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Monetisation of electoral politics and the challenge of political exclusion in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT


This paper argues that money has become the deciding factor in Nigerian politics. It has served the purposes of consolidating elite rule as well as the political exclusion of the non-elite. A discernible 'ritual of money politics', has enabled the power elite to remain in power, and new comers to develop the elite character. This paper concludes that money politics is at the heart of the general crisis of democracy and governance in Nigeria, and unless this is mitigated, reforms aimed at bringing about good governance and curbing other anomalies in the political system may not produce the desired results.

KEYWORDS Electioneering; elite; governance; money politics; Nigeria; political exclusion

Introduction

The prevailing lack of good governance in Nigeria is ultimately traceable to the tendency to exclude a majority of Nigerians from political leadership as well as others from meaningful participation in politics. The strategy and means of this political exclusion in recent times seems to be money politics. Money politics is here defined as the degeneration of politics into a venture in which money assumes a central role as well as exerts a decisive influence such that it determines the extent of political participation at all levels of the political process, particularly electoral contests. It also entails the monetary or material inducement of voters and electoral officials as well as security agents manning elections and judges handling election cases, by candidates and or political parties.

To be sure, money has always played a major role in politics, especially during elections, so much so that a prominent American politician was said to have once mused that three things are important in politics – money, money, and more money! In Nigeria as in most other places, this is largely true of politics and elections – money is needed to mobilise party agents at polling booths, and money is needed for transportation expenses, among many others. This paper is however concerned with the phenomenon of money politics in

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Nigeria – a situation whereby money is not just the facilitator of politics, but money becomes the very essence of politics – politics then approximates business, and every political value ultimately goes to the highest bidder.

Money politics in Nigeria has involved a discernible ritual – the formal and informal practice of subjecting political aspirants to prohibitive nomination fees and campaign financing which compel them to spend their entire life savings, borrow huge loans (which must be repaid) and enter into unholy alliances (usually sealed with secret oaths which must be 'fulfilled') with political investors in an attempt to meet their campaign expenditures. This ritual has served as the initiation into politics for the Nigerian elite. The history of money politics in Nigeria has shown that not many people have succeeded in going through the ritual. Those who have managed to succeed in the ritual however, have gone ahead to become leaders at the various levels of government in the country.

Money politics has however, had a very negative effect on political leadership in the country. Most people who would genuinely want to perform in office often cannot get into office because they lack resources needed for the ritual of money politics. This ritual has ultimately made those who have gone through it to necessarily want to recoup the monies they spent in getting to power while in office. This is true for even those aspirants with integrity who are compelled by the rigours of this ritual to abandon their moral principles while satisfying the demands of money politics in order to win the party nomination and to advance further and win the main elections. It has been observed by some political analysts and actors in Nigerian politics that when credible individuals meet the demands of money politics and get elected, they usually, like other elite, become vulnerable to material accumulation, which depletes public resources and undermine governance and development (see Iwu, 2009; Musa as cited in Vanguard, 2017; Simbine as cited in Punch, 2017; Wabara as cited in Adetula, 2015). This is why

multiparty democracy in Africa [particularly in Nigeria] has been for the affluent and the powerful, more a game of musical chairs in which various individual members of the political elite take their turns at the seat of power, but do not change the music. (Obi, 2008, p. 10)

Those who cannot mobilise the necessary monies are thereby excluded from meaningful participation in politics. It is this monetisation of politics and elections in Nigeria and its implication for the exclusion of many from possible leadership positions that this paper attempts to interrogate.

Background to the monetisation of politics in Nigeria

Money is one of the essential ingredients of politics in general and democracy in particular because without it most political activities (including periodic

elections that make democracy a popular system of governance) cannot be carried out (Walecki, 2008). However, money is antithetical to democracy and good governance when it is used to determine who participates or not in politics in real terms, through undue influence on electoral outcomes. It is this centralisation of money in the political process that is here referred to as money politics. The challenge of money politics has become a universal phenomenon. Thus, Annan (2012, p. 3) observed that 'across the world, uncontrolled political finance threatens to hollow out democracy and rob it of its unique strengths'. Even in consolidated democracies like the United States it is common practice for different Political Action Committees and big corporations to deploy money in elections in a way that indirectly influences the outcomes in favour of candidates who would protect their various interests if elected (Berman, 2016).

