

Monetization of Politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: The Role of Political Parties

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Abstract

The massive and pervasive monetization of Nigerian politics, and its attendant consequences, is due in part to the nature and character of the political parties (how they are formed and structured, how they operate, and the cavalier manner they often pursue the quest for acquisition and consolidation of political power) in the country. This is the main thesis of the paper, which is anchored on the Rentier theoretical orientation. With specific reference to the Fourth Republic, the paper attempts to bring to the fore and interrogate the unbridled and often reckless use and misuse of money by politicians, with the active connivance and even tacit instigation of political parties, through their deliberate policies and strategies (of ostensibly raising funds), as well as other acts of commission and omissions. Relying on mainly qualitative data (desk review, content analysis and critical examination of published documents), the paper finds out that notwithstanding the existence of laws and several legislations to curtail same, political parties have foisted and enthroned a regime (and culture) of money politics in Nigeria, and the pernicious influences of this are just too obvious and too grave: contraction of the political space (restricting political aspiration to moneyed few); hijack of the political parties and the political process by cabals of persons of means, thereby frustrating and pushing others away, etc. Accordingly, the paper proffers some measures toward addressing the problem, including the need to set up true political parties (that are inclusive, mass-based and democratic through and through), initiating electoral reforms capable of doing away with god-fatherism, and legislating away the odious phenomenon of party capture, etc.

Keywords: *Monetization, Politics, Fourth Republic*

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Background to the Study

Concern over monetization of politics, as well as issues relating to same, is not a recent phenomenon. Nor is it restricted to Nigeria. There has been a legislation in the United Kingdom since 1883 that prevents misuse of money or excessive spending by electoral candidates and political parties during elections. Also, in the United States, the 26th President, Theodore Roosevelt, tried to regulate expenditure in electoral campaign by proposing the Campaign Finance Reform of 1907. There was also an amendment of the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) that regulates electoral spending in 1974 after investigation into the Watergate Scandal revealed that there were corruption and abuse of electoral process by political parties and their candidates (Babatunde, Shuabu and Ariyo, 2019).

France is another country where monetization of politics once threatened to undermine the electoral process. There were series of high profile money politics scandals during French elections in the 1980s and 1990s. The incidents made the legislative arm of government in France to promulgate eight different Electoral Laws within seven years (Clift and Fisher, 2004).

In Nigeria today, monetization of politics holds sway within and among political parties, particularly since return to civil rule in 1999. Politics has degenerated into an activity where money is used to exert enormous influence, if not determine participation, especially during electoral contests. Aspirants pay their way to become candidates of their parties, in return, parties pay huge sums to buy votes, induce electoral officials, buy other candidates and their political parties, and sometimes bribe judges handling elections cases (Nwali and Onah, 2018).

This, however, does not in any way seek to ignore, neglect or even gloss over the reality of the centrality of money in modern partisan politics. As affirmed by an American Senator, Mark Hanna: *"There are two things that are important in politics. The first is money and I can't remember what the second one is."* This simply underscores the place of money in politics both formally and informally. The assertion is very true for most climes across the world, but even more so for Nigeria's fourth republic, because these days, money politics appears to have erected a huge barricade on the path of actualizing many a political aspiration and ambition and threatens credible, peaceful, free and fair elections. Formally, money is used to fulfil routine party requirements and obligations: pay for membership forms, make donations, buy forms, mobilize agents to polling units, do campaign posters, organize campaign rallies, sponsor media campaigns and other activities, etc. Based on the Electoral Act, there are limits to election spending by political parties and their candidates, but informally monies are used to set up and oil campaign structures, incur and procure benefits and advantages, buy votes, bribe security agents and judges, as well as engage in extra- mainly illicit spending aimed at securing victory in elections (Babatunde, Shuaibu, Ariyo, 2019).

In Nigeria monetization of politics, which is partly inspired, instigated and influenced by political parties, has invariably made the political process to be excessively expensive. Aspirants and candidates spend their life savings in a bid to actualize political aspirations:

belong to parties (sometimes by “settling” godfathers who are the real owners of the parties); induce greedy party officials at all levels; purchase “Expression of Interest” and nomination forms (often at prohibitively high rates); bear the cost of campaigns (which in the context of Nigeria’s fourth republic, are really meaningless and showy jamborees, full of empty shenanigans and often shorn of any substance, but which still must be carried out); then inevitably bribe delegates during primaries (which aftermaths often produce more challenges that necessarily require more spending whichever way they go). Sometimes to prosecute political aspiration, individuals are compelled to borrow or enter into unholy alliances with political investors and godfathers.

