

Monetization of Politics and Elections in Fourth Republican Nigeria: Implications for Sustainable Democratic Governance.

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Abstract. Politics in democratic political system thrives on popular political participation in free, fair, period and credible intra-party and general elections. These democratic norms have been greatly associated with older democracies where a greater majority of citizens as politicians and electorates have imbibed the participant or civic democratic culture. However, in relatively new or emerging democracies such as Nigeria, citizens imbibed more of parochial or subject political culture. While politicians perceived and play zero-sum politics and use all means, including offering of material inducements, use of force and other unconstitutional means in electoral politics. These explains why the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), reported the nullification of 117 election results after the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. The recurrence of nullification of results of general election and even intra-party elections by election tribunals and courts are sufficient empirical evidence of low level awareness of the unfolding trends of monetisation of politics or electoral corruption in Nigeria. Therefore, this paper examines the rising trend of monetisation of politics and elections in the fourth Republic. The paper identifies the characteristic traits and incidences of monetisation of politics in Nigeria and its players or political actors. The paper further highlighted the perception of monetised politics, the factors associated with its observable trend in fourth republican Nigeria, its implications for good governance and sustainable democracy in Nigeria. Finally, the paper proffers solutions for curtailing the dysfunctional trends in Nigeria

politics to ensure sustainable democratic governance in the fourth republican Nigeria.

Keywords: Politics, Elections, Monetisation of politics, Zero-sum politics and Sustainable democracy

1. Introduction

Politics is inevitable in human society on account of the gregarious nature of humans and the inevitable conflict among humans in the society. Although, the outbreak of war in human society has been described as the continuation of politics by other means, civilize politics is one that avoids the escalation of conflicts to war or use of weapons of mass destruction. Politicking in accordance with democratic norms or culture of popular participation in free, fair, regular, periodic, transparent, violent free or credible elections have been adjudged the hallmark of democratic governance (Okunloye, 1990).

Nigeria is a relative new entrant into the democratic system of government on account of the relatively longer period of military rule (1966 – 1999) and persistent disruption of democratic regimes of government by military rule (1966 – 1979, 1983 – 1999) until the fourth republic (1999 – 2017). This explains why the latest experience in democratic governance in the fourth republic in Nigeria which started from 29th July 1999 has been described as democratic experiment, democratic learning process or nascent democracy (Okunloye, 2017). Given the transition of democracy from Athenian

democracy in the Greece city states to representative democracy in the modern world, the place of election and electoral politics cannot be overemphasized. Representative democracy is the government of the people by their accredited representative. Representation in democracy is based on election of different levels. At the Intra-party level, it is used to elect representatives that will serve as Electoral College or party representatives that will in turn elect those to contest in the general elections into different elective seats in government on party platforms (Okunloye, 1990). At the general election level, the electorate in different constituencies created for elective positions in government, have the opportunity of voting in accordance with their personal preferences for candidates and parties of their choices. When voting at intra-party and general election levels becomes a game of political zero-sum or winner takes all/win at all cost by all means (including illegitimate or extra-constitutional means) and voters begins to vote in accordance with the ability of politicians to offer the highest bids or material inducements, then politics or electoral politics is said to be monetised (Okunloye, 2017). Monetisation of politics is therefore the process or acts of use of different forms of monetary or material inducement on citizens for securing the patronage, participation or votes during electoral politics as well as other stakeholders to seek undue favor to compromise the electoral process for the purpose of emerging victorious in the intra-party or general elections (Okunloye, 2017). Monetization of politics is not new in Nigeria. There were traits of its trend since general elections in the first 1960 – 1966), second (1979 – 1983) and aborted Republics (1989 – 1992). However, it assumed a gargantuan proportion in the 4th Republic when 2015 election was estimated to cost the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), political parties and candidates ₦1 Trillion (Vanguard News). At the general election level for instance, one politician and Minister, Mrs. Alison was alleged to have disbursed over ₦23 Billion naira to (INEC officials, other politicians and security officials) in order to compromise the electoral process to favor PDP Presidential Candidate, Dr. Ebele Jonathan in 2015 presidential election.

According to INEC, ₦3,046,829,000 was traced to INEC staff in 16 states. INEC also confirmed that 5 former Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs) of the national electoral umpire are being investigated in connection with the disbursement \$115 (#23 billion) Election Inducement Bribe Fund (EIBF) (Vanguard News,; Uche, 2015). Although, the litigations around the alleged sum of EIBF are still ongoing, the fact that some INEC officials, security officials and politicians entered into plea bargaining and refunded ₦503 million out of the amount involved are sufficient evidence that 2015 election was significantly monetized, even when the intended results of producing clear winners for the highest bidders for votes and compromised electoral process were not achieved.

