

The Implications of Godfatherism and Eliocentrism in Nigeria Politics for National Development

Frank Funkeye Sapele¹ and Victor Ogheneochuko Jeko²

¹*University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State (sapelefrank@gmail.com)*

²*Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Edo State, Nigeria*

Abstract

One of the fundamental problems of godfatherism is that it does not revolve around ethical considerations. Nigerian politics is bedeviled by the problems of godfatherism, eliocentrism, corruption, tribal sentiments, monetized politics, political assassination, political thuggery, and religious bigotry or Islamic fundamentalism. Godfatherism has become a cankerworm in Nigerian politics. Godfatherism in Nigerian politics has become very problematic due to the evils of corruption. This paper adopts the hermeneutical methodology in discussing the inextricable nexus between godfatherism and eliocentrism in Nigerian politics. The purpose of this paper is to reveal that godfatherism and eliocentrism serve as impediments to Nigeria's quest for democratic sustainability and accountability. Godfatherism has paved the way for political irresponsibility and poor leadership structure. The evils of godfatherism have given room for leadership irresponsibility. Leadership in Nigerian democratic setting has failed woefully due to selfish aggrandizement and kleptocratic practices of some Nigerian politicians. Many Nigerian representatives have become very corrupt, and they have plunged the country into serious economic hardship and poor socio-political and economic insecurity. One of the serious implications of the evils of godfatherism is that it has resulted in socio-economic and political insecurity. Today's Nigerian society has been bastardising and balkanised by the evils of elite politics, corruption and godfatherism. The method adopted on this study relied on purely secondary means. The findings of this paper, however, show that godfatherism has very negative consequences. If necessary, steps are not taken Nigeria's quest for sustainable national development would only be a mirage. This paper concludes that godfatherism remains one of the indices of the evils of kleptocratic practices in Nigerian politics.

Keywords: Democracy; Eliocentrism; Godfatherism; National Development; Politics.

Introduction

Godfatherism has become part and parcel of Nigerian politics. Godfatherism has led to what Gillian Howie (2009, 5) calls an accrued political currency. For Mbamara (2004, 134), the word "godfatherism" means a political process of sponsoring a candidate for a political office in Nigeria. It may be either by appointment or by election. There is this assumption that politics is a dirty game, but politics is not really a dirty game because it is a process that guarantees the common good of a people. Politics is all about the pursuit of the common good of a people. According to Iain Mackenzie (2009, 5), politics is best thought of as the pursuit of the common good. Innocent Asouzu (2004, 382) in consonance with Iain Mackenzie (2009) believes that the common good has abstract speculative approach. This abstract speculative approach is likely to render the relational dimension of the concept imperceptible. This relational dimension is basic towards understanding the relevance of the common good in

existential situations of life. Accordingly, Iain Mackenzie (2009, 9) argues that politics is a form of human activity that results in, and/ or expresses, norm-governed human interaction. Nigerian politics is usually bedeviled by the problems of godfatherism, eliocentrism, corruption, tribal sentiments, farmer-herders clashes, and religious bigotry or Islamic fundamentalism. Godfathersm has become an impediment to Nigerian politics. Godfatherism is closely associated with the evils of corruption in Nigerian politics. Corruption is systemic and endemic in Nigerian politics. In contemporary Nigerian society, godfatherism has been regarded as one of evils of corruption that has drastically hindered the quest for sustainable national development in Nigeria. Godfatherism is deeply rooted in paternalism. For Ekiyor Henry (2004, 25), the word “paternalism” is derived from the word “pater”, and it means father. Wale Adeyemi-Suenu (2004, 79) argues that godfatherism, the concept, the idea and phenomenon is not new in Nigeria’s political discourse, but the dimension it has assumed leaves much to be desired.

Furthermore, godfatherism has not given room for Nigeria’s quest for democratic sustainability and accountability. Godfatherism has paved the way for political irresponsibility and poor leadership structure. Leadership in all its ramifications is a very onerous or a gargantuan task. Leadership requires enthusiasm, intelligence, moral probity, empathy, listening skill, and managerial competence. Many Nigerian representatives have been engaged in kleptocratic practices, and they have become very corrupt, and this has plunged the country into serious economic hardship and socio-political, educational, moral and economic insecurity. One of the negative implications of the evils of godfatherism and eliocentrism in Nigerian politics is that it has resulted in poor economic system. If necessary, steps are not taken Nigeria’s quest for sustainable national development will be a wild goose chase. This paper argues that godfatherism and eliocentrism remain some of the indices of kleptocratic practices in Nigerian politics. The word “politics” means a public process that revolves around resolving conflicts of interest. For John Hoffman and Paul Graham (2009, 500), politics is a public process that involves resolving conflicts of interest. Politics is undermined by force and is inherent at every level in all societies.

Nonetheless, this paper is divided into five sections. Sections one is the introductory remarks. Section two is the conceptual clarification of godfatherism. Section three focuses on the conceptual clarification of eliocentrism, section four discusses the negative implications of godfatherism and eliocentrism in Nigerian politics. Section five is the concluding considerations.