In Nigeria, money politics usually starts at the party level during candidate nomination and progresses into election campaign and voting. It also extends to post-election matters such as the pursuit of electoral victory at the courts. Money politics poses a greater problem in Africa than in any other region of the world (Bryan & Baer, 2005). And nowhere in Africa is this more evident than Nigeria. Over the years, Nigerian politics has been characterised by the use of too much money by the power elite to influence electoral outcomes. Most literature on money politics in Nigeria trace the origins to post-independence events: the emergence of military rule, the oil boom in the 1970s, the character of the Second Republic politics and politicians, and the emergence of ex-military generals in politics (see Davies, 2012; Egwu, 2009; Ojo, 2000). Historical evidence, however, shows that the monetisation of politics in Nigeria predates the country's independence.

The foundation of money politics in Nigeria dates back to the 1922 Clifford Constitution which introduced the Elective Principle and created four elective seats (three for Lagos and one for Calabar). Although the Elective Principle introduced suffrage for the first time in Nigeria, it was an income-based franchise (Jinadu, 2010). The provision of the Elective Principle 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). The implication was that many Nigerians could not contest or even vote in elections. Hence between 1923 and 1946 only four Nigerians were elected as members of the Legislative Council by 'an electorate composed of the wealthier members of the communities' (Coleman, 1963, p. 153).

The limited franchise was a deliberate policy of the colonial government to circumscribe the quest for political participation in Nigeria which it feared would ultimately lead to the demise of colonial rule if not restricted. The idea was to use money as the marker that will determine those that will

participate meaningfully in politics. The Nigerian nationalists understood the danger of this policy and tried to resist it. Thus one of the aims of the Nigerian Youth Movement was the abolition of the property or income-based franchise and its substitution with universal suffrage (Awolowo, 1960). This aim was later achieved following the repeal of income-based suffrage and the introduction of universal adult suffrage for the regional elections in the Eastern and Western Regions in 1954 and 1956, respectively, and adult male suffrage for the 1959 elections in the Northern Region (Jinadu, 2010, p. 2).

Although in the politics and elections of the First Republic, the influence of money was minimal, yet, even at this time, party emblems, customised T-shirts, caps, food and drinks were shared to party supporters at campaign rallies. There were no attempts to buy votes as such, as 'appeals to ethnic and religious sentiments were the most important weapon the political leaders ... deployed to win [or rig] elections' (Davies, 2012, pp. 68–69; Nnoli, 1980). It was in the run-up to the Second Republic that money reared its ugly head again in Nigerian elections. In fact, the history of money becoming central to Nigerian politics can be dated to the Second Republic, between 1979 and 1983. Money politics has since continued to define the careers and fortunes of politicians in the country.

At the start of the Second Republic, it was clear that the list of First Republic politicians had been depleted and new actors needed to be admitted into the ranks. Money was eventually the major yardstick that determined entry into the political cadres of the Second Republic. Those who were recruited turned out to be products of events that took place between 15th January 1966 when the first military coup occurred which ushered in military rule and 1979 when the Second Republic began following the exit of the military from politics and the handing over of power to a democratically elected government. These events were 'military rule, a civil war and enormous resources from mineral oil (oil boom)' (Onuoha, 2014, p. 322).

Military rule created retired and wealthy military officers who became an emergent political power bloc (Adekanye, 1999). The civil war which lasted between 1967 and 1970 not only eroded traditional values and caused moral decay in the society, but also created a new crop of elites who made enormous wealth from the 'civil war economy' (Onuoha, 2014, p. 329), notably, supply of weapons and essential commodities (e.g. food) during the war. Oil resources and the subsequent oil boom left the various military regimes with enough funds to throw around, and in their attempts to buy loyalty and weaken resistance to military rule using a carrot and stick approach, they created new elites who became super rich through their unholy connection with the military regimes which rewarded them with questionable oil deals and government contracts (Onuoha, 2014).

It was inevitable that this trio of moneyed elites would venture into politics and deploy any means possible, including monetary inducements, to capture

state power by contesting elections themselves or sponsoring their cronies. Hitherto successful military officials and contractors suddenly became successful politicians, and people like Senator Olusola Saraki and Alex Ekwueme, vice-president from 1979 to 1983, general elections were awash with pecuniary inducements. The major political parties – the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and the Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP) that participated in elections were all linked to different businesses and wealthy government contractors who indulged in different types of electoral malpractices, particularly the use of money to influence party primaries, electoral officers and the electorate (Davies, 2012).