It is therefore, very tempting to assert, as hereby done by this paper, that judging by the way and manner they operate, parties in Nigeria’s fourth republic have rendered politics to be a very expensive activity that only the rich and the well-connected can afford; and that this undue and unwarranted monetization of the political process is done without qualms, care or shame; in spite of laws expressly prohibiting same; and regardless of the far-reaching adverse effects on the democratic enterprise.

Theoretical Framework

The paper adopts rentierism, also known as rentier theory or rentier state theory, as its theoretical baseline. The theory was first postulated around 1970 by Mahdavy Hossein in Iran. Initially, the theory was developed to explain the reality of the Arab World. Later it was extended to the analysis of oil rich states generally, but today, the theory is capable of explaining any society where the State gets rent from raw materials. In its broadest sense, the theory defines rentier states as those countries that receive on a regular basis substantial amounts of external economic rent from primary products or raw materials (Yates, 1996, 11).

Beblawi, cited in Ugwu and Ugwu (2018), describes four factors that must be considered in order for a country to be rented out:

- i. First, the rental economy where the state is its subset should be where rental conditions prevail.
- ii. Second, the source of this rent must be outside the economy of that State. That means rents should come from external sources. According to this theory, domestic rent, even if it is large enough to be strong, is not enough to produce a rentier economy.
- iii. Thirdly, in a rentier State, only a few people are involved in the generation of the rent, while the majority are involved in its consumption and distribution. Thus, an open economy with high levels of foreign trade is not rentier, even if it depends predominantly on rent (e.g., tourism), because the majority of the society is actively involved in the creation of wealth.
- iv. Ultimately, the state government must be the main recipient of that foreign rent on the economy.

Herb (2002:4) suggested that it is the third point that makes the use of the word “rent” appropriate, and in some ways similar to the use of the term in the classical political economy: rents are not generated by human activity, but instead by the scarcity value of natural endowments.

Elaborating further, Herb (2002: 5) stated that the underlying mechanisms for supporting this concept are of three types.

- i. The first concerns how the state collects revenue, that is, that the absence of taxation releases the state from the accountability ordinarily exacted by domestic appropriation of surplus and makes it virtually completely autonomous from its society, winning popular acquiescence through distribution rather than support through taxation and representation.
- ii. The second causal mechanism concerns how the state spends revenues: rentierism, it is argued, increases the capacity of the state to both buy off, and to repress, opposition. These two mechanisms together are thought to produce “a rentier social contract” in which “the state provides goods and services to society ... while society provides state officials with a degree of autonomy in decision-making.”
- iii. The third set of arguments in the literature holds that rentier wealth distorts social structure, preventing changes that promote democracy when countries follow a more standard development trajectory. According to Herb, while the first two mechanisms are state-centred, the third focuses on how rents affect society, and thus is more about natural resource dependence than rentierism specifically (Herb 2002: 5-6).

This theory gives a deep insight into the monetization of politics in Nigeria and how political parties operate. Because of the expensive nature of Nigerian politics due to monetization of the whole process, candidates that seek for money from different sources just to finance their election expenditures are likened to Government of a State that is in need of revenue to run its activities; and just like a Government has several sources of revenue (taxes, rent, loans, etc), a candidate also has different alternatives of getting money (through donation, personal savings, loans and godfather sponsorship).

Partisan politics in Nigeria is expensive, just like running a State or government. Nigerian governments at all levels hardly generate enough money to run their activities. They rely on the rent they get (from oil and other sources). This accounts for why governments here are not accountable to the people: the resources they are (mis) managing are not from the citizens, but from rent generated through sundry sources. In the same vein, for candidates and their political parties, the most reliable way to have quick access to enough fund for election expenditure is to rely on sponsorship from godfathers (who have hijacked the parties and their major organs, and who often operate as investors, funding the parties and pulling the string). Now political parties use the money to run their activities (which include buying votes, bribing security agents, compromising electoral officials and judges in charge of election adjudication). After winning election, they are also hardly accountable nor responsible to the people. Their fealty is rather to the godfathers and political investors that sponsor, manipulate and/or pave their way to office. The party structure and machinery exist to facilitate this travesty – or at least lend themselves as willing tools to it!

