ELECTION, MONEY POLITICSAND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABILITY OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Although money politics contributes significantly to democracy, it also has negative impact on sustaining democracy in developing democracies such as Nigeria and other African countries. Due to this, the study examines the antecedents of money politics with a view to establishing the reasons responsible for money politics, the strengths and shortcomings of money politics and the implications it has on sustaining democracy in Nigeria. Making use of secondary sources of data, the study found out that increase in population cum high value of money, increase in number of political parties, high intensity of electoral contests and desperation to control government by political class are the factors responsible for money bag politics. Despite the fact that money politics hasthe strengths, it has implications of encouraging looters, eroding competence of the candidate, weakening political participation and undermining democratic governance in Nigeria. The study concludes that unregulated money politics in elections by political parties and politicians has debilitating impact on sustaining democracy and that it is only the hostile stance of government that can completely root out the pervasive money bag politics in Nigeria. The study recommends that government should redesign the framework of money bag politics in order to ensure strict compliance by the political parties and other stakeholders in the conduct of election in Nigeria.

Keywords: Money Politics, Democracy, Political Parties, and Democracy

INTRODUCTION

For the past two decades, the Third World Countries (TWCs) have witnessed the emergence and growth of democracy as a system of governance. The growth of democracy in these climes serves as the rise to demand for an end of dictatorial rule and its replacement with emerging democracy. Democratic practices ensure popular will of the people, make themto influence politics and instills the sense of belongingin the people that governance belongs to them which seems to be a preferable option across the world.

In view of this, Enemuo (1999) posits that several conditions are thought to be conducive to the germination, growth and sustenance of the democratic system. He posits further: Democracy has to be desired by the people who must be prepared to strive and sacrifice to attain it. The citizens must be willing to tolerate opposing views and show respect for the lives of other people. While the majority must act in a tolerant way, the minority must learn to accept the decisions of the majority.

The above quotation indicates that for democracy to strive, it means people's mind must be broad and have a liberal

disposition towards one another. The sustainability and enduring is necessary because democracy is imported from the Western countries. Therefore, one expects that there will be a variation in the socio-economic conglomeration of the two cultures in terms of practices and observances of its norms.

Consequently, in a democratic setting, politics can be influenced by citizens in such a way of organizing rallies, advocating, publishing of ideas, conducting town meetings and conducting elections. Among many ways for citizens to influence politics, elections have a special position as formal decision-making processes about political office holders.According to Davies cited by Ojo (2006), money politics is unfortunate to be "a critical variable when assessing the level of political corruption in Nigeria." Despite this, elections still serve as an indicator of the state of the country's democracy (Matigg, 2013). Therefore, the conduct of elections is crucial and paramount because elections serve as the of transition from one civilian government to another. In view of this, election serves as an indicator of the state of democracy.

Nigeria has conducted general elections in 1959, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019 respectively. In the

conduct of some elections, the phenomenon of money politics has assaulted and vitiated the good qualities of democracy in Nigeria. In fact, the destructive power of money politics has been fingered as one of the factors that undermine good governance in Nigeria, in the past and became part of the reasons for military inculcating into politics in the First and Second Republics (Ovwasa, 2014; Omenkea&Apam 2006; Adamu&Ogunsanwo, 1983).Recently, "many Nigerians are becoming increasingly worried about the impact of powerful money bags corrupting the nation's democratic institutions" (Babatunde et. al, 2019: 37) because politics has turned into vote buying and selling. The politicians buy votes while the electorates sell votes.

Extant studies such as Sakariyau et. al (2015),Ovwasa (2014), Ogbette et al (2019)Babatunde et.al (2019) focus on the causes, effects, implications and management of money politics vis-a-vis good governanceand the crisis of leadership in Nigeria while little attention has been given to democracy, money politics and the sustainability of democracy in Nigeria. However, investigating issues of democracy, money politics and sustainability of democracy will add to arrays of literature in Nigerian electoral politics.

In view of the above identified little attention in the literature, the questions one needs to ask are:What factors best account for the reasons/conditions that allow money politics to take place in the conduct of elections in Nigeria? What are the *pros* and *cons* of money politics in Nigeria's democracy? What are the implications of money politics on sustainingdemocracy in Nigeria? In order to provide answers to these questions, the paper relies on secondary sources of data. These include the use of journals, textbook, newspapers, government publications and internet sources.

The paper is structured into five parts. Apart from introduction, there are five other parts. The next part presents conceptual clarifications in order to define the key concepts and their usage in this paper. The third part presents the history of money politics in Nigeria, the fourth partexamines the pros and cons of money politics in Nigeria, part five examines the implications of money politics on the sustainability of democracy in Nigeria while part six concludes and make recommendations.