It is therefore not surprising when INEC reported the nullification of 117 election results in Nigeria after 2015 general election (INEC Chairman, Information Nigeria). The unfolding trend of monetization of politics and more specifically electoral politics are critical problems that must be addressed to guarantee good governance and sustainable democracy. This paper, therefore, examines the trend of monetization of politics and elections in Nigeria in the fourth Republic and their implications for sustainable democracy. Specifically, the paper examines the concept and trait of monetization of politics, factors associated with monetization of politics and implications for sustainable democratic governance in the fourth Republic in Nigeria.

2. Concept and Traits of Monetisation of Politics and Elections

Monetisation of politics refer to conception, pattern of behaviors and relationship between/among organizational activists, organizational contributors, opinion leaders, voters and non-voters involving the use of different forms of giving and taking of monetary or material inducements for the purposes of securing varieties of political patronage, allegiance, support or favour before, during and after intra-party or general elections in a political system. It may involve rent-a-crowd political

rallies, press conferences, political processions/demonstration of opposition or support, voting, manipulation of voting procedure against or in favor of specific political parties and candidates, provision of security coverage/report to compromise electoral process, etc, based on offered or accepted monetary or material inducements.

The political space in which monetisation of politics thrive is one in which politicians share the zero-sum conception of the game of politics, otherwise known as do or die, win-at-all-cost or winner-takes-all politics. Politicians in these political relationships see politics as an investment or money-spinning and interest-yield venture. Politics is therefore seen as worth

buying voters, votes and using other complementary manipulative instruments on political stakeholders who may add to the profit-yielding capacity of political investment in politics generally or electioneering politics in particular. Although, Nigeria politician across the parties that contest the 2015 general elections (Falodi, 2016) share these attributes, the electoral law, parties constitutions, intra-party election procedures and stipulated fees of Filling Expression of Interest Form (EOIF) and Elective Office Nomination Form (EONF), seem to have compound the monetisation of politics in the Fourth Republic in Nigeria.(Adebawale, 2016; Onyekpere, 2015; Uche, 2015) as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Template of Fees of EOIF and EONF of Three Major Parties in 2015 General Elections

Parties	Office in view	EOIF fees	EONF fees	Total
APC	President	₦2.5m	₦25m	₦27.5m
	Governorship	₦.5m	₦5m	₦5.5m
	Senate	₦.3m	₦3m	₦3.3m
	House of Rep.	₦.2m	₦2m	₦2.2m
PDP	President	₦2m	₦20m	₦22m
	Governorship	₦1m	₦10m	₦ 10.5m
	Senate	₦5m	₦4m	₦4.5m
	House of Rep.	₦.4m	₦2m	₦2.4m
APGA	President	No presidential candidate	NPC	NPC
	Governorship	₦2m	₦10m	₦12m
	Senate	₦.5m	₦3m	₦3.5m
	House of Rep.	₦.5m	₦2m	₦2.5m

Source: Adebawale (2016). *Cost of Politics in Nigeria*. P.8

Based on costs implication of buying the EOIF and EONF in table 1 and the greater proportion of Nigerian voters that are living below the poverty line (62.6% Nigerians according to the United Nations Development Programme, (2016), the stakes are very high for any loser, be it politicians or voters, in Nigerian elections. This is more so when these exorbitant costs of elections do not include cost of campaign and distribution of money, food, fabrics, customized shirts and other material inducements known as ‘stomach infrastructure’. It is quite worrisome that all parties in Nigeria that fielded candidate in 2015 general election use ‘stomach infrastructure’ inducements for winning votes. This tends to raise the bar in the ‘market of political bargaining, as political parties bid for

votes from different voters using political fronts, ‘brokers’ and ‘jobbers’ in the transaction. This explains why there tend to be an intricate connection if not perfect overlap between monetisation of politics or electoral politics and electoral corruption. This is with reference to the offer and acceptance of material or monetary gratifications among politicians, political parties, political godfathers, political fronts, political brokers and jobber and voters during or around general election at local, state or national levels.