Conceptual Clarifications

Political Party

Like many social science constructs, there is no universally acceptable definition of political parties. To Weiner (1967) cited in Ukase (2018), political party's area set of people that are

“organized for the deliberate purpose of controlling state power and who have specific organizational structure, procedures, leadership, members, ideology, finance, etc.”

Heywood (2003, 272) sees political parties mainly from the prism of controlling government. He defined political party as a group of people that are organized for the purpose of winning governmental power, by electoral means. He is, however, quick to caution that political parties should not be confused with pressure groups as it is often the case. This is because the functions of a political party are entirely different from those of pressure groups. Political parties are also organizations whose members have values, ideals and aspirations in common and at least participate in the organized contests/struggles for political power (Kura, 268).

Putting it a little differently, Coleman and Rosenberg (nd), cited in Ukase (2018), defined political parties as associations formally organized with the explicit and declared purpose of acquiring and to some extent maintaining legal control, either singly or in coalition or electoral competition with other associations over the personnel and the policy of the government of an actual or perspective sovereign state. The definition of the African Leadership Forum is also apt. According to them a political party is an aggregate of people united by a common and collective desire to capture political power and authority within a legitimate and legal political framework by canvassing for votes in a democratic polity (African Leadership Forum, 2000, 3). The common denominators in all these definitions above are that a political party is an organized platform used by like-minds whose main aim is to capture or consolidate political power and authority within a given polity.

Monetization of Politics/Money-politics

According to Kura (2011), Ovwasa (2014) and Ukase (2016), money is an indispensable tooling politics. Similarly, Alfa and Marangos (2016) have argued that money matters in politics because many political activities simply could not take place without money. Echoing the same tone, Best (2006) describes the role of money in politics, especially for those seeking for political offices, as the norm. In concurrence, Ojo (2006) conceives of money as an instrument used by political parties or candidates in election campaign to secure votes.

However, monetization of politics or money politics, in terms of conceptualization, raises conflicting and varying explanations from scholars, policy analysts and politicians alike. According to Gillon (2000) money-politics encompasses the activities of 'big-money interests' geared toward buying political outcomes. What this entails is that money-politics connotes a situation in which 'wealthy candidates' and 'special interest individuals' weaponized money as an instrument to be deployed to dominate the political – particularly the electoral – realm.

Evertsson (2008) views money-politics as bribery and a form of political corruption, while to Beetseh and Akpoo (2015) money-politics is a situation whereby players and contenders for elective positions use money, or money is used on their behalf, as an inducement to sway or procure support – in short, where electorates vote not according to their wishes and convictions but because money has changed hands. This postulation, however, is a bit narrow, as it restricts itself to the monetization of the electoral process only.

The stance of this paper is that money-politics is the prevalence of or pernicious and pervasive use of money by few wealthy or influential persons in such a scale and manner as to enable them totally or substantially hijack or dominate political parties in particular and the democratic process in general. In other words, money-politics involves the use of money to take over or compromise political parties and other democratic institutions, induce voters and exact or procure undue advantages and privileges through fair and foul means.

Arising from the above, there appears to be a consensus that to a great extent money politics is one of the defining characteristics of Nigeria's fourth republic.

The Nature of Fourth Republic Political Parties

Generally, the fourth republic political parties have their own unique features. It has even been by asserted by Kari and Ereke (2011), that most existing political parties in Nigeria do not qualify to be called so, strictly and scientifically speaking, having been beset by issues such as lack of organization, dearth of ideology and common bond, and sheer absence of internal party democracy.