Against this background, this paper examines the phenomena of elections, money politics and the sustainability of

democracy in Nigeria. This is necessary due to the fact that money politics in recent times has been a major concern for relevant stakeholders and scholars ofelections in the Nigerian politics. Besides, vote buying has become rampant and the sustainability of democracy is worrisome among the electorates. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the implications of money politics in sustaining democracy in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Money Politics

The concept of money politics has been conceptualized by scholars of politics in various perspectives. Money politics deals with how politics is financed. It is about how political parties fund their electoral activities. For example, registration, administration of campaigning during election and propellation of political parties' ideologies etc. According to Oxford Lexicon Dictionary, it means a situation in which the politicians promote their personal interests or a particular interest group through the use of financial support. Ezirim (2010) sees it as the reflection of interplay between the dubious tendencies of public servants in government owned ministries

and agencies, manifest in their demands for bribe from politicians and the latter's oblige. Sakariyau et al.(2015) see money politics as the practice of anything that involved money to influence or change the minds of voters to favour givers.

Similarly, to Tunde et. al definition, scholars such as Ojo (2008), Aspinall (2019), Edgar (2013) and Ovwasa (2014) also see money politicsbeing synonymous to vote buying and an issue that involves inducement. According to Edgar (2013), hesees money politics as an act of changing people's minds through the use of money, anything that involves inducements, promises and even threats in the polls are considered election offences and money politics. Also, Aspinall (2019) believes that it is a general term which connotes other aspects of inducements, including offering of material gifts and vote buying. Beyond the views of Aspinall (2019) and Edgar (2013), Ovwasa (2014: 99) comprehensively defines it as:

The phenomenon in the Nigeria electoral process whereby contenders for elective positions used money or money is used on their behalf as an inducement to sway their support which is based on persuading their electorates not to vote according

to their wish and conviction but on the force of money that has changed hands.

For the purpose of this paper, Ovwasa's definition is acceptable to be the working definition.

Democracy

The word, democracy is derived from two Greek words. These words are "*Demos*" and "*kratein*."*Demos* denotes 'the people' while *kratein* implies 'rule of or by.' The term literally means 'rule of the people.' By extension of the meaning apart from demos, Heywood (1997: 66) views it from '*kratos*,' which means power or rule. Democracy therefore means rule by the '*demos'* (the demos referring to the people, although the Greek originally used this to mean 'the poor or the many'. Heater (1964: 134) argues that it involves equal right and opportunity of all citizens and guarantee the respect of human body and mind. He posits further:

There are, it is suggested, five basic elements without which no community can call itself truly democratic. These elements are

equality, sovereignty of the people. Respect for human life, the rule of law, and liberty of the individual.

Heather's definition has been criticized because it undermines the cardinal contents of liberal democracy.It may however be faulted for its lack of emphasis on the role of political parties in the democratic process (Enemuo, 2000). This deficiency has been rectified by the definition given by Diamond (1988: 4) who avers that democracy entails "meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organized groups (especially political parties) either directly or indirectly, for the major positions of governmental power."Similarly, but comprehensively, Egwu (2013: 5) posits that democracy is a liberal project which "emphasizes the formal, institutional and procedural elements such as multi-party system, periodic elections, and constitutional guarantee of civil and political liberties." For the purpose of this paper, Egwu's definition will be used as the workable definition of democracy.

Sustainability

This is the capability to maintain at a certain rate or level. It is a means of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their needs (Grant, 2020). It comprises three pillars. These include economic, environmental and social. It is through these pillars

that sustainability is defined as the interconnected domains of environment, economy and society. Elaborately, sustainability means responsible and proactive decision-making and innovation that minimizes negative impact and maintains a balance between ecological resilience, economic prosperity, political justice and cultural vibrancy to ensure a desirable planet for all species now and in the future (Magee et. al, 2012). For the purpose of this paper, Magee et. al definition is a working definition for the study.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF MONEY POLITICS IN NIGERIA

The history of money politics did not begin today. Its antecedent can be traced to when it experienced politics of nationalism in the 1950s which is synonymous with rent seeking behaviours of parties, politicians and vote (Adetula, 2006).Studies such as Ojo (2006), confirmed that colonial period did not experience money politics. The reason was that this era had a small number of political parties and these political parties cum low intensity electoral contests, due to this, the influence of money was minimal. Also, politicians only made T-shirts, with party emblems, foodstuffs and other

sundry things to attract the electorates. Besides, the population of the Nigerian state as at that time vis-s-vis value of money greatly discouraged money politics. In another study carried out by Adeyi (2006), the commitment of parties and candidates to nationalist aspirations and the goal of ensuring self-government in 1954 election, which did not allow for money politics prior to the first republic. In 1959, the pattern changed dramatically in the federal elections when political leaders spent money to ensure success of their parties. In the first republic, lack of strict legislation to regulate party financing caused politicians and political parties to embarked on illegal party finances and corruption.