As expected, these monetised elections produced a crop of leaders who siphoned-off government resources to recoup election expenses and make profits. Thus the prebendalism that characterised the politics of the Second Republic and which ultimately led to its collapse following the military take-over in 1983 (Joseph, 1991) was a direct consequence of money politics in the 1979 and the 1983 general elections. The phenomenon of money politics was consolidated in the Third Republic when the Military regime of Ibrahim Babangida introduced the concept of 'newbreed' politics, which ultimately only served to hand over political leadership to the crop of new men and women whose only credential for power was monies they accumulated under the military era. The presidential election, which the Babangida military regime conducted in 1993, ostensibly as the culmination of the transition programme of the regime, was eventually annulled, because according to Babangida himself at the time:

There are authenticated reports of election malpractices against agents, officials of the INEC and voters ... there are proofs of manipulation, offers and acceptance of money and other forms of inducement. Evidence available to the government put the amount of money spent by the Presidential Candidates at over 2.1 billion naira. (Babangida as cited in Ojo, 2000, pp. 11–12)

Money politics and the problem of leadership recruitment: a theoretical overview

That money has become the determining factor of Nigerian politics cannot be denied. This fact is well recognised in literature though. According to Fogg (2003), political parties and candidates in both emerging and older democracies are faced with 'rising costs of campaigning and deepening public mistrust about the invidious role of money in politics'. Money politics is usually corrupt political financing, and it manifests in various dimensions among which are: the use of illicit money to fund political campaign and the use of money by political parties and candidates and their sponsors to unduly influence electoral outcomes through vote purchase and inducement of electoral officials (Walecki, 2008). In a study conducted by the National Democratic Institute

on the role of money in politics in 22 countries (including Nigeria), it was found that in many instances, political office was for sale to the highest bidder and that candidates financed by patrons, if elected, may compromise their integrity and accountability to the benefit of their benefactors (Bryan & Baer, 2005).

The same applies to political parties when they accept campaign funds from business interests that intentionally support campaigns as a way of ensuring lucrative contracts with the state, or for assurances that the state will turn a blind eye to their illegal business practices (Bryan & Baer, 2005). So overwhelming is money politics in Nigeria that when an aspirant makes known his intention to contest in elections, the first question that is usually asked by his well-wishers is, 'how much does he have?' (Best, 2008, p. 60). As a one-time chief electoral officer in the country once said, 'politicians are perpetually bidding to buy electoral officers often at sums of money that could transform a whole town' (Iwu, 2009, p. 11).

The significance of money in Nigerian politics actually derives from the challenge of leadership recruitment. Electoral politics in every society is usually faced with the challenge of who will participate and at what levels and in which patterns. For instance, what are the criteria for determining who will lead? The different criteria that have been variously used in leadership selection in different countries have turned politics and electoral contests in almost all countries into an elite affair. According to the elite theory, the elite are the rulers of society, and consist of the best and most successful persons who rise to the top at every level of endeavour in the society (Varma, 1975). The theory argues that the elite possess some qualities necessary for their accession to political power, namely, consciousness, coherence, conspiracy and organisation. Members of the elite are thus not only aware of their status, but work determinedly to protect it.

It then follows that the use of exclusionary factors in leadership recruitment might be after all, an elite strategy. In other words, the use of deliberate exclusionary strategies and factors has ensured that in most countries, elections in particular and politics in general, are not an all-comers affair. Ultimately, it is only those who best meet the set qualification criteria that qualify to contest elections. In many countries, especially the advanced Western countries, ideology has served as the major denominator, and it is only those who best approximate the ideology and manifesto of the party that end up as the party's candidates. In Nigeria, there has been a dearth of ideology in politics (Omotola, 2009), and parties without ideology have found it difficult deciding between candidates that will fly their flags.

By the time of the Second Republic, money filled the vacuum and assumed the decisive marker of political recruitment in the parties. From this time, money became the factor that determined who could contest elections or not, at least in any meaningful way. Party nominations could theoretically

be contested by any party member, but in reality, only those who could buy the nomination form and probably make additional donations to the party would stand as candidates. Even as the nomination exercise is going on, party leaders would be projecting the candidate among the pack who would be able to stand against the candidate of the other parties. It is ultimately the candidate who has the best prospects of mobilising the most funds that eventually receives the nomination.