A Conceptual Clarification of Godfatherism in Nigerian Politics

Godfatherism has been one of the crises of democratic accountability and sustainability; and it remains one of the impediments of a robust democratic setting in Nigerian politics. According to Maduabuchi Dukor (2004) one of the political headaches of democracy in Nigeria today is the crisis of godfatherism. The discontent in this apparently valued conception of godhead in a secular world, historically and diachronically translated to the social and political relations, has lifted the veil on the phenomenon of its pathology in the pilot of the ship of the state at micro and macro level. The fact that it is all about phenomena poses the empirical and analytical challenge to make an adventure into nuomenal reality in the search for a solution to a political problem that has evaded the cynosure of some constitutions. Philosophers right from time immemorial have indirectly discussed the contextual issues of godfatherist politics.

The moral and political thoughts of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau have to some extent discussed the whole notion of godfatherist politics. For Maduabuchi Dukor (2004, v-vi) philosophers from Socrates to the contemporary times may not have spent handsome time thinking about the problem of godfatherism in republics and democracies, but beneath the substratum of their thoughts are underlining principle that would preempt an irregular, mutant and aberrant godfatherist politics. Godfatherism gives room for patron-client relationships or prebendal political syndrome. For Maduabuchi Dukor (2004, v), godfatherism gives room for patron-clients syndrome or prebendal politics; and prebendal politics leaves much to be desired in the phenomenon of godfatherism in politics. All the same, progressive countries in the world have benefited from the hindsight by instituting constitutional and legal checks on electoral and electioneering procedures that involve money, sponsorship, and practices that undermined democracy and art of government. For Maduabuchi Dukor (2004) there is nothing intrinsically retrogressive in the art of godfatherism, and the problem inherent in it is only psychological, social, moral or extrinsic. The abuse of the otherwise cultural and humanistic concept is fallout of the collapse of values, rationality and reason. It is the failure of human wisdom as a collective conscious and responsibility, substituting in its place the jungle morality, the hypothetical imperative principle, and the survival of the fittest principle that caused the crisis of modernity and which found their way into the heart and minds of warlords, dictators, godfathers, and politicians who accordingly desire to conquer, subdue and lord it over the people. Wale Adeyemi-Suenu (2004, 73) sees godfathers as political contractors. The activities of the godfathers and their unmediated primitive political misdemeanor create fundamental contradictions in Nigerians who are fast abandoning faith in Nigeria's democratic project. Accordingly, Maduabuchi Dukor (2004, viii) asserts that godfatherism is a moving spirit for good or for bad in human affairs. Godfatherism has various dimensions such as Missionary Godfatherism, Nationalist Godfatherism, Colonial Godfatherism, Military Godfatherism, and Bureaucratic Godfatherism. For Maduabuchi Dukor (2004) Godfatherism in African philosophy is much more fundamental and based on normative cultural premises of service to man and society within the context of gift, patronage, gratitude, rewards, stewardship, and excellence totally devoid of rancor, bitterness, selfishness and greed. It is in this diachronic and synchronic senses that Maduabuchi Dukor (2004, viii) concludes that godfatherism is not reducible to some bad but that it has been operated with abuses made possible by disobedience to the rule of law.

Godfatherism does not give room for social cohesion in any democratic sustainability and accountability. As Chimaroke Nnamani (2004) rightly observed, ultimately, even as universally appreciated, democracy as a vehicle of social cohesion not coercion, ought to attain the platform for cohabitation, debate, popular participation, free enterprise, high productivity as well as change which arises from a well-placed definition of the entire dimensions of the state in preparation for the emergence of the new order. According to Chimaroke Nnamani (2004, p. 13), the character of the godfather negotiation for settlement has the obvious strings of brutal intimidation and other forms of manipulation in Nigerian politics. The godfather would not take pleas on leanness of resources, nor would he take the prayer of the godson for alternative personnel in recruitment into the high level and strategic positions in government because he must exert his pound of flesh or power of influence in all cases. Godfatherism has paved the way for paternalism. According to Ekiyor Henry (2004, 25) paternalism exists in various forms and in different cultures of the world. It is known as godfatherism in Nigeria but in India the patron-client relationship is known as jayman-kamin

relationship. Godfatherism has undermined the spirit of democracy in Nigerian politics. For Ekiyor Henry (2004, 26-27), democracy is cherished and claimed by many all over the world. In other words, paternalism is not a recognized political institution in any democratic setting. However, it has been manifesting itself invisibly in the political arena of Nigeria for many decades, but it has become overtly active in recent years and has endeavoured to legitimize itself. For Ekiyor (2004, 27) democracy is fragile and it can easily be aborted, distorted, hijacked by dictators and destroyed. In view of this it must be handled with care. Moreover, democracy takes many years to be nursed and nurtured to sustainable democracy. The electorates must play the role of a watchdog for its survival in any nation. Accordingly, Ekiyor Henry (2004, p.29) argues that paternalism has resulted in the erosion of democracy. The patron-client relationship tends to encourage political corruption. The clients had to fulfill their contractual obligations by tempering with government treasury. For Ekiyor Henry (2004, 28), patron-client paternalism has gradually turned itself into an institution and has become an aberration to the practice of democracy in Nigeria. For Kehinde Coker (2004, p. 37), godfatherism in Nigerian politics has become a social problem, which has ravaged and permeated the entire blood stream of our political system negatively. For Danoye Oguntola-Laguda (2004, 43), in recent times, Nigerian nascent democracy has been plagued by many problems. Some of these include incessant corruption among government officials, political killing, thuggery, abduction, kidnapping etc. these problems portend great danger to the future of Nigeria as a nation. For Emmanuel Ome (2004, p.57), in Nigeria, the role of the godfather is always prevalent. For Paul-Sewa Thovoethin (2004, p.60), godfather is a common parlance in religion, management, education, sports, Mafia worlds and of course, in politics. Godfatherism within the context of politics is sometimes known as vertical mentoring.

