were placed on the building blocks of rapacious entrepreneurs, many of whom were in government using proxies to purchase government properties courtesy of the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE).

A social critic puts it succinctly thus: 'Economically, Obasanjo's regime was one that came to empower its own friends, captains of industries whom he promoted to appropriate the collective wealth of the people in the name of commercialization and privatization' (The NEWS June 4, 2007: 31). However, it may not be out of place to argue that his government empowered a few privileged ones in the society in order to be rewarded 'by other means'.

To be specific, on 14 May 2005, friends of Obasanjo raised billions of naira for his library project. Despite the president's claim that no kobo of government funds had gone in to the launching, state governors affirmed that a total sum of N360 million was donated by them to the president's private cause. At the federal level, the ministers donated their May salaries to their boss. Aside the quantum sum donated by a consortium of banks, individuals like Mike Adenuga, Aliko Dangote and Sonny Odogwu also donated a large sum to support the president's library project (TELL May 30, 2005: 25-27).

To further demonstrate that Obasanjo's regime was characterized by self-centered disposition, anti-masses programmes and lack of coherent policies, rather than repay domestic debt, pay pensions, gratuities and other domestic creditors so as to inflate and enhance a more rapid growth of the economy, the regime embarked upon the repayment of external debt in order to please its foreign sponsors and its greedy foreign partners and perhaps get their support for the unconstitutional

determination to perpetuate itself in office.

As Aluko (2007) captured it:

'The regime bought the bait of the western creditor nations to pay \$12.5 billion of the debt at a tranche, in order to receive \$18 billion debt relief, an amount which no other debtor-nation in history has ever paid at once. While some of the other debtor countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America are obtaining complete debt write-off, Nigeria paid such a huge ransom, because the Nigerian government has more money than sense'.

The regime completely imbibed the imposition of what has become known, as the 'Washington consensus', propagated by the World Bank, the IMF and the western imperialist powers, in order that they will continue to control and direct the economic policies of countries that have no independent economic policies of their own. This signifies neo-liberal, neo-colonial, market economic policies which are not meant to provide an effective framework for combating poverty nor for generating rapid economic growth. Instead, it is designed to tie perpetually the economies of client economies to the apron-string of the patron-metropolitan western economies (Aluko 2007).

CONCLUSION

The paper sets out to argue that in the past eight years, Nigerian government was a patrimonial and rentier state, and was shaped by structural constraints that eroded the impersonal state based on rule of law that is necessary for democratic practice. The government was bedeviled by personal enrichment and aggrandizement, political parties organized around personalities, blurred public and private realms, rules applied with partiality; and actions taken arbitrarily and based on subjective reasoning rather than on objective methods and due process with the exception of Dieprieve Alamieyesigha whose case was obvious.

This, however, suggests that Obasanjo's administration was devoid of good governance and/or democratic ethos and norms. Governance emphasizes leadership – the manner in which political leaders manage, use, or misuse power to promote social and economic development or to pursue agendas that undermine such goals. But 'good' governance is conceived from a process perspective with emphasis on constitutionalism, accountability, transparency, and human and civil rights (Olowu, 2002: 4).

The effect of this, that is, employing and applying a patrimonial and clientelistic ruling system on Nigerians are enormous as economic, financial and legal agencies of government have been used to harass innocent Nigerians on discriminatory bases and for not belonging to the ruling political parties or to the section of the ruling political parties that is a crony of the government; some politicians, including parliamentarians and governors had

been removed unjustly or impeached unconstitutionally because they refused to kow-tow to the whims and caprices of the ruling elite. Because of the jaundiced reform policy of this regime, many public enterprises have either collapsed, closed down or been sold to foreigners while the public service which was once vibrant and productive has become a haven of corruption and inefficiency.

All in all, our deduction is that patrimonialism (neo-patrimonialism) which was adopted by Obasanjo was an exclusive tool of the privileged few exercised at the detriment of the populace. It reinforced the follies and foibles of the power elite, frustrated the legitimate aspirations of the masses and relegated them to grinding poverty, timidity and ignorance. It is either democracy in its ideal form or a continuation of Nigeria's political woes. As Ibrahim (1997: 172) epitomised it: As the struggle of Nigerians for a democratic Republic continues, the expansion of democratic space is the most effective method of overcoming the fear of the dictator which the masses often transform into the fear of the 'other'.

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