This trend is not, however, limited to general elections. The same trend has been observed in intra-party elections when delegates are expected to elect parties candidates for different elective offices. In this case, delegates are

actually ‘bought’ by candidates contesting for elective positions on party platforms. In some cases, the political ‘godfathers’ of ‘anointed candidates’ are sometimes returned ‘unopposed’ after their political godfather must have ‘ordered or ‘persuaded’ competing candidates with their ‘heir apparent’ to step down after settling their bills of intra-party campaigns and/or promise of other commensurate political compensations such as political appointments in the future. Accordingly, the cost of fighting elections and stakes of political power-holding has continued to rise astronomically in Nigeria.

3. Monetization of Politics Associated Factors

Monetisation of politics in the fourth republic in Nigeria is a product of the multiplier effect of a combination of factors. These include: Political class-related, Political culture-related, Electorate expectation-related, electoral law-related, electoral umpire-related and Security official partisanship-related.

3.1 Political Class-related Factor

A significant proportion of politicians across political parties in Nigeria perceive politics as zero-sum or winner-takes-all (Dudley, 1982). Politics played in zero-sum conceptions, makes political power-holding an end in itself or at best, an instrument for primitive capital accumulation and rather than a call to serve to better the lots of greater majority of electorate. In this process politics becomes occupationalized and the pendulum of political coalitions and alliances swing to any political party that in power to distribute the perquisite of office. This explains why there had been continuous political cross-carpeting at national and state levels among members of different political parties that swap positions as opposition or incumbent party in power. For instance, the former opposition party that takes control of government of a state tends to attract political defectors or carpet crosser from the former ruling party now turned opposition. Such defectors have been labeled ‘bread and butter politicians’ or ‘Any Government In Power (AGIP) politicians’. The non-ideological nature or ideological fluidity of Nigerian political

parties and politicians tend to reinforce this trend of shifting political coalitions, alliances and carpet-crossing.

In the same vein, politician have developed a syndrome of pursuing ‘free money in government’ that can be easily accessed by defecting to the party controlling the government at the centre or state levels through political appointments. Few charismatic politicians among the political class have also become domineering political ‘father-figures’ or ‘godfathers’ who determine what, when and how of political power-holding among their followers or political sphere of influence. They are more of ‘defacto’ controllers of government than the ‘dejure’ incumbents that are officially in government, and visible to citizens. For instance, the ‘Adedibu factor’ in Oyo state politics and the ‘Saraki factor’ in Kwara politics (Okunloye, 2017). These elite groups in politics sustain their large followership among the poor masses by regular distribution of money, food, clothes and other related materials otherwise known as ‘stomach infrastructure’. These ‘defacto’ controllers of elected politicians also use their positions and routinized charisma to impose ‘anointed’ candidates on their respective parties. In the process, they consolidate their hold on political party by distributing money and other materials to their large political followers in and outside their respective parties. This pattern of politicking tends to enhance the monetisation of politics and electoral corruption.

3.2 Political Culture-related Factor

A greater proportion of Nigerian voters who are predominantly illiterates imbibed more of parochial or subject political culture instead of the participant or civic culture which are requisites for sustainable democracy and rational voting behavior (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), 2006). These have been traced to long period of military rule, recurrence of election malpractices and low degree of personal political efficacy of Nigerian voters (Okunloye, 2017).

3.3 Electorate Expectations-related Factor

Although Nigerian voters generally exhibit irrational voting behavior (Falade, 2014), they tend to have more of revolution of rising

expectation from the political class after voting for them and their parties (Amdi, 2014 & Afolabi 2015). Indeed, a significant proportion of voters desired immediate gratification or upfront payment for voting than wait for four long years to progressively enjoy dividends of democracy along with the generality of the citizens or at least a greater majority of voters in delineated constituencies at different levels of government. Therefore, more often than not, young voters and illiterate women voters within politicians' or political 'godfathers' sphere of influence exhibit 'cash-and-carry voting' or monetised voting behaviour. Accordingly, the electorate makes several demands which are predominantly materialistic and personal than collective demand for the implementation of party's manifestoes and accountability. This settlement syndrome is also related to voter's low sense of personal and collective political efficacy. (Mahmud, 2015; Okunloye, 2017).

3.3 Electoral Law-related Factor

The electoral law stipulated high benchmark of election-related expenses which tend to make the rich to venture into politics or at least attach themselves to different political 'godfathers' and political financiers who tend to popularise monetisation of politics. Notwithstanding the benchmark of electoral expenses for different elective positions, Nigerian politicians tend to spend more within and outside the party in order to win elections. The upward review of electoral expenses of parties under the Electoral Act, 2006 and 2010 as shown in Table 2 clearly shows that the stipulated limits of electoral expenses are relatively high against the background of a country with 62.6% of the population living below the poverty line (UNDP, 2016). The limits of election expenses are clearly beyond the reach of lower or middle class politicians. As a result, some of them may be constrained to attach themselves to willing political 'godfathers' or financiers and in process engender the trend of monetisation of politics.