Furthermore, godfatherism should be channeled towards a more positive/ progressive direction rather than its negative/ retrogressive implications. For Christopher Ukhun (2004, p.83), godfatherism is a global phenomenon. It is common knowledge that part of the driving force of U.S polity is the Godfather concept. In Godfather phenomenon, there is a perpetual neurosis of which recipients of Godfather's largesse are victims. It is a neurosis of insecurity, powerlessness and dependence. Accordingly, Christopher Ukhun (2004, 82) argues that the Godfather expects the godson to adopt or exhibit a slave mentality of complete obedience, he must have cowardly, subservient and beggarly disposition and which must be well developed if the godson must enjoy or continues to enjoy the favour which flows out of the Godfather's strength and power. According to Christopher Ukhun (2004, 87) the Godfathers have ensured the selfish disintegration, bastardization and trivialization of electoral process. Elections have not been free and fair in Nigeria. Godfathersm does not give room for the prevalence of social justice and equity. On the other hand, godfatherism does not create an enabling environment for democracy to thrive. For Jimmy Chijioke and Adejare Aderibigbe (2004, p.110), one of the prime responsibilities of a government is to create an enabling environment for justice and equity. Godfatherist politics does not truly represent the collective interest of the people. For Friday Emiri (2004, 148), the interest of government is equivalent to the interest of its people. Recognizing that governments only legitimate goal is to promote the good of its people is what forms the basis for the duty of persons who aspire to run government on behalf of the people.

A Conceptual Clarification of Eliocentrism in Nigerian Politics

Eliocentrism centres on elite politics in Nigerian democratic setting. There is inextricable nexus between godfatherism and eliocentrism. Both concepts revolve around

kleptocratic practices. Corruption reigns supreme in any godfatherist and eliocentric politics. Eliocentric politics has led to money politics in Nigeria. According to Eribo and Matthew Izibili (2010, p.22), a cursory look at the Nigerian politics reveals that politics is in shambles, logjam and quagmire, therefore, it's nothing to write good report of. The political situation is very much critical: people go into politics only to loot the national treasury, money politics reigns prominently in Nigerian politics. Power tousel, bribery and corruption, assassination everywhere, gangsterism, and even in religious arena, religious bigotry reigns supreme. All these have become the stock in trade in Nigerian body polity: just because of the political structure that is circumscribed by eliocentric politics.

Moreover, eliocentric politics in Nigerian democratic society has led to the flagrant violation of the fundamental rights of the Nigerian masses. It is based on this subscription that Eribo and Matthew Izibili (2010,p. 22) argued that the peoples' rights are infringed upon while the state laws are made to protect the interest of the oligarchy in power who form themselves into an eliocentric clique and lord themselves over the mass population, who as a result of weakness had become the clown instead of crowning their rulers and participating actively in the process of governance. For Eribo and Matthew Izibili (2010, p.23), people perceive politics to involve money, social influence, gangsterism, maneuver, and killer-torch which are the vague characteristics of eliocentric politics in Nigeria. A conceptual clarification of eliocentrism reveals that the key word elite was derived or coined from the word eliocentrism. For Eribo and Matthew Izibili (2010, p.23), eliocentrism is a situation where political power is given to the elite group and as such, they exercise power, influence, and wealth in political leadership in the society. Unfortunately, Nigerian political leadership vis-à-vis eliocentric politics has created abject poverty among the mass population in Nigeria. According to Godwin Okaneme (2018, 4), poverty means being of a low or inferior standard or quality. Poverty therefore connotes a general scarcity or the state of one who lacks a certain amount of material possessions or money.

Nonetheless, eliocentric politics in Nigeria has been so pathetic because many Nigerian politicians lack the tenets of political leadership. Accordingly, Godwin Okaneme (2018, p. 2) argues that the nation cannot be said to have had any vibrant, creative, purposeful and development driven political leadership whether during civil or military regimes. For Godwin Okaneme (2018, 2-3), political leadership that is to be effective, efficient and purposeful as well as development oriented must be that which is filled with goals and vision driven with passion and full capacity to impact the lives of the citizens positively to engender societal development. Eliocentric politics has led to a new crops of inexperience Nigerian politicians. According to Godwin Okaneme (2018, 3), there were new politicians with little or no political experiences who were then popularly referred to as new breed of politicians. Eliocentrism in Nigerian politics reveals that subsequent Nigerian government right from the military to civil regimes lack political ideology. Accordingly, Godwin Okaneme (2018, p.5) asserts that a political ideology is a coherent and consistent set of ideas that typically includes issues about political relationships and the role of the state, a notion of what constitutes political legitimacy and the highest exhibition of political values in a state. According to Godwin Okaneme (2018, 1), political leadership is an important and critical component in any human society. Political leadership drives the entire human activities social, economic, political, and religious. It is the ability of an individual or organization to lead or guide other individuals, teams or entire organizations. Political leadership is like a light during darkness. Wangari Maathai (2009, p.116) in consonance with Godwin Okaneme (2018) argues that one of the

reasons why success in securing democratic space continues to elude the populace in many African countries is that politicians tend to change with the tide.