Political parties are formed and indeed rest upon certain key principles, the existence of which means they are true parties and are capable of guaranteeing democracy both from within and without. For instance, a party should be organized; but Nigerian political parties in this epoch are everything but organized, owing to lack of coherent structures and functional organs. Most times membership and even operations of key party organs (Board of Trustees, National Working Committee, Caucuses, National, State or Zonal Executive Committees, etc.) are arrested, hijacked, tele-guided or controlled by few individuals or groups; and the rules and requirements governing who becomes what in which party organ are often arbitrarily set and changed at the convenience or pleasure of the god-fathers (who may be the President, Governors, or influential party chieftains). The parties hardly elect their leaders; at least not in free and fair contests. Leaders often emerged through dubiously procured "consensus" staged at farcical conventions and congresses, during which names of the anointed are simply read out, and delegates – who themselves are products of similarly fraudulent shenanigans – shout their acceptance by "acclamation." In the few times elections were allowed, only the preferred choice of the godfathers emerged, while others got disqualified or harangued and harassed out of the race.

Another unenviable feature of the existing parties is that they hardly operate based on the laws of the land and their own laws. It is this contempt for the rules that allows some god-fathers to appropriate the parties almost for their exclusive use and to insist on imposing candidates or substituting already elected ones with their anointed and favoured choice. This explains why the godfathers virtually own the parties in their domains and do whatever pleases them (Kari and Ereke, 2011: 41). It equally accounts for why it is easy for the godfathers to charge willing political godsons and goddaughters or render politics for the highest bidder.

Political Parties and Monetization of Politics in Nigeria

Much earlier than, but especially since, the advent of Nigeria's fourth republic, party politics has been punctuated by influence of money. This influence, has however, been quite negative,

and actually accounts for why rather than 'democratizing,' Nigeria has been 'de-democratizing' (Momoh, 2006).

The issue of monetization of politics has been in existence right from the foundation of Nigeria. The country's very first constitution the Clifford Constitution of 1922, contained a provision that hinged the exercise of franchise on financial qualification. It only allowed those with annual incomes of £100 or more to participate in election. This was happening at a time when the annual salary of most Nigerians, nay Africans, was less than £100 (Tamuno, 1966). However, many scholars and analysts are of the opinion that money became more prominent in the 1970s arising from the oil boom as political offices became lucrative. This culture has been sustained till today. Given the negative role of money in the elections of the Second and Third Republics, it was expected that adequate measures would be put in place to preempt and prevent the influence of money politics from repeating itself in future elections. This was not the case as the governing elite who 'midwived' the 1999 election did not do much to forestall the repeat of history.

The 1999 general elections were thus, characterized by money politics. Sub-section (2) of Section 225 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) required political parties to maintain and submit to the Nigeria's electoral management body – the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)- audited annual reports of their finances, while Sub-section (3) circumscribed political parties from foreign funding of any kind. The maximum spending by political parties was also captured by the Electoral Act. Apart from the above provisions, there were no other practical measures taken to regulate and mitigate the negative role of money in the parties. To worsen matters these provisions are most often observed in the breach. The implication is simply that moneyed men and women appropriate the parties to themselves and their cronies, lackeys and favoured ones. In one instance of the use of money, Gen. T. Y. Danjuma (Rtd.) admitted that he spent 7 million dollars on Obasanjo's presidential campaign in 1999 (Adetula, 2009). It is against this back-drop that Suberu (2001) lamented that the use of money in the 1999 general elections – the inception of the Fourth Republic - was open and shameless. Indeed, it can be argued that a critical look at the foundation and edifice of the Fourth Republic parties indicates that they were unmistakably elitist; the then three political parties (Alliance for Democracy, All People's Party and the People's Democratic Party) were a collection of moneyed men and women (including but not limited to retired military generals, rump of moneybags that dominated the politics of the earlier republics, and the club of budding nouveau riche and their ilk). Things have hardly changed ever since, even after the partisan political space became deregulated, resulting in proliferation of all manner of groups who go by the name "political parties." Such is the pervasiveness of money politics that with few exceptions, if any, the existing parties are run and controlled by few, privileged individuals and groups whose main source of power and influence is their capacity to draw from their deep pockets and spend same for and on the parties.

A similar trend of excessive use of money to control the parties, influence voters and electoral outcomes was observed in the 2003 general election. In fact, money was the major determinant of who won and who lost in that election. Convinced that civilian rule had come

to stay after four years of democracy in the country, those with money came out in their numbers to participate in the 2003 general elections. The primaries of most political parties were characterized by 'widespread bribery of delegates with sacks stuffed with money to influence their votes' (Transition Monitoring Group as cited in Adetula, 2009).