Table 2: Legal limit of Election Expenses in Nigeria (2006 and 2010)

Elective Office	Electoral Act, 2006	Electoral Act, 2010
President	₦5 million	₦1 billion
Governorship	₦100 million	₦200 million
Senate	₦20 million	₦40 million
House of Assembly	₦10 million	₦20 million
State Assembly	₦5 million	₦10 million
Local Government Chairman	₦5 million	₦10 million
Councilors	₦500 000.00	₦1 million

Source: Electoral Acts (2006 & 2010).

These 'Political Financiers' that fund party candidates conceived their input in the partisan politics as political investment that must be recouped during the four-year tenure of elected party candidate(s) and thereby promoting electoral corruption.

3.4 Electoral-Umpire related Factor

INEC as the umpire in the game of politics and more specifically electioneering politics lacks the human, technical and supervisory capacity to monitor political spending and election expenses of political parties and candidates before and during elections. This is because of the coded

way of political or electoral financing by politicians and political financiers in particular. INEC is only left with the monitoring and auditing of the official electoral financial transactions of politicians, political parties and candidates. INEC is also constrained on account of its capacity to audit the account of parties on statutory grants to political parties. Other mobilized funds, donations and expenses of parties that are usually controlled by political 'financiers' or 'godfathers' within or outside the parties are somehow beyond the reach of INEC oversight function. Therefore, monitoring and enforcement of limits of electoral spending as stipulated in the electoral law are very difficult if

not impossible. Accordingly, the loose and enabling environment for monetisation of politics tends to encourage electoral corruption in Nigeria.

3.5 Security Officials Partisanship-related Factor

Security officials are legally assigned complementary roles in the conduct of intra-party and general elections. They are supposed to be non-partisan if not apolitical in the discharge of their functions. However, on account of partisan tendencies and overbearing influence of politicians, they sometimes compromise the required neutrality or non-partisanship in elections. Policemen had actually been indicted in Ekiti and River state in Nigeria in 2015 and 2016 elections for aiding and abetting electoral malpractices on account of inducements they received from some politicians or political parties. The cumulative effects of offering and acceptance of gratifications tend to progressively increase the trend of monetisation of politics and electoral corruption in Nigeria.

4. Implications of Monetisation of Politics

The implications of monetization of politics are very grievous and most damaging to good governance and sustainable democracy in Nigeria on account of its a cumulative effects on political actors, other stakeholders in Nigerian politics and the entire Nigerian political system. These are with reference to the erosion of voters' sovereignty, reversal of political relationship between the elected and the voters, voters' freedom of action, reaping of democratic dividends, promotion of corruption, wastage, socialization of voters and threat to sustainable democracy and polity.

4.1 Erosion of Popular Sovereignty

When politics is monetized, voters tend to loose their collective popular sovereignty because the 'upfront' political gratification received from politicians tend to nullify their right to demand for service from those elected during the four

year tenure of elective office-holding at national, state and local levels.

4.2 Reversal of Relationship with the Electorate Reversing

In the same vein, monetization of politics has the tendency of reversing the relationship between the ruler (elected) and the ruled (voters) to one of master (elected) – servant (electorate) and order-giving-process rather than servant (elected) – master (electorate) pressure-responsive and accountable process. Those politicians who profess to be servant or chief servant are truly stating the democratic norm of the relationship between the electorate (master) and the elected politicians (servants) in government under democratic system of government. However in reality, elected politicians in government tend to exhibit more of master-servant relationship in relating with majority of the electorate in their respective constituencies.

4.3 Restriction of Freedom of the Electorate

Monetization of politics also has the tendency of undermining the freedom of the voters to choose their government and determine how they are governed. This is because the winners of the elections are often no longer the most popular, credible and potentially performing parties and candidates. Rather, they are sometimes the 'highest bidders' and 'payers' of the highest 'stomach infrastructure', money, other material gratifications or manipulators of votes during general elections.

4.4 Mortgaged or Forfeited Dividends of Democracy

When politics or electoral politics is monetized, the fortune or right of voters to access and enjoy good governance and allied dividends of democracy is predominantly mortgaged. Voters only stand the chance of getting another set of 'crumbs' of voting inducements (stomach infrastructure) towards the end of tenure when the political bidders will show up to distribute the immediate material requirements to 'capture' voters and access their votes to win election and

rule for another four years under the Presidential Constitution (1999) of the fourth republic.