In addition, eliocentric politics has led to the pathology of power. Accordingly, Wangari (2009, p.114) argues that the pathology of power only intensifies the longer a leader remains in office, even to the extent that leaders find themselves prisoners of the lieutenants and associates who helped them achieve that office in the first place. Wangari Maathai (2009, pp. 114-115) further heightened her theoretical position by arguing that as long as African politicians are pressured by their constituencies—parliamentary or ethnic—to remain in the government whether they win elections or not, because the people believe the politicians will provide them with patronage. And if politicians continue to supply these gifts, handouts and favours, then any system of governance will be broken.

Furthermore, eliocentric politics in contemporary Nigerian society has been worsened because the Nigerian people refuse to speak out. As Wangari Maathai (2009, p.115) rightly observed, in Africa, as elsewhere, democratic space can be created and sustained only when a critical mass of people is aware of the situation and willing to speak out, protest, monitor government actions, and risk harassment, arrest or even death. For Wangari (2009, p.123), perhaps it is African leaders' sense that their hold on power is quite tenuous that explains why so many flaunt the trappings of power so ostentatiously. Of course, to some degree, all leaders need to show they're more important than others, and to invest their office with dignity and authority. Accordingly, Wangari Maathai (2009, p.126) opines that she would like to hope that the challenge of African leadership could be solved simply by persuading the hippos to leave the watering hole and retire to the shade. The new generation of African leaders, drivers of a potential African Renaissance, have in some cases provided their countries with much-needed economic growth, political stability, and a measure of national reconciliation after years of devastating civil conflicts and mismanagement. For Wangari Maathai (2009, p. 127), throughout the continent of Africa, a genuine and deliberate effort has begun to provide a different kind of leadership from the past. Democratic space is significantly broader in many countries, while free elections are far more common. For instance, electoral fraud has been deepened due to the kleptocratic practices of eliocentric politics in Nigerian body polity. Eliocentric politics in Nigeria has led to serious political irresponsibility and political gangsterism. For Eribo and Matthew Izibili (2010, p.24-25), our elites who are leaders are evil politicians who are irresponsible, degraded human beings: people who do not want the polity to see the light of the sun; people who because of their greediness hijack democratic process through unconstitutional means for their own benefit; leaving the body polity in impasse. As democratic politics in Nigeria become a systematic evil, a system Odili says breeds and fosters corruption, engineers and rewards incompetence, a system which falls short of the democratic ideals and principles of democracy upon which western democratic politics are built that make their politics thrive so well, because they are founded upon the ideal democratic principles and values. Accordingly, Eribo and Matthew Izibili (2010, pp. 28-29) succinctly argued that:

Democratic politics in Nigeria had over the years also failed wholly due to lot of inherent political behaviourism of our elite by their insensitivity to the demands of the masses in the society. Rather, they are only sensitive to their inordinate ambitions and quest for power for ulterior motives of political power in the allocation of state resources for their personal aggrandizement than for the ideal reason of common good. Our elite

leaders have over the years not been able to rise to the occasion of fulfilling their obligations, which they owe to the masses but, rather they parade themselves loftily only to squander state resources on wasteful ventures instead of investing on peoples-oriented projects.

In the light of the above subscription, Eribo and Matthew Izibili (2010, p.29) further heightened their theoretical position by asserting that corruption reigns supreme in elitist regime as the allocation of state resources are for the benefit of the mighty that is the ruling class at the expense of the ruled. For Eribo and Matthew Izibili (2010, pp.29-30), our elites are the ones who are with power, influence and wealth, they occupy authority and not the masses, they are the ones that are corrupt, who have set Nigerian calendar backward among members of international community. The effect of eliocentric politics is prebendalism and its associated attribute of tribal sentimentalism where each elite in power tends to look at political power as a basis of helping and developing his own ethnic group, patrons and political godfathers. However, eliocentric politics gives room for monetized politics. For Eribo and Matthew Izibili (2010, p. 31):

Monetized politics is a phenomenon by which an individual political actor or public office seeker uses money to influence or buy his position or public office instead of coming in by legitimate means- on grounds of merit, patriotism, statesmanship to his country. Money has become a pivotal requirement in the eliocentric politics of Nigeria. Its impact has become very enormous in elite's democratic process. The consequences of monetized politics are very enormous; it causes rancor, rivalry, political tension, evil competition, political assassination and other related attributes of do or die politics that leads to looting of state's treasury, exploitative tendencies as well as we are experiencing in Nigerian democratic politics now.

Moreover, the crux of this paper is that though godfatherism is a global phenomenon African democracy ought to be premised on the principles of communitarian consensus whereby everybody has a sense of belonging.

Godfatherism and Eliocentrism: Implications for Nigerian Politics for National Development

Godfatherism is antithetical to democratic principles or democratic stabilization. Godfatherism in Nigerian democratic community has led to an endemic corruption and the culture of wastage. Corruption in contemporary Nigerian society has destructive tendency. Corruption means taking precedence of private interest over public interest. For Chris Okoli (2010, pp.59-60), corruption is as old as human history and has affected and decimated society down the line to some degree, not sparing institutions. Regrettably, corruption in Nigerian society is all pervading, endemic and systemic. For Subrata Murkherjee and Sushila Ramaswamy (2011, pp. 144-145), corruption meant licence, violence, great inequities in wealth and power, lack of peace and justice, disorderly ambition, and growth, lawlessness, dishonesty and contempt for religion. It meant the subordination of public values to the private sphere or/and when the public sphere was used for furthering private aims and interests. Corruption could be tackled only with extraordinary measures.