Money politics was so prevalent in the 2003 elections that it attracted condemnation from even President Obasanjo, himself a prime beneficiary of the ugly phenomenon:

The greatest losers are the ordinary people, those voters whose faith and investment in the system are hijacked and subverted because money, not their will, is made the determining factor in elections. Can we not move from politics of money and materialism to politics of ideas, issues and development? (Obasanjo as cited in INEC, 2005, 5)

But this was just elite double-talk, as the use of money in the 2007 general election, which took place still under Obasanjo's watch, proved to be even worse. Money politics degenerated into a more frightening dimension in the elections as it was made part of Nigeria's electoral tradition. President Obasanjo had attempted to elongate his tenure (Campbell, 2011) but when that attempt failed, he made sure that he installed his successor – Umar Musa Yar'Adua, against all known good electoral practices. To achieve this, he used as his tool, the monetary inducement of party delegates, voters, electoral officers and security agents to rig the 2007 general election (Okolie, 2010). Other major political parties and their candidates equally engaged in these unwholesome practices – but were less successful.

In another dimension, the nomination fees of the major political parties that participated in the election was so exorbitant that only very wealthy aspirants could afford them. For the ruling PDP, the fees ranged from N500,000 for the State House of Assembly candidates, to N1,000,000 and N2,000,000, respectively, for candidates for the Federal House of Representatives and for the Senate, while the Governorship position and the Presidency each attracted N3,000,000 and N5,000,000 nomination fees, respectively.

Other parties had similar high nomination fees (Thisday, 2006). For the 2011 general election, the amount of money the major political parties charged for nomination forms were more than double the amount they charged in the preceding general elections (Abati, 2010). The nomination fees of the political parties that participated in the 2015 general election were similarly astronomically high (Olorunmola, 2016).

When the nomination fees for all the general elections are compared, it is logical to conclude that in all of them, party nomination was meant for the very-rich, especially in respect of the contest for office of the president and governor. Each election in Nigeria since 1999 has followed the pattern of money politics set in the previous elections. All the elections were a game for those with money. From party nomination to election campaigning to voting and who won at the Election Petition Tribunals, it was all about money and who could bribe more. Candidates who had money and offered more of it as a bribe or inducement, won, even if they had received less of the votes cast in the election; whereas candidates who had money but

offered a smaller bribe, lost, even if they had won a majority of the votes cast. Those who had no money were excluded with prohibitive party nomination fees even before the elections took place, and if they ever managed to contest (using smaller parties), lost outright irrespective of whether they had the support of the people or not.

Similar acts of monetary/material inducements also characterized the general election. For example, to support the re-election bid of President Jonathan in 2015, a fund raising campaign was organized in which over 21 billion naira was collected by friends and some corporate organizations. The chair of the initiative made a donation of 2 billion naira. Some governors of the ruling party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), donated 50 million naira each (Olorunmola, 2016).

While most of the donations from individual donors surpassed the 1 million naira benchmark permissible under the amended Electoral Act 2010 (EU Election Observation Mission, 2015), the donations from corporate organizations were against the provisions of Company and Allied Matters Act [CAMA], 1990. Section 38 sub-section (2) of the Act forbids corporate bodies from making donations to political parties for any political purpose. The language and intention of these laws are unambiguously clear. While the intention of the restrictions by the Electoral Act is to preempt those with money from hijacking the electoral process and undermining the integrity of elections and governance thereafter, the prohibition by CAMA is aimed at preventing companies within and outside Nigeria from forming unholy alliances with any political party and influencing the electoral outcomes, with the possibility of being rewarded with undue patronage in the award and execution of government contracts after elections. These laws could mitigate the undue influence of money on elections. However, the enforcement institutions, such as the INEC and the police, have weak capacity. The laws limiting campaign donations are thus, rarely enforced.

Beyond these donations, President Jonathan of the PDP was known to have diverted several billion of government funds to finance his campaign (Encomium, 2015). The All Progressive Congress (APC) also embarked on a fund raising exercise to generate funds for the candidature and campaign of Mohammad Buhari in 2015. For example, the former Vice President – Atiku Abubakar not only contributed 50 million naira, but also donated an Aircraft and 12 Land Cruiser Jeeps to Buhari's election bid. APC also planned to raise 10 billion naira from ordinary party members and Buhari sympathizers and another 40 billion naira from party members holding elected positions at federal and state levels. The ex-governor of Lagos State, Bola Tinubu, and Chibuike Amaechi, ex-governor of Rivers State, were believed to have made huge contributions running into several billions of naira to the Buhari campaign (Adetula, 2015; Olorunmola, 2016).