In the second republic, despite the fact that the 1979 Constitution provided the check for external control of political parties, yet there was unbridled use of money in electoral activities (Adetula, 1996). Here, little or no attention was paid to political mobilization by those people that were seeking elective positions. As a result, politicians attached much importance to money which they used to buy the votes of the electorates. For instance, the occasion of Lagos in 1982 where ten members of a political party donated 5 million naira at a

fund-raising ceremony. Adetula (1996) captures the experiences of the 1979 and 1983 elections thus:

The experiences of the 1979 and 1983 elections were such that political parties and politicians had unrestricted freedom to use money from both legal and illegal election expenses. During the Second Republic, the role and activities of contractors in government and political parties and other patronage became very rampant. Therefore, the report of several special tribunals that tried politicians and office holders revealed gross abuse of public office and impropriety in dealing with political parties.

In the third republic, the money bag politics was also of increase and was heightened. For instance, in 1992, one of the presidential aspirants spent over one billion naira during the party primaries while the other not-so rich aspirants had about 120 million naira as a budget for primaries. According to one of the presidential aspirants who contested for primaries stated that "money was paid to party functionaries who were demanding and negotiating the amount of money to be given to them for payment to ward officers and others, and for how many votes will be allocated to aspirants" (Nwosu, 1996: 78). Consequently, the political campaigns for the conduct of the

1993 election involved the excessive use of money during the primaries and presidential elections.The then, the head of military junta, President Ibrahim Babangida annulled the election on 23rd June, 1993. He specifically mentioned that moneybag politics was one of the reasons for annulling the presidential election results. According to him "there were proofs of manipulations, offer and acceptance of money and other forms of inducements…evidences available to the government put the total money spent by the presidential aspirants at over #2.1 billion" (Ojo, 2000: 11&12).The aftermath of the cancellation led to the introduction of Interim National Government (ING) due to stepping aside by the military president.

In the era of the fourth republic, money politics and vote buying has been reported in all the elections. Ogbette et al (2019) corroborated this when they assert that "money politics has reached its pinnacle" in the elections that ushered the current civilian government in 1999 and the subsequent elections in the era of the Nigerian fourth republic. According to Suberu in Ovwasa (2013), "if money politics in 1999 was open and shameless, that of 2003 was outrageous." Obasanjo in Ojo(2006: 118) examines the beneficiaries of it and he posits

that: With so much resources being deployed to capture elective offices, it is not difficult to see the correlation between politics and the potential for high level corruption. 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 determining factor in elections.

Afrobarometer survey (2005) further corroborated this when it revealed that as many as 28 % of votes were offered gifts during the 2003 campaign. Therefore, based on the public perception of the vote buying transaction voters are usually offered money (68% of the attempts). Corruption and money bag politics under the fourth republic has been pervasive, open and shameless (Suberu, 2001). Ojo (2006) supports Suberu's position when he captures that:

The nascent democracy reached its zenith of political venality and indecency when negative impacts of money politics tainted with godfatherism consumed three governors. The one in Kwara, Anambra and Oyo States.

From the foregoing, factors that explain the reasons influencing people through money bag politics include increase in population cum high value of money, increase in number of

political parties and high intensity of electoral contests, desperation to control of government by political class, party patronage to finance elections, gross abuse of public office by political class, impropriety in dealing with political parties, and lack of attention paid to political mobilization by those that were seeking political offices.

THE MONEY IN NIGERIAN POLITICS:PROS AND CONS

Extant literature hasunearthed the issue of money politics as regards its roles across the world. It plays significant role in electioneering process of the countries of the world. Extant literature has identified some factors in this regards. The money politics has a mixed feeling as regard politics in Nigeria. While some have examined it to be an issue of feasibility, some think that it is detrimental to Nigeria's politics. Although, the experience in Nigeria has shown that it is detrimental than the feasibility. This paper will be examined the two sides of a coin with a view to addressing the issue under consideration.