4.5 Enhancement of Corruption

Monetization of politics creates and enhances conducive environment for corruption to thrive in all sectors of the society. Give and take political transaction, cash and carry voting behavior, political brokers and jobbers and allied facilitators of corruption in society have the tendency of growing rapidly in society where politics is monetized.

4.6 Economic Waste and Trivialization of Democratic Election

When elections are nullified in democracy on account of compromised process of electoral politics involving different players, re-run elections will have to be conducted to arrive at ultimate winner(s). Nullification and re-run election lead to colossal waste of public fund and undermine credibility and democratic significance of electoral process, gate-keeping and political recruitment procedures in a democracy. The nullification of 117 elections results and re-run election in 2015 general election which collectively cost Nigeria an estimated sum of ₦1 trillion was therefore an act of profligacy in public expenditure.

4.7 Socialization to Political Apathy

Monetization of politics also increases political apathy and promote socialization of voters into parochial and subject political culture. This is because voters become alienated from those they voted for predominantly on account of inducements have a perception of paying their way into political office-holding and as such do not have a sense of serving them in government after ‘paying’ for votes. Parochial and subject political culture in Almond and Verba (1963)’s typology of political culture are inconsistent with democratic culture which thrives on participant political culture which is the closest to the ideal civic culture for sustainable democracy. Voters may accordingly develop withdrawal syndrome from politics which in the Fourth Republic had manifested in non-

collection of Permanent Voter Card (PVC), and low voter turnout in general elections (Okunloye, 2016).

4.8 Threat to Democracy and Continuity of Democratic State

The greatest cost implication of monetization of politics is however beyond monetary cost, waste of fund and fuelling of corruption. Much more, it has more fundamental and damaging socio-political implications of threatening democracy and the continuity of the Nigerian state. When on account of loss of confidence in the electoral process, the aggrieved and alienated voters and other concerned citizens take up arms against some agents of government. This may increasingly move Nigeria towards a failed state or ‘Hobbesian state of Nature’ as ‘the revolution of rising expectation’ from the political class is increasingly matched with ‘the revolution of rising frustration’.

In view of the devastating socio-political implications of monetization of politics, it is imperative that, the trend which reached its peak in 2015 in the annals of general elections in Nigeria be reversed to avert the metamorphosis of its negative implications into near or total collapse of democracy and the Nigerian state.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Monetization of politics and specifically electoral politics pose the most devastating threat to good governance, sustainable democracy and the continuity of the Nigerian state. It is therefore imperative for all stakeholders, especially the political class, Federal and State governments, electorate at different levels, INEC, National Orientation Agency (NOA) and other stakeholders to collaborate to reverse the trend.

It is therefore recommended that the following measures be taken to reverse the trend. First, the political class needs re-orientation about their perception of politics and political power-holding from zero-sum to variable-sum game. Secondly, political office-holding must be made less attractive by devolution of powers from the

Federal to the state and local government and reduction of remuneration and perquisite of political office-holding to enable service-oriented and value adding politicians to seek and occupy political positions in government.

Thirdly, a statutory independent political party auditing body should be established to complement INEC in enforcing election expenses limits stipulated in Electoral Act 2010 on parties and candidates before during and after general elections. Fourthly, liberalized independent candidates provision should be introduced into the Nigerian Constitution (1999) and Electoral Act (2010) to enable tested and trustworthy citizen without financial capacity to contest and win elections to serve the people. INEC stipulated EOIF and EONF fees for independent candidates (instead of parties) must also be drastically reduce to a maximum of ₦500,000 for the highest elective office and minimum of ₦50,000 for the lowest.

Fifthly, there is the need to drastically reduce the number of special Advisers, Personal Assistants and other political appointees attached to political office holders at all levels of government to re-orientate 'free money for the boys' mentality of elected political Chief Executives, especially President, Governors, and Local Government Council Chairmen. Sixthly, the trend of occupationalization of politics by majority of Nigerian politicians must be reversed by abrogating legislative duties at all levels of government as a full-time engagement. It should be made part-time governmental duties for which legislators will be entitled to sitting allowances only for a minimum of 180 days stipulated period of legislative session in a year.

Finally, moratorium should be placed on when politicians can cross-carpenter among political parties. This could be a minimum of two years after general election to curtail materialistic-oriented cross-carpentering from opposition parties to parties in power. It is hoped that this measures will go a long way to address the problems of Monetisation of politics in the fourth Republic in Nigeria and promote sustainable democratic governance.

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