With these kind of campaign donations to candidates and political parties for the election, it was not surprising that party politics and electioneering were reduced to a money-show in which candidates and their parties tried to outspend their opponents. Even the candidate of the APC, Mohammad Buhari, decried the high cost of nomination forms as he had to take loans from the bank before he could buy the nomination form of his party (Vanguard, 2014).

Moreover, after passing the hurdle of prohibitive nomination fees, candidates had to also induce party delegates with money in order to get their votes. Traditional rulers, religious leaders and other opinion leaders were not left out of the inducement largesse (Omotola and Nyuykonge, 2015).

Election campaign rallies, organized and driven by or in conjunction with the parties, were largely characterized by crowd renting. The hired participants, mostly idle youth, cost between N500 to N3000 per head. The parties, through agents and local officials, also superintended over distribution of different types of treats, including foodstuffs, clothes and even raw cash, to entice voters (Olorunmola, 2016).

There were even cases of successful attempts made by some desperate politicians or those working for them, from within and outside the party structures and campaign teams, to buy the Permanent Voter Card from voters (EU Election Observation Mission, 2015).

In fact, by the time of the 2015 elections, the various aspects of party politics in Nigeria had become so monetized that it was possible to talk about the economics of power in the country. It is actually possible – even helpful and necessary to make a rough calculation of how much it would take to belong to a party, find accommodation and acceptance therein, contest and win elections in Nigeria. When such a mental calculation is made, it may cumulatively translate into millions or billions of naira. The calculation, however, may well often depend on the political party involved, the quantum of the demand of the godfathers, type of election, what is at stake, and the actors involved.

Perhaps, the worst manifestation of the unwholesome roles played by the Fourth Republic parties as par monetization of politics is in the organization and conduct of primary elections. To secure a party nomination under the monetized system in Nigeria, an aspirant is expected to first buy over the party delegates. Depending on the party and type of election, such inducement could cost 200,000 naira or more per delegate for presidential nomination and 100,000 naira or more per delegate for gubernatorial nomination. In some instances, foreign currencies, particularly U S dollars are used to induce party delegates as was allegedly the case during the APC presidential primaries in 2015 where each delegate was alleged to have received an inducement of US\$2000 from the Atiku Abubakar group and another US \$3000 from the Muhammadu Buhari group (Onyekpere, 2015). A total of 7214 delegates participated in the primaries in which Buhari scored 3430 votes to defeat Atiku who polled 954 votes (Premium Times, 2014).

The foregoing shows that money politics in Nigeria is a pretty serious business and the economics of power is very prohibitive. This prompted Obasanjo to observe that “in Nigeria: ... we prepare for elections as if we are going to war... the parties and candidates together spent during the last elections more than would have been needed to fight a successful war ...” (Obasanjo as cited in INEC, 2005, p. 5). This view may be very correct going by a report by INEC that between \$1.5 billion and \$2 billion was spent on the 2015 general election by the political parties and their candidates (Vanguard, 2017). As happened in the previous elections,

in 2019 and the off-season polls thereafter, political parties and their candidates have used the same methods or even survived on rent from godfathers and political investors, notwithstanding the unwholesome consequences on democratic politics.

Implications of Parties Breeding Money Politics in Nigeria

The enthronement of money politics in the country is a major obstacle to evolution of parties that are truly rooted in and driven by the people, a hindrance to achieving a healthy electioneering process, and a veritable cause of all forms of crises and controversies within the parties. It is also at the heart of lack of internal party democracy, electoral violence, destruction of individuals' aspirations and electorates' right to choice, institutionalization of a culture of impunity within the polity and foisting of misfits and those clearly unfit for leadership. It equally breeds frustration, leading to low democratic consciousness, as well as desperation among contestants. In a nutshell, it constitutes a clear and present danger to democratic growth and consolidation in Nigeria.