Nevertheless, the prevalence of godfatherism, eliocentrism and corruption in contemporary Nigerian society could lead to violent disruption, social disorderliness and social vices. One fundamental problem that is closely associated with godfatherist and eliocentric politics is that it could lead to the culture of wastage, and it could serve as a stumbling block to Nigeria's quest for sustainable national development. Development is a multidimensional concept that encourages that quantitative and the qualitative economic growth of a people. Development means the improvement in the spiritual and the material needs of a people. Some of the indices of sustainable national development include good health care system, affordable water supply, regular power supply, employment opportunities, higher productivity level, good tax system, good road network, effective communication system, good and functional education, high per capita income, good governance, due process, good legal system, promotion of human rights, environmental sustainability, and increase in life expectancy.

Nonetheless, godfatherism gives room for eliocentrism or elite politics. Unfortunately, elite politics in contemporary Nigerian society has led to the grave danger of the social gap between the rich and the poor. There is nothing like equality of opportunity because the Nigerian representatives are busy engaging in the looting of the national treasury thereby leading to a social gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria. The Nigerian political class has lost focus due to their kleptocratic practices. The Nigerian political class has turned the entire country into their father's estate. The Nigerian political class govern the country with a lot of impunity or lackadaisical attitude. Worthy of note is that the Nigerian political class do not really understand the basic tenets of democratic principle, accountability and sustainability. The evils of godfatherism and eliocentrism in Nigerian politics has led to greed, political insecurity, and the pathology of power. Political insecurity because of godfatherism and eliocentrism in Nigerian politics has led to political assassination, political thuggery, electoral rigging, political gangsterism, and kidnapping. For Gbari Sylvester and Anselm Odo (2021, p. 202), there are violent and desperate politicking's among political parties, electoral fraud, election rigging, thuggery and money politics. Electoral fraud poses a major challenge to democracy in Nigeria and by implication, a threat to the security of the nation. For Bari Sylvester and Anselm Odo (2021, p.208), political insecurity has paved the way for thuggery, violence, kidnapping and loss of lives and property because of insecurity and lack of truth.

Moreover, the evils of godfatherism and heliocentrism has resulted in the mismanagement of human and natural resources thereby paving the way for brain drain syndrome or the Japa syndrome. Many Nigerian citizens are currently travelling out of the country to overseas for greener pastures. All these boiled down to the evils of corruption, godfatherism and heliocentrism in Nigerian politics. The prevalence of godfatherism and eliocentrism in Nigerian politics have led to a serious social crisis such as social disorderliness, armed robbery, internet fraud, kidnapping, political thuggery, poor political participation, voters' apathy, political assassination, weak government institution, lack of rule of law, and lawlessness. In contemporary Nigerian society, the dividends of democracy have not really been realistic. For John Hoffman and Paul graham (2009, p.496), democracy reflects on a society in which people govern themselves. Godfatherist politics does not give room for people to govern themselves. In a godfatherist politics leaders are chosen by one individual or group of individuals otherwise known as a selected few. Godfatherism has both positive and negative implications but there is this assumption that its negative implications outweigh its positive implications. On the other hand, Joan Ferrante (2003, 538), however, argues that democracy

is a system of government in which power is vested in the citizen body and in which members of that citizen body participate directly or indirectly in the decision-making process. For Leon Baradat (2008, p. 107), democracy must work within a governmental system. For Modestus Onyeghalaji (2008, pp.36-37), democracy as a system of values is an integration of political virtues and moral norms. Democracy provides an idea of social life, an idea which harmonizes the society and projects into the unlimited future. According to Leon Baradat (2008, p.62), democratic government ought to be dedicated to improving the conditions of life for all its people and that some mechanisms exist by which the people in society can exercise a degree of control over their leaders and express their wishes and needs. But in contemporary Nigerian society, godfathers exercise control over the Nigerian people and at the same time stifled their wishes, needs and aspirations. Accordingly, Iain Mackenzie (2009, p.119) asserts that democracy tends to emphasize community, agreement, consensus and rationality. It is paradoxical, philosophers of democracy argue, to use the ideal of consensus to regulate democratic processes, because democracy is premised upon disagreement: dissensus is necessary, they say, for the functioning of democracy and any attempt to remove it (even in theory) is striking at the heart of the democratic project itself. According to John Burr and Milton Goldinger (2008, pp.278-279), democracy has traduced its own ideals, and that the principle of democracy is an ethical one. Based on the theoretical subscription of Burr and Goldinger (2008), godfatherism is not anchored on ethical considerations but nefarious activities or kleptocratic practices. Godfatherism is kleptocracy because it is backed by corrupt practices. For Eribo and Matthew Izibili (2010, p.25), generally, the theory and practice of democracy are embedded in the concepts or doctrines of laissez faire, that is liberalism, liberty, basic freedoms, fundamental human rights, rule of law, welfarism, principle of separation of powers, enfranchisement, sovereignty, popular participation and accountability of representatives. But all these are lacking in the current democratic dispensation of Nigerian society. For Eribo and Matthew Izibili (2010, pp.25-26), considering the ideals of democracy and the tendency to seek the greatest good for the greatest number in society is given a special place in politics and governmental engineering. Unfortunately, these democratic principles are lacking in the current political dispensation due to the evils of corruption, godfatherism and eliocratic politics in Nigeria. Godfatherism and eliocentrism are kleptocratic practices that are against to use the words of Iain Mackenzie (2009, p.156) emancipatory and progressive movement. Godfatherism and eliocentrism are some of the fundamental problems contemporary Nigerian society is currently battling with and it must be addressed with some fundamental solution. Some of the fundamental solutions are the eradication of godfatherism in Nigerian politics through effective political participation by the Nigerian masses. Another way in which Nigeria could tackle the problem of godfatherism is through zero tolerance for corruption. However, one of the fundamental solutions to the evils of godfatherism, eliocentrism and corruption is through the need for electoral reforms in Nigeria whereby the votes of the Nigerian people would count. There ought to be a strong and not weak government institutions that tend to promote democratic principles. Unfortunately, the Nigerian legal framework has been bedeviled by corrupt practices whereby some Nigerian Judges collect bribes both in local and foreign currencies just to thwart the course of justice in their court proceedings and court litigations or court judgments. Based on this subscription, Ike Odimegwu (2008, p.6-7) argues that fundamental problems require fundamental solutions.