Pros

First, money politics matters in democracy much of its political activity could not occur without it. In other words, Walecki (2006: 7) posits that "it is influenced by, and influences, relations between parties, politicians, party membership and the electorates."It helps the political parties to fund their activities such as registration, campaigning, administration and to drive their ideologies.For example, it is through money politics that political party finance is enhanced. In other words, political parties need adequate funding to establish themselves, reach and represent their respective constituents and function effectively.Omenka & Apam (2006: 23) supports the importance of money politics when they posit that "both during the elections, or the campaign period preceding it and, even for the day-to-day operations of the party affairs, huge sums of money are needed." An instance of the money power was seen in 1983 when the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) was able to have edge over political parties because of money power it had to weaken other contenders in the second republic elections. Hence, the importance of money politics cannot be overemphasized in Nigerian politics.

Second, it enables the expression of political support and competition in elections.The political parties receive support through money politics most especially in elections. The success or failure of a political party in an election as well as the credibility of the entire process is, in most cases, tied to how monies are raised and expended (Omenka&Apam, 2006: 23). Therefore, the importance of money politics cannot be emphasized.

Three, it may be a means for powerful narrow interests to exercise undue influence. Money is a very powerful instrument of influencing people including electorates in an election. For instance, newly elected officials may be pressured to 'return the favour' to corporations that funded their campaign.

Cons

Money politics, as it has been identified above, has some advantages. It also has disadvantages. According to Onyekpere (2006), he vividly identified the effects of money politics on politics. These include the followings factors:

(i) State capture

(ii) Hijack of policy making and implementation organs

(iii)Work against the interests of the poor and marginalization

Apart from the factors identified, it has encouraged the syndrome of winner-takes-all in Nigerian politics. In other words, money politics has the disadvantage of making the politicians to expend so much to win elections in Nigeria. Due to this, politicians invest so much to win election and when they win, the first mindset is to recoup what they have invested before they talk of good governance in the country. According to Obasanjo cited in Ojo(2006: 118):

With so many resources being deployed to capture elective offices, it is not difficult to see the correlation between politics and the potential for high level of corruption. 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 factors in elections.

Also, it is also important to note that the nature of politics in Nigeria is structured around clientage. Therefore, money politics makes the political office holders to use the state to generate income for themselves and their close associates (both

sponsors and clients) and then use the accumulated wealth to purchase the election results they desire. Walecki (2006) also points out the problems associated with a political regime. He highlighted the following factors as regards the problems. The factors are:

(i) Funding from undesirable sources;
(ii) Improper influence of the money over policy outcomes; and
(iii) Financial barriers for average citizens against standing for political office.

Besides, it fails to guarantee that candidates and political parties compete on equal terms (Walecki, 2006). This is corroborated by Ewing (1992) when he gave an illustration to show competition between the political parties and the candidate. According to him, "political corruption under unregulated political financing would be like inviting two people to participate in the race, with one participant turning up with a bicycle, and the other with a sports car. The implication of this is that candidate who rides a bicycle and the party with a sports car cannot be at the same level and that makes the candidate to become less important to the electorates.

Furthermore, it makes the citizens to sell their votes to a wrong party when money politics comes in. In the words of Ajayi (1998), poverty is "at the crux of politics of bitterness" and that the electorates are affected with poverty, they easily vote for wrong candidate when enticed with money. For example, we have seen situations when gubernatorial candidates spent or even borrowed money to influence candidates to vote for them. The aftermath was inability to pay salaries of workers and to carry out developmental projects in such states.

It also makes only the rich to participate in party primaries. For instance, in 1992 Social Democratic Party (SDP) primaries, a candidate spent over one billion naira to emerge as the presidential candidate of the party. Then, question we need to ask is that what is the faith of the poor in emerging as the presidential candidate in governing a state or a country? in other words, the interests of the masses are not assured and recognized.

Consequently, from the above, money politics perverses justice and create problems for good governance in Nigeria (Ogbette et. al, 2019). The best candidate may not win because the consciences of the electorates are bought.

IMPLICATIONS OF MONEY POLITICS AND THE SUSTAINABILITY OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

The relationship between money and politics is a powerful one that has implications for democracy, especially in transitional democracies where appropriate political institutions are largely underdeveloped or even non-existent (Adetula, 2006). The paper, will at this stage, examines the implications of money politics on sustainable democracy in Nigeria. These include the following.

First, itmay encourage looters andmay erode the competence of the candidate which further questions the legitimacy of the government.The winners of elections who influence electorates when they occupy public offices, give them more access to public funds and give room for corruption because what the winner of election by money bag politics will do is to recoup the money he or she has spent to buy the conscience of the electorates. This act erodes the competence of the candidate since he or she may not be competent to govern the electorate but through money bag politics he or she assumed the leadership role of the state. This act has debilitating effect on sustaining democracy because the candidate may have

legitimacy problem from the people. In other words, there is an affinity between democracy and legitimacy. Legitimacy is even the key in sustaining democracy of the state. When legitimacy is questioned, then sustainability of democracy also becomes problem.