The unwholesome consequences of parties breeding money politics can also be located in the following features of fourth republic politics in Nigeria:

- i. Politics appears to be the most lucrative business in town.
- ii. Incumbents at all levels, money-bag politicians, special interest individuals and groups, and godfathers have hijacked the parties, and use them to feather their own nests, with scant regard for the democratic norms, fair and healthy competition. The game is often not played according to the rules, or money is deployed to subvert or even change the rules.
- iii. The parties have become a cauldron of crises, recriminations, conflict and violence, which are often hardly amicably resolved. Internal party democracy is a mirage. Therefore, the parties are unable – or even unwilling - to give, or to so much as guarantee democracy.
- iv. Electoral contests, within and outside the parties, have become a zero-sum game, a do-or-die affair in which no arsenal is spared – however, the most potent weapon is money, because it seems capable of buying everything and everyone. Often, victory is for the anointed of the godfathers or the highest spender or giver.
- v. The parties are rendered hollow – spiritually and intellectually – and bereft of the time-honored democratic values. This makes it difficult to nurture and grow true political culture, which is a necessary precondition for enthronement of strong and virile democracy.
- vi. Those who buy themselves into power or office are more likely to consider themselves as owing little or nothing to the electorate in particular and society in general. Inevitably, the parties have become a breeding ground for those who perpetrate mis-governance, poor, selfish and self-serving leadership.
- vii. The continued use of money by political parties and candidates to manipulate the electoral process and buy electoral outcomes will continue to breed political thuggery and violence. As politicians and office seekers spend a lot of money to secure political offices, they employ the services of thugs. Thuggery ultimately militarizes the political environment and encourages violent political culture. This also promotes the

proliferation of arms procured and deployed for harassment and intimidation of political opponents and in order to rig elections. This accounts for why many are scared from political participation.

On the whole, the main implication of political parties partaking of and breeding money politics is that in and by so doing, they become willing enablers of willful and flagrant violation of about all the cardinal principles of democracy: the people are denied their rights to choose, participation, and self-actualization, while rule of law is jettisoned or observed in the breach in the way the parties operate and politics is played.

Conclusion

As in many other countries in the world, Nigerian politics is monetized and the negative effects are felt beyond the political system. The above analysis concludes that the monetization of politics by political parties and their candidates have made electoral politics to be unaffordable. At the same time, political leaders, many whom believe that they have paid themselves to power, have become unaccountable, insensitive and irresponsible. The Rentier theory increases our understanding of the fact that political leaders that passed through a hugely monetized electoral process might not be accountable to the citizens because their loyalty lies in the hands of political investors and godfathers that sponsor, help or manipulate them to power. This explains why Nigerian political leaders have excluded the masses from the business of governance. The real dividends of governance are often nowhere to be found. There is an urgent need to reduce the level of money politics in Nigeria so that capable hands would have their ways to the positions of power and authority.

Way Forward

The paper recommends the following as a way forward:

- i. The masses of the people must participate actively and meaningfully in the political process, especially in terms of taking up membership of the parties and striving to serve in all party structures and organs. Little or nothing can be achieved by remaining aloof or on the sidelines and allowing few godfathers and their henchmen to have a field day, unchallenged. Alternatively, like-minds should avail themselves of the opportunity offered by the extant laws to form mass-based parties that can be truly democratic from the outset.
- ii. Members of political parties should insist that the parties be inclusive, democratic, law-abiding and free from the over-bearing influence of godfathers. This they can achieve by active resistance and mobilization, as against the prevailing culture and attitudes of indifference, inertia and passiveness.
- iii. Our political parties must be made to play by the rule: respect their own constitutions and all other extant laws (particularly the provisions of the Electoral Act on political party finance). There should be strict enforcement and sanctions for violations of these laws.
- iv. Institutions such as the EFCC and ICPC should also be compelled to focus on corrupt acts and omissions being perpetrated within parties or as pertained to partisan politics and electioneering.

- v. Amendments be effected to the Electoral Act and, possibly, the 1999 Constitution categorically outlawing party capture through activities of godfathers.
- vi. There is a need for further electoral reform and institutional restructuring and reengineering of INEC as the main political umpire to develop the required capacity necessary to curb the act of money-politics and vote buying in Nigerian politics.
- vii. Finally, and more importantly, the scourge of poverty and inadequate voters' education in the country should be addressed without delay. Poverty and illiteracy motivate the act of money changing hands within the parties and during elections.

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