Democratic practices rest on deliberation. For Iain Mackenzie (2009, p.118) the fundamental issue is whether deliberation will lead to better decisions: that is, decisions are

qualitatively more rational than those reached by a simple aggregation of opinions. Godfatherism largely works against the benefit of society. According to Iain Mackenzie (2008, 108), for all the hard work of being in politics, the benefit to individuals of political participation is that each will feel an ever-greater sense of freedom as he/she becomes more involved and more able to take control over their lives. The benefit to society is that free individual will pursue intellectual, moral and spiritual projects that will lead to the progress of all in society. Based on the subscription of Iain Mackenzie (2009) godfatherism works against the progress of all individuals in any democratic society. Today, Nigeria is currently battling with the problem of corruption, voter's apathy, gender inequality, weak government institution, election rigging, political thuggery, political assassination, hunger and abject poverty. There is hunger and social unrest in Nigerian society due to kleptocratic practices of godfatherism and eliocentrism among Nigerian politicians. Godfatherism has led to serious negative consequences of conflicts in Nigerian politics. For John Hoffman and Paul Graham (2009, 496), conflict means a clash of interests that can be tackled through violence but only resolved through non-statist pressures. Joan Ferrante (2003, 537) argues that conflict is the major force that drives social change. The evils of corruption, godfatherism and eliocentrism have led to the flagrant violation of human rights and lack of the common good in Nigerian society. The common good presupposes what Innocent Asouzu (2003, p.155) calls the principle of harmonious complementation. Godfatherism is one of the kleptocratic practices in Nigeria that has hindered the normative principle of social order. For George Ukagba and Patrick Iroegbu (2013, 23), there are various instruments of social order- morality, religion, conventions- but law is regarded as the most and best prevailing of these means of social control because it is backed up with the authority of society and capable of sanctions through legislation. Godfatherism is antithetical to the Rawlsian principle of distributive justice and economic buoyancy. For John Hoffman and Paul Graham (2009, 82), distributive justice is, as the name suggests, concerned with the just distribution of resources. Godfatherism discourages what Dukor (2004, pp.216-217) calls economic adequacy. In his theory, Rawls argues for economic adequacy for the worst-off. Economic adequacy, a feature of the special conception of justice, is attained when the search for food, shelter and work has become routine rather than urgent. Godfatherism has led to the inadequacy of law in Nigerian politics. For Oguejiofor (2009, p. 23), a situation of where the law is inadequate gives a completely unfair advantage to the ruling party or the holders of political offices. Godfathersm encourages the perpetuation of power.

In addition, the emergence of godfatherism has to do with the perpetuation of power by some selected few and greedy Nigerian politicians. For Adeniyi (2010, p.38) power is seen as the basic ingredient through which a nation's national interest is attained. That means that power is inseparable from national interest, they are concomitant, and they complement each other. Therefore, power will serve as the means in which a state influences its national interest. Unfortunately, Nigeria's national interest has been subordinated by the selfish aggrandizement of godfathers and some selected few or oligarchic factors in Nigerian politics. Godfatherism is a form of kleptocratic practice that is against the ethics of good governance. For Fidelis (2006, 94), good governance refers to the political character of the society or the state in the attainment of the moral objectives of human sociality. Human sociality specifies that individuals and groups aspire towards realization within the framework of the political society. Godfatherism undermines what Gillian Howie (2009, p.7) calls democratic entitlement, democratic interaction and social cohesion. The prevalence of godfatherism has serious

negative consequences on a country's democratic governance. Accordingly, Godwin Okaneme (2016, p.31) asserts that governance on the other hand is also a human activity whose overall aim is to administer men in states from a humane and humanistic disposition. Though there may be deviations and aberrations in governance, its critical aim is to bring about peace, progress and development in the state. As we have earlier argued in this theoretical discourse, godfatherist politics has serious negative consequences on sustainable national development. According to Paulinus ChikwadoEjeh (2021, p.192), national development therefore can be described as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation. For Paulinus ChikwadoEjeh (2021, pp.189- 190), development is a difficult word to define. As a concept, it has different definitions. Development equally implies improvement in material wellbeing of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future, it also demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. For Godwin Okaneme (2016, pp. 31-32) development is also human activity which comes about when the resources of the state are judiciously used for infrastructural and human development. Development itself is also a human activity that ensures that nations are not stagnated but make steady and veritable progress in all facets of human endeavours. Unfortunately, in the case of Nigerian society sustainable development has been eluded due to the evils of corruption, godfatherism and eliocentrism.