Two, it may weaken political participation and encourage the growth of political apathy among voters.Since it encourages the rich to participate in politics, the faith of the poor is dashed; thereby contribute to political apathy by the masses. Extant studies have demonstrated that one of the main determinants explaining political participation is voters' turnout (Omotola, 2021). Democracy is measured by its participation and that determines the quality of democracy. In other words, the higher the level of voters' turnout, the higher the level of participation and by extension the democratic quality of election (Lijphart, 1997; Omotola, 2021). If the electorates refuse to participate in elections due to the fact that the money is used to influence their consents, it encourages autocracy which truncate democratic system of government in Nigeria.

Three, it may truncate democracy and encourage authoritarian regime since elections are not for the poor. Barker (1952) and

Akintunde (1967) support this fact. The argument of Barker (1952: 182) as regards the superiority of the poor in a democratic state is that "when democracies have no middle class and the poor are greatly superior in number, troubles ensues and they are speedily ruined." Akintunde (1967) puts his perspective against money politics by submitting that:

The poor depends on the rich for survival; while the rich predominate in politics as gladiators, the poor becomes either onlooker, apathetic or instruments in the hands of the rich to achieve their political ambitions. Those who are not rich are being confined to mere voting and political careers becoming the privilege of those who are wealthy enough to afford the leisure to devote to politics.

The above implication of money politics on sustainable democracy eventually culminated the demise of first republic in January 1966.

Four, it may undermine democratic governance thereby lead to military take overs. Instances in Nigeria indicate that the destructive power of money politics has been given as one of the reasons for military take overs (Adamu&Ogunsanwo, 1983). The military took over power in the first, second and

third republics because money politics in 1966, 1983 and 1993 respectively. For instance, Sakariyau et. al (2015: 2) draw reference to 1992 party primaries when they posit that "…one of the presidential aspirants spent over one billion naira during the primaries while other not-so-rich contenders had about 120 million naira as budget primaries."A close examination of this assertion reveals that the candidates who could spend such money would not emerge as the party candidate which makes only the rich to vie for elections. It led to the collapse of the third republic. The implication of this is that the sustainability of democracy becomes difficult since it may obstruct the fourth republic if it is not checked or well regulated by the Nigerian government.

CONCLUSION

The study has highlighted some factors that explain the reasons for money bag politics, its *pros* and *cons* as well as its implications on sustaining democracy in Nigeria. The study, therefore, concludes that although money plays significant role in election, the unregulatedmoney politics in elections by political parties and politicians also has debilitating impact on the sustainability of democracy in Nigeria. The aggressive

stance of government can root out it out in Nigerian body politics.However, more has to be done in achieving regulating money bag politics in Nigeria's democracy. These include:

First, the government should redesign the legal framework of money bag politics in order to ensure strict compliance by political parties and other stakeholders in the conduct of elections. The government should demonstrate this through its political will of ensuring strict compliance by political parties, political class and other stakeholders in the electoral politics. Besides, the amended Electoral Act should be speedily signed into law in Nigeria.

Two, the government and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) need to collaborate with the Civil Society Organisations(CSOs) and the media in ensuring transparency and accountability of the activities of political parties. This can be done by displaying and enforcing the ceiling for all their finances in Nigeria.

Three, the number of political parties should be reduced.The recent step taken by INEC to reduce the number of political parties from 93 to 18 is not enough. The number of political parties should still be further pruned down in order to reduce

the competition among political parties. This will address the desperation to control of government by political class in Nigeria.

Four, education should be given to all and sundry as regards the evils of money politics and its implications on sustaining democracy in Nigeria. Most especially, the political class, should be enlightened as regards desperation to take control of government by influencing the electorate through money bag politics. The enlightenment should open their minds that the democracy is still a preferable option as a system of governance due to people's participation, power of the people and making leaders to be kept on toes.

Five, poverty should be addressed by the Nigerian government. Poverty always induces behavior. The culture of money bag politic by the political class to induce the electoral behavior of the electorates can only be stopped if the level of poverty is reduced. For democracy to be sustained, it calls for development and prosperity for the citizens. Abject poverty creates problem for sustaining democracy. Government should address the problem of poverty holistically by enacting policies

that enhance development, prosperity and happiness of the citizens in entirety.

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