Money is therefore not just the criterion for choosing party candidates, it is also the criterion for recruiting party leaders. At the end of the nomination exercise, even some of those who lost would have succeeded in imprinting their names in the party books by the sheer volume of funds they displayed or spent. From this time onwards, they become party stakeholders and would subsequently feature in the echelons of the party. Money thus, becomes the means for the circulation of the elite in politics. From time to time, those who have become capable of mobilising political funds join the party elite. Those who have fallen into incapacity fade away, and those who ultimately win elections become leaders. Money politics is thus, also a strategy for political exclusion. Those who cannot (and do not) mobilise monies for political activity remain at the level of ordinary members and can at the very best, only work for the party or vote at elections for the preferred candidates of the party.

Money politics, both as a means of the circulation of the elite and as a strategy for political exclusion, help the elite to remain in power and for new entrants into the elite category to be able to develop the elite character. This is done by initiating them into the ritual of money politics which first compels them to spend their entire life savings on an election, then borrow huge loans from banks and or political patrons (usually referred to as god-fathers) and sometimes enter into unholy alliances with them, in order to have enough funding for their election campaigns. The unholy patron-client alliance is usually sealed with oaths, often depriving the contestants of their honour and integrity. Usually, these rituals force the contestants to become desperate and try to win at all costs having sacrificed everything. It is now inescapable that any candidate who wants to win an election in Nigeria must somehow pass through the ritual of money politics.

Since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1999, the entire electoral system, from party nomination to the election proper and even post-election issues (e.g. election petition), has been monetised. This has implications for good governance. Such a society of money politics will be bereft of good leaders and its leadership will always be dominated by charlatans, 'money-bags' and political investors, who see politics as investment that must at all times yield surplus value. This could produce the situation which Huntington (as cited in Adejumbi, 2010, p. 5) envisaged when he observed that

threats to the third wave democracies are likely to come not from generals and revolutionaries who have nothing but contempt for democracy, but rather from participants in the democratic process. These are political leaders and groups who win elections, take power and then manipulate the mechanisms of democracy to curtail or destroy democracy.

In fact, the danger of money politics in Nigeria is that it undermines political participation, public policy and good governance.

Electoral violence in the country is equally a consequence of money politics since politicians who have spent a fortune on elections deploy every means including violence to ensure they win (Adetula, 2015). The high cost of electioneering also tends to hinder women's inclusion and participation in politics due to their low income power which makes it difficult for them to compete successfully in a monetised election (Ballington, 2003; Best, 2008). But the exclusion impact of money politics in Nigeria cuts across gender. It affects all non-moneyed elite irrespective of gender. Money politics further encourages political corruption, as elected political office holders try to recoup election expenses (Ojo, 2008). In fact, money politics makes it impossible for electoral outcomes to reflect the popular will. Thus it cannot guarantee democracy, accountability and good governance (Egwu, 2009, p. 41; International IDEA, 2001).

The role of money in party politics and elections in the fourth republic and the economics of power in Nigeria

Party politics and electioneering are essential ingredients of democracy. While party politics entails interest articulation and aggregation as well as recruitment of candidates by political parties for elections, electioneering serves as a mechanism for presenting party manifesto and candidates recruited for a given election to the people and at the same time persuading the electorate to vote for the party and its candidates based on their exceptional qualities and soundness of the programmes in the party manifesto (Cross & Katz, 2013; Hazan & Rahat, 2010; International IDEA, 2003). Party politics and electioneering are, as seen above, inseparable elements of democracy which Schumpeter (1947, p. 269) described as 'that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the peoples' vote'.

Efficient party politics can improve elections, and robust campaigning can improve party politics (Afrobarometer, 2008). In recent times however, party politics and electioneering in Nigeria have been marred by the unbridled influence of money, such that both cannot effectively create the symbiosis that would have lifted the society. This influence of money is very negative, and is actually much of the reason why, rather than 'democratising', Nigeria is 'de-democratising' (Momoh, 2006).

The Fourth Republic was ushered in by the 1999 general elections. 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 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, characterised 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. Apart from the above provisions, there were no other measures taken to regulate and mitigate the negative role of money in the elections. There were no limits for campaign donations to political parties and candidates or their campaign expenditures. The implication was that moneyed elites hijacked the elections and installed themselves or their cronies in power. In one instance of the use of money in that election, Gen. T. Y. Danjuma (Rtd.) admitted that he spent 7 million dollars on Obasanjo's presidential campaign in 1999 (Adetula, 2009, p. 23). It is against this backdrop that Suberu (2001) lamented that the use of money in the 1999 general election was open and shameless.