Nevertheless, the human and natural resources of the Nigerian state have been bedeviled by the culture of wastage and mismanagement. Be that as it may, the Nigerian political structure ought to be redirected by the power of philosophy and ideological underpinnings. Based on this subscription, Nigerian philosophers have a great role of play in ensuring that they become the watchdogs of the Nigerian society. They should speak out through the power of the pen. There is the popular saying that "the pen is mightier than the sword". Nigerians cannot keep quiet and live a life of sit-down-lookism and an obscurantist mentality of let us take it the way we see our existence. For Godwin Okaneme (2016, p.37), Nigerian philosophers can help to give ideological direction to the nation's politics. A cursory look at the manifestos of most political parties in the country reveals so much ideological gap and indeed emptiness. It becomes more worrisome when this same emptiness is copiously translated into reality and action when eventually these parties win elections and come to power.

In addition, it is unfortunate that Nigerian politicians have taken the citizenry for a ride for a long time. Our political parties are ideologically empty and often exist merely for the purpose of contesting elections. For Bamgbose Adele (2010, 1), elections, broadly understood refer to the process of elite selection by the mass of the population in any political system. Bamgbose Adele (2004, p.119) further argues that godfatherism is alien to the Nigerian culture. In the annals of political history of Nigeria, party politics patterned after the western model of democracy is alien to Nigerian culture. For Bamgbose Adele (2004, 128) godfatherism in Nigerian politics is not a recent phenomenon. It emerged along with party politics in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the prevalence of godfatherism in African politics has led to the failure of democratic governance. For Theophilus Okere (2004, p.5), thus, the tragedy of Africa can be termed a failure of governance. Godfatherism has led to poor democratic governance. As Mbamara (2004, 135), rightly observed, the problem of godfatherism among Nigerian politicians has become intimately related to political, economic, and social conflict within our

society. Godfatherism does not give room for altruism and sincerity in African politics. Benjamin Ewelu (2004, 558) argues that for responsible governance in Africa, therefore, altruism and sincerity on the part of African governments are indispensable ingredients; and partisan democracy has consistently failed us in selecting leaders. Godfatherism encourages socio-political and economic inequality. For Idowu William (2004, 158), the major and fundamental problem with the current Nigerian nation state is that it is based upon the principle that Nigerians are not equal. This principle which violates a basic human need underlies the structure of the Nigerian federation.

Nevertheless, the Godfatherist concept became very pronounced in some Nigerian states such as Edo State, Anambra State and Lagos State. In Edo State, it was a case between Adams Oshiomole and Godwin Obaseki. In Anambra State, it was a case between Chris Uba and Chris Ngige while in Lagos State, it was a case between Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Ambode. This Godfatherist scenarios led to a popular local parlance that says that “Edo non be Lagos” which simply means that Edo State is not the same as Lagos State. Worthy of note is that in all these states there was no cordial relationship between the godfather and the godson. The Godfatherist phenomenon presupposes a complex relationship, and this complex relationship always ends in deadlock. One fundamental challenge that is bedeviled by these examples of the Nigerian States is that these godfathers (Oshiomole, Tinubu, and Uba) have the same common features of the neurosis and the psychological factors of greed and over-ambition. In other words, these godfathers were too over ambitious to run the internal affairs of the state just to satisfy their selfish aggrandizement. They failed to realize that government is a continuous process, and it is every time godfathers can hire and fire their godsons. The Edo State’s godfatherist scenario is a case in point.

Concluding Considerations

So far, this paper critically examines the implications of godfatherism and eliocentrism in Nigerian politics and concludes that some of the fundamental problems closely associated with Nigerian politics are the problems of the Godfather concept/phenomenon, lack of environmental sustainability, poor health care system, eliocentrism, corruption, tribal sentiments, political assassination, political thuggery, electoral fraud, election rigging, looting of national treasury, abject poverty, political irresponsibility, and kidnapping. Godfatherism in Nigerian politics has become very problematic due to the kleptocratic practices of elites in politics. Godfatherism and eliocentrism in Nigerian politics have become endemic and have hampered Nigeria’s quest for sustainable national development. Godfatherism and elite politics serve as impediments to Nigeria’s quest for democratic sustainability and accountability.

Recommendations

The present government should change the pattern of political patronage to selected people of interest without following a merit based system; the masses should call for all-inclusive methods of amending the nation constitution to meet up the aspirations of Nigeria system; there should be resistance by the masses when there is any observation of godfatherism on appointments, selection, elections to any given public office; the people of Nigeria should form clusters of youth to create awareness on how to curb the challenges of godfatherism and eliocentrism in the current and future politics.