A similar trend of excessive use of money to 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 characterised by 'widespread bribery of delegates with sacks stuffed with money to influence their votes' (Transition Monitoring Group as cited in Adetula, 2009, p. 35). 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 (in Nigerian elections) 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, p. 5)

But this was only elite double-talk, as the use of money in the 2007 general election, which took place after the 2003 elections and still under President 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 super-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 characterised the general election. For example, to support the re-election bid of President Jonathan in 2015, a fund raising campaign was organised in which over 21 billion naira was collected by friends and some corporate organisations. 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 organisations 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 sympathisers 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 Cibuike 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 & Nyuykonge, 2015). Militant groups in the Niger Delta and even Boko Haram elements were not left out as they had demonstrated an ability to unleash violence against party supporters or to disrupt the elections. Monetary inducement was equally extended to leaders of some of the ethnic affiliated socio-cultural

organisations such as Ohanaeze Ndigbo, Afenifere, Arewa Consultative Forum, Oodua People's Congress and others.

The election campaign was also characterised by crowd renting for party rallies which cost between N500 to N3000 per head, as well as the use of different types of treats, including foodstuffs to entice voters (Olorunmola, 2016). The elites and their political parties turned campaign grounds into platforms where they displayed their posh cars and other ill-gotten wealth to the admiration of their rented supporters.

There were even cases of successful attempts made by some desperate politicians or those working for them 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 electoral politics in Nigeria had been so monetised that it was possible to talk about the economics of power in the country. It is actually possible to make a rough calculation of how much it would take to contest and win elections in Nigeria. When such a mental calculation is made, it even helps us comprehend how what usually seems insignificant and immaterial (500 or 1000 naira inducement per voter) in a given election can cumulatively translate into millions or billions of naira and become prohibitive. The calculation is however, hampered by the fact that the economics of power in Nigeria depends largely on the type of election, what is at stake, and the actors involved.

The electoral contest in Nigeria usually starts with the party nomination. To secure a party nomination under the monetised 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 the presidential nomination and 100,000 naira or more per delegate for the gubernatorial nomination. In some instances dollars are used for the inducement of the party delegates as was the case in APC presidential primaries for 2015 election where each delegate was alleged to have received an inducement of US\$2000 from the Atiku Abubakar group and another US \$3000 from the Mohammed Buhari group (Onyekpere, 2015). A total number of 7214 delegates participated in those primaries in which Buhari scored 3430 votes to defeat Atiku who polled 954 votes (Premium Times, 2014).

Assuming 10 per cent (about 722) of the delegates were serving governors and members of the National Assembly at the time and who ordinarily may not partake in collecting the inducement, there would be 6492 delegates left, a majority of whom, if not all, received inducement from the presidential aspirants. Assuming also that each of the presidential aspirants wanted to corner a majority of the delegates, Buhari must have needed a budget of over 11 million dollars (i.e. 3679 delegates \times 3000 dollars) while Atiku would have needed to keep over 7 million dollars (i.e. 3679 delegates \times 2000 dollars). If an estimate is made based on the number of delegates who cast

their votes for each presidential candidate, Buhari would have spent over 10 million dollars (i.e. 3430 votes \times 3000 dollars) while Atiku would have spent close to 2 million dollars (i.e. 954 votes \times 2000 dollars), on the party nomination alone.

After securing the party nomination, a candidate standing for election in Nigeria is also expected to run a monetised election campaign. Media propaganda is one of the things for which a candidate needs a budget. Lacking sterling attributes that would endear them to the electorate (Davies, 2012), candidates resort to campaign posters which are designed to meet certain specifications intended to bamboozle the gullible electorate and damage the reputation of their opponents. The posters come in different shapes, sizes and colours and are graphically photo-shopped such that they would rebrand a frail septuagenarian politician to look very youthful, radiating strength, hope and optimism or transform a-hungry-poor-looking politician to look ebullient, wealthy and successful. Media and poster politicking usually cost each candidate millions of naira. In the 2015 general elections, it was reported that the two leading political parties – PDP and APC and their candidates spent 8.7 and 2.9 billion naira, respectively, on political campaign adverts (Centre for Social Justice cited in Olorunmola, 2016). These amounts were far more than the 1 billion naira legal limits permissible under the 2010 Electoral Act (as amended) for the entire presidential campaign. The inability of INEC and Nigerian police to arrest and prosecute those who breached the campaign spending limits is not only an indication that they have weak enforcement capacity, but also, that the enforcement institutions are corrupt. Most Nigerian politicians are usually ready to breach the laws knowing full well that they can bribe their way out if they are caught.

Vote buying was also among the monetary inducements in the election and this took place in most polling units across the country, though with varying degrees of intensity. For example, in some local government areas of Anambra State, voters were induced with amounts ranging from 1000 to 5000 naira (Nwanegbo, 2015). Similar incidents were spotted in Delta State where vote buying cost between 1000 and 1500 per vote (SDN, 2015). Inducement of voters using money and other material gifts was observed across the states of federation. Although it is known that not all the votes secured by a candidate in every polling unit is paid for (and there are many reasons for this), usually the inducement budget is made based on the statistics of each election, and the monies budgeted are shared out to party leaders across the country some days before the election. It is these party leaders that will then deliver the monies to the respective polling booths. Party leaders at the booths are usually free to distribute (or redistribute) the monies to voters according to the numbers of voters that are on the

ground on voting day or according to any other exigent factors such as the intensity of the fight between the parties for available votes.

In the presidential election, a candidate would need to budget for at least half of the total registered voters in the country, being aware of the constitutional requirement of the minimum of 25 per cent votes in 2/3 of the states of the federation. Going by the 2015 National Voters Register, there were about 67 million registered voters for general election that year (INEC, 2015). Assuming that each major presidential candidate prepared an inducement budget for half of the registered voters at 1000 naira per voter, that would amount to 33.5 billion naira (i.e. 33.5 million voters \times 1000 naira per voter), just for vote buying only. Even if we are to base the budget on the number of votes that each leading presidential candidate got in the election, then Buhari would have spent at least 15 billion naira (i.e. 15 million votes \times 1000 naira), while Jonathan might have spent at least 12 billion naira (i.e. 12 million votes \times 1000 naira).

Paying party agents to keep watch on the various polling units on election day to ensure that the party is not short-changed, or even inducing the agents of other parties with money to turn a blind eye when voting and election results are being manipulated, is also part of the economics of power in Nigeria. The budget for this is normally prepared for one agent each according to the number of polling booths in the constituency. In 2015, each agent of the major parties got around N1000. For the presidential election, this will give $1000 \times$ (the number of polling booths in the country). Bribing electoral officers and security agents manning elections is also an inevitable aspect of money politics. The late President Yar'Adua acknowledged this fault-line in 2008 during the inauguration of the Uwais Electoral Reform Committee, when he said

if we must be honest with ourselves we know how we rig elections in this country. We compromise the security agencies, we pay electoral officials and party agents while on the eve of the election we merely distribute logistics all designed to buy the votes. (Yar'Adua as cited in Adeniyi, 2011, p. 116)

In 2015, electoral officers were about three in a polling station, comprising of the polling officer and two polling clerks, each of whom got between N40000 and N20000, while there were usually two policemen for each voting area (that could comprise between one and three polling stations), each of whom got between N10000 and N20000. The election process does not often end with voting and the announcement of results. Many a time, the results are disputed. In that case, a candidate has to hire lawyers for the resulting court cases. Hiring lawyers for cases that may arise from the elections and bribing judges handling such election cases in order to obtain favourable judgements are other aspects of the economics of power in Nigeria. Lawyers are known to now charge around N200,000,000 to N500,000,000 to defend a top

presidential candidate at the election tribunal. For the governorship tribunals, lawyers now charge a minimum of N200,000,000 for defending a sitting Governor and between N50,000,000 and N100,000,000 for others.

The foregoing shows that money politics in Nigeria is a huge outlay and the economics of power is very prohibitive. Hence Obasanjo observed 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 the recent 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).

Money politics, political corruption and the exclusion of non-elite from political leadership in Nigeria

Nigerian politicians are always willing and ready to spend so much on elections because of what politics offers in return – wealth, influence and security. Politics has become so lucrative that it guarantees more than a 100 per cent return within one year. No other business in Nigeria offers that magnitude of profit (Agbu, 2016). Also, in the absence of a developed productive base, most if not all lucrative businesses in Nigeria, from oil and gas to export and import, depend on political patronage to survive and thrive. Hence those who engage in politics do so because it makes not only political sense, but business sense too. Unfortunately, this turning of politics into business has constrained the franchise of Nigerians. One of the fundamental human rights of Nigerians enshrined in the 1999 Constitution is the right to vote and to be voted for in elections.