References

- Adele., B. (2004). "*Party politics and godfatherism: The Nigerian experience*" in Maduabuchi Dukor (ed.), *Godfatherism in Nigeria's Politics*, An Interdisciplinary, International Journal of Concerned African Philosophers, Vol. 1, No. 1, 111-118
- Adele., B. (2010). "*Kenya presidential elections and the fallacy of democratic experience*" in Maduabuchi Dukor (ed.) *Philosophy and Public Sphere*, An Interdisciplinary, International Journal of Concerned African Philosophers, Vol 7, No. 1, 1-10.
- Adeyemi-Suenu., W. (2004). "*Godfatherism and political development: Understanding its Impact on Nigeria's Emerging Democracy*" in Maduabuchi Dukor (ed.), *Godfatherism in Nigeria's Politics*, An Interdisciplinary, International Journal of Concerned African Philosophers, Vol. 1, No. 1, 72-80
- Aghamelu., F. (2006). "*Good governance in Nigeria: The christian philosophical perspective*" in Prof. C. C. Agbodike and Rems Umeasiegbu (eds.), *Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*, A Journal of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria, VIII, 94-112
- Asouzu., I. (2003). *Effective leadership and the ambivalence of human interest: The Nigerian paradox in a complementary perspective*. University of Calabar Press.
- Asouzu., I. (2004). *The method and principles of complementary reflection in and beyond African philosophy*. University of Calabar Press.
- Baradat., L. (2008). *Political ideologies: Their origins and impact*, Ninth Edition, New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India Private Limited.
- Burr., J. and Goldinger., M. (2008). *Philosophy and contemporary issues*. Prentice Hall of India Private Limited.
- Chijioke., J. and Aderibigbe., A. (2004). "*Ethics and godfatherism: The Nigerian Experience*" in Maduabuchi Dukor (ed.), *Godfatherism in Nigeria's Politics*, An Interdisciplinary, International Journal of Concerned African Philosophers, Vol. 1, No. 1, 110-117
- Coker., K. (2004). "*Christianity and godfatherism: Lessons for Nigerian politicians*" in Maduabuchi Dukor (ed.), *Godfatherism in Nigeria's politics*, An Interdisciplinary, International Journal of Concerned African Philosophers, Vol. 1, No. 1, 33-42
- Dukor., M. (2004). *Justice, Law and Corporate Ethics: Philosophical Essays*, Lagos: Essence Library.
- Dukor., M. (2004). "*Theory and politics of godfatherism*" in Maduabuchi Dukor (ed.), *Godfatherism in Nigeria's politics*, An Interdisciplinary, International Journal of Concerned African Philosophers, Vol. 1, No. 1, v-x
- Ejeh., P. (2021). "*Philosophy, leadership and national development in Nigeria*" in Alloy Ihuah and Philip Idachaba (eds.), *Philosophy and national security: Interrogations in a Distressed Nation*, Proceedings of Association of Philosophy Professionals in Nigeria, Makurdi: Eagle Prints Limited.
- Emiri., F. (2004). "*Godfatherism: An ethical slippery slope*" in Maduabuchi Dukor (ed.), *Godfatherism in Nigeria's Politics*, An Interdisciplinary, International Journal of Concerned African Philosophers, Vol. 1, No. 1, 148-157
- Eribo., M and Izibili., M. (2010). "*Eliocentrism: A reorientation to democratic agenda in Nigerian politics*" in Maduabuchi Dukor (ed.) *Philosophy and Public Sphere*, An

- Interdisciplinary, International Journal of Concerned African Philosophers, Vol 7, No. 1, 22-36
- Ewelu., B. (2004). "*Altruism and sincerity: Indispensable ingredients for responsible governance in Africa*" in J. Obi Oguejiofor (ed.), *Philosophy, democracy and responsible governance in Africa*. Delta Publication (Nigeria) Limited.
- Ferrante., J. (2003). *Sociology: A global perspective*, Fifth Edition. Wadsworth and Thomson Limited.
- Henry., E. (2004). "*The contradiction of paternalism and democracy in Nigeria*" in Maduabuchi Dukor (ed.), *Godfatherism in Nigeria's Politics*, An Interdisciplinary, International Journal of Concerned African Philosophers, Vol. 1, No. 1, 25- 32
- Hoffman., J. and Graham., P. (2009). *Introduction to political theory*, Second Edition, England: Pearson Higher Education Limited.
- Howie., G. (2009). *Teaching philosophy in context: Or knowledge does not keep any better than fish* in Andrea Kenkmann (ed.), *Teaching Philosophy*, London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Maathai., W. (2009). *The challenge for Africa: A new vision*. Heinemann Publishing Limited.
- Mackenzie., I. (2009). *Politics: Key concepts in Philosophy*. Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Mbamara., C. (2004). "*Anxiety and psychological factors in Godfatherism*" in Maduabuchi Dukor (ed.), *Godfatherism in Nigeria's Politics*, An Interdisciplinary, International Journal of Concerned African Philosophers, Vol. 1, No. 1, 134-144
- Murkherjee., S. and Ramaswamy., S. (2011). *A history of political thought: From Plato to Marx*, New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India Private Limited.
- Nnamani., C. (2004). "*The Godfather phenomenon*" in Maduabuchi Dukor (ed.), *Godfatherism in Nigeria's Politics*, an Interdisciplinary, International Journal of Concerned African Philosophers, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1-24
- Odimegwu., I. (2008). *Philosophic foundation of politics*, Amawbia: Lumos Publishing.