Whereas the right to vote can still be technically exercised by all Nigerians who are of age, the right to be voted for has now become exclusive to those who can go through the ritual of money politics. By making the electoral process so monetised, it is now only the rich who can afford to participate. In fact, although the people are technically allowed to vote for the candidate of their choice during elections, such choice has actually been limited to candidates already chosen by the elite through monetised party primaries, during which candidates that could have been better but are less moneyed would have fallen by the wayside. In other words, the actual power of choosing who occupies whatever office in Nigeria now resides in the hands of the moneyed elites. Even when such credible candidates decide to contest election in other, minor political parties, many a time they cannot make it, because the main elections are equally heavily monetised.

For the election proper, a candidate who has won the nomination must take a number of steps if he/she hopes to ever win. First, he/she must lay

out an arsenal of campaign paraphernalia, including exotic cars, gorgeous dresses and engage a number of musical bands, celebrities and public orators. He/she will also hire an army of thugs and equip them with sophisticated weapons like AK47 rifles, for his personal security, otherwise he may be killed by the opponents in the course of the election. The 2006 assassination of Funso Williams, a principled popular gubernatorial aspirant in Lagos State is a typical example. Second, such candidates must share gifts of money and foodstuffs at the various campaign rallies, and treat the organisers and party officials to luncheons and buffets at every turn. He must pay courtesy visits to power brokers and influential traditional rulers and religious leaders whose support could only be given in exchange for money and/or promise of juicy appointments or government contracts.

On the Election Day, provision must be made for the party agents to move around with bags and cartons of money in cash, to settle whatever exigencies that may arise, on the spot. He will even have a ready crowd to celebrate his victory or defend it once the results are declared. Even after the declaration of the results, the winning candidate must keep money ready either to placate his opponent immediately so as to forestall the matter moving to the courts, or if it does, to use the money in preventing the opponent from having access to the needed evidence. Any aspirant therefore, who wants to win an election in Nigeria must pass through this ritual. When aspirants who have been subjected to the ritual of money politics win an election, their preoccupation on assuming power is to recoup election expenses, and also to accumulate much material resources with which to fund future elections and remain politically relevant (Adetula, 2015; Davies, 2012; International IDEA, 2001).

More often than not, the quest to recoup election expenses and to accumulate wealth for future elections is so corrupting and overwhelming that everything else, including campaign promises and governance, is put aside. White-elephant projects are created, but only as conduit pipes to siphon-off public resources. Fictitious contracts are awarded and contract costs are inflated. Significant portions of budgetary allocations for capital projects and even recurrent expenditure is embezzled. Primitive accumulation of votes is a trigger for primitive accumulation of wealth (Ibeanu, 2007), and it is money politics that sustains the trigger. Having imbibed the elite mind-set through the ritual of money politics, Nigerian leaders' quest for material wealth has become incurable. Even the few who were in the past believed to have integrity seemed to have lost it after they contested and won elected office, or were given political appointments.

This is largely why those with money who fund the election of political office holders are given juicy political appointments, as reward for their campaign contributions. After the 1999 presidential election was won by General Obasanjo (Rtd.), he promptly appointed General Danjuma (Rtd) his Defence

Minister. President Buhari handed over the Vice President slot to Senator Bola Tinubu who then nominated Professor Yemi Osinbajo into the position. It is partly in this way that the monetisation of politics in Nigeria has become the major factor of corruption in the country. The worst manners of graft are now being perpetrated by political office holders and for the reasons of accumulating funds for different purposes.

There are four major types of such accumulation. The first type is accumulation to recoup election expenses and pay back to the sponsors their principal sums and interests. The second is accumulation to fund re-election or second term bids (see Adetula, 2008, 2009, 2015; Bryan & Baer, 2005; Davies, 2012; Egwu, 2009; International IDEA, 2001; Ojo, 2008; Walecki, 2008). The third type is accumulation to fund the election of the future successor. The fourth is accumulation aimed at being very wealthy when out of power so as to have financial security and become a permanent member of the elite class. Such status enables the holder to enjoy the accompanying social, political and economic benefits, including the ability to hire the best legal team to defend him/her usually by delaying or buying judgement in any criminal case that may arise from cases of graft committed while in power, assuming his/her successor or government anti-graft agencies decide to probe their affairs.

With the significant outlay that these politicians have for corrupt activities, it is logical that not much is left to provide democracy dividends for the people. It is believed that a large percentage of the annual budget is actually spent on recurrent expenditures of the government, with corruption taking a large chunk of this, while only a small part is left for capital projects and other developmental purposes (Okonjo-Iweala, 2012). Some of the incidents of corruption include the diversion of huge sums meant for payment of salaries of workers into 'ghost worker' accounts. In 2016 alone, the Federal Government of Nigeria discovered about 23,000 ghost workers on its payroll, amounting to 2.29 billion naira each month (Adeosun as cited in Daily Trust, 2016). Other forms of corruption in Nigeria include budget 'padding' (smuggling new and unapproved items into the budget), and inflation of the budget estimates by the National Assembly (Adewole as cited in Premium Times, 2016; Jibrin as cited in Punch, 2016).

This is true for the federating units, which explains why, despite the differences in federal allocations to the different states and local governments, the level of development remains essentially the same among them. In all the states and local governments across the country, only a very small percentage of the federal allocations are utilised in providing real development while the major part of the revenue go into the private pockets of the officials of government. According to Acemoglu and Robinson (2013, p. 3), African countries (such as Nigeria) are poor and failing not because they lack natural resources, but because 'political power has been narrowly concentrated, and has been

used to create great wealth for those who possess it – the narrow elite who have organized society for their own benefits at the expense of the vast mass of people’.

As a result of this corruption of the political and electoral process, the benefits that should have come from more than a decade and a half of democracy and significant earnings accrued from crude oil exports have not materialised. Instead the country continues to suffer from poverty and underdevelopment, while the political elite keep siphoning the commonwealth, living in affluence, and controlling politics for their own narrow self-interests.

Recommendations and conclusion

From the foregoing analysis, it could be seen that money politics has made electoral politics unaffordable and unresponsive to the people. It has therefore become the exclusive reserve of the rich. The implication of this high cost of electoral politics in Nigeria is that it has enabled the power elite to not only exclude the majority of people from electoral contests and by extension, positions of power, but also reinforced their grip on power and political leadership. It is therefore not surprising that for more than three decades now Nigeria has been lacking good leaders, as a parasitic cadre of the elite has continued to gain power and dominate the country’s political leadership. An enduring solution to money politics in Nigeria would be to make it easier for candidates with significant merit to participate in electoral contests, and that would require reforming the prohibitive nomination process (high fees for expressions of interest/nomination forms, and the monetary inducement of party delegates).

This can be achieved by benchmarking the maximum nomination fee of all political parties in Nigeria on the prevailing national minimum wage at the time of election(s), and also by banning party delegates from receiving gifts either in cash or in kind from aspirants vying for party nominations. To prevent party delegates from being susceptible to inducement of any kind, political parties should broaden and increase their membership base so as to generate more funds from party membership registration fees and dues, and from such funds, cater for the transport and accommodation allowances of delegates rather than allow aspirants to do so. Further, there should be a commitment that integrity rather than money forms the basis for nominating a party candidate; parties should start the nomination process with a clearance process for those who have purchased nomination forms. This should be done at every level of the party by committees comprised of eminent elders, whereby only aspirants with excellent qualities and not necessarily money will be cleared to participate further in the nomination exercise. The nomination fees will thereafter be subsidised for the cleared candidates.

In addition, the laws that criminalise monetary and material inducement of any form should be enforced. Enforcement of such laws should ensure that both the politician who gives out money to induce and the voter who takes the money are liable. It is recommended that an enforcement agency should be created specifically for electoral laws different from INEC. The alternative is that the enforcement arm of INEC should be strengthened to make it possible for that body to ensure effective compliance. There is the need to strengthen the capacity of INEC to enable it to monitor and prosecute voters, candidates and political parties, who breach electoral law, especially campaign funding regulations. Also, paid campaign airtime or media campaign adverts should be regulated to ensure that candidates do not spend too much money on campaign adverts.

It is equally important that the electoral management body undertakes a cost survey to determine the actual campaign cost for each political office at each election assuming there is no monetary or material inducements. Estimates from such cost survey can then form the basis for limiting campaign funding for political parties and candidates. The current campaign spending limits of a maximum of 1 billion naira (for Presidential), 200 million naira (for Governorship), 40 million naira (for Senatorial), 20 million naira (House of Representatives) and 10 million naira (for State House of Assembly and Local Government Chairmanship) candidates, as contained in Section 91 of 2010 Electoral Act (as amended), are clearly unrealistic and seem to be promoting money politics rather than mitigating it.

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