

## **MONETISATION OF POLITICAL POWER AND THE CRISIS OF THE NIGERIA STATE, 1999-2019**

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### **Abstract**

*Monetisation of political power otherwise known as money politics has gained concern in the international community as it threatens democratic stability and sustainability across the globe. The menace seems to be the root of political crisis in Africa, particularly in Nigeria's fourth republic, beginning from the return to civil rule in 1999. Primarily, the study examined the implications of money politics in the electoral process and democratic consolidation of the fourth republic vis-a-vis how it has contributed to the crisis of the Nigeria State. This study by implication presented money politics as the independent variable which causes changes and effects on leadership performance. Hence, financial inducement always influenced virtually all aspects of institutional mechanisms and processes for leadership selection and governing activities. The failed system theory, on which this study anchored, corroborated the position of this paper which stresses that due to incessant leadership crisis arising from monetisation of political power, the Nigeria State has lost the capacity for effective governance. This, according to the paper, has had grave implication in service delivery which plunges the system into recurring episodes of leadership crisis. This study identified three dimensions of monetisation of political power in the fourth republic to include; financial corruption/poor accountability syndrome of public office holders; godfatherism and high cost of election funding. This study obtained materials solely through secondary sources. The paper also recommended an all-encompassing institutional and cultural re-evaluation as*



*very potent remedies to incidences of leadership crisis in Nigeria arising from the monetisation of political power.*

Key words: Monetisation, election, funding, selection, leadership.

## **Introduction**

An overwhelming portion of the maladies, woes and banes of Nigeria politics finds vivid expression in the otherwise perceived culture of financially induced system of politics. Over the years, credible mechanisms required in the leadership selection processes have severally been compromised by pecuniary stimulations. In effect, there has been a growing spate of ineffective, irresponsible and irresponsive cycle of leadership produced. By extension, such institutional anomaly has consistently proved to birth poor leadership performances in relation to quality service delivery to the citizenry. Hence such situation typically demonstrates the inability of leaders to justify the essence of the official responsibilities contractually entrusted to them by the people. Davies explicitly captured this when he stated that, the Nigeria State is trapped in a web of recycling leadership failures owing to the constraints posed by money politics in choosing a well deserving crop of leadership.<sup>1</sup>

In his separate contribution, Bara, avers that, the influence of money in the screening, determination and selection of candidates in Nigeria political parties, discountenances other aspects of moral credentials which a candidate, aspiring to hold any political/public office should possess.<sup>4</sup> Hence Alabi stresses that the natural principles of integrity, chastity, nobility and uprightness have been alternated with pecuniary persuasion in the administration of politics in Nigeria.<sup>5</sup> Consequent upon these realities, the ability for effective leadership becomes constrained to a very large extent. Aiyede, asserts that in Nigeria, the outrageous expenses borne by political office aspiring politicians



represent financial investments.<sup>6</sup> by implication, the overriding interest of the average politician in Nigeria in the event they clinch any political position is always to make gainful returns on their investments. As a result, the need for quality and selfless services to the people becomes underplayed.

The transition to a civilian administration in 1999 was welcomed with massive excitements and high positive expectations. The thrills and hopes expressed by the Nigerian electorate were necessitated by the impressions entertained by the people. Such thoughts encompassed the strong convictions of the people that the establishment of a civilian rule entailed a clear departure from a military administration characterised by insensitivity and despotic tendencies a democratic dispensation which expectedly should promote leadership-people confraternity, inclusiveness, reliability and responsiveness. However, Ovwasa, observes that in Nigeria politics, there exists a disparity between democracy as a concept and its practice. This situation according to him, owes largely to the flooding of the public space with a bunch of incompetents whose avoidance is consistently hampered by financial influences.<sup>2</sup> In corroborating this position espoused by Ovwasa, Nwosu, holds that in Nigeria, money politics remains a dysfunctional factor that compromises the relevance of democratic institutions. He specifically remarks that the political party, upon which individuals aspire to various political positions has its activities manipulated by monetized method of politicking.<sup>3</sup> his submission emphatically decries the complementary synergy between money and position aspiration in political party's selection processes in Nigeria.

Therefore, this study attempts to undertake a critical assessment of the negative roles financial inducements have played in defining political leadership in Nigeria's fourth republic. The core objective of this study is to deeply examine the extent to



which money politics have contributed to leadership failures/crisis in Nigeria from 1999 to 2019.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

According to Ovwasa, money politics can be defined as the phenomenon in the Nigeria electoral process whereby contenders for elective positions used or money is used on their behalf as an inducement to sway their support, which is not based on persuading the electorate to vote according to their wish and conviction but on the force of money that has changed hands.<sup>7</sup> In his definition of the concept, Aspinall, views monetisation of politics otherwise called money politics as a general term which connotes other aspects of inducements including offering of material gifts and vote buying. Accordingly, he submits that, a second category of election-induced gift is those that are handed out to larger public campaign events such as rallies and village parties. Also provision of foods, drinks, and transport money all sponsored by candidates of elective positions constitute portions of money politics. The third category entails the provision of individual cash payments or goods to voters in the immediate lead up to the election.<sup>8</sup>

Again, in a differing but concurring opinion on the subject of money politics, Ezirim avers that the concept in practical terms, denotes a reflection of the inter play between dubious tendencies of public servants in government-owned ministries and agencies, manifest in their demand for bribe from politicians and the latter's disposition to oblige.<sup>9</sup> Hence, Ebegbulem maintains that money politics in Nigeria is rooted in the systemic habitation of corruption and other forms of sharp practices.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, according to Nkamah, money politics in Nigeria suggests a dysfunctional disposition of corruptly minded and morally perverted politicians who literally buy their way to political offices by having access to affluence and other forms of privileged circumstances, they circumvent the rigorous but



legitimate criteria for aspiration to political positions. also, money politics, perpetuates even after these dubiously inclined politicians have paid their ways to political offices with the aid of a strong financial base[this time, acquired from public treasury], they try to sustain their ill acquired political legitimacy and relevance.<sup>11</sup>

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study for the purpose of suitability is anchored on the Failed State Theory". According to Rotberg, a failed state typifies a politically organised society where the various structures, institutions and organs that make up the society are administratively ineffectual and incapacitated with regard to providing basic social services to the people and as a consequence, the leadership of such society loses the capacity to assert its authority and control over the citizenry.<sup>12</sup>

Offering his opinion, Call affirms that the inability of state leadership to assert its authority and constitutionally enabling control on the people gradually metamorphoses into subsequent epochs of social dissensions demonstrated in forms of overall public outcry, inter/intra ethnic restiveness and civil violence.<sup>13</sup> In a separate contribution, Olivier attributes the circumstances leading to state failure to the outright negative tendencies of state functionaries which are conspicuously manifest in poor service delivery and on the whole failure of leaders to justify the essence of the mandate given to them by the people. Hence, some of the indicators of lack of responsiveness and insensitivity of leaders to the citizenry include;

- i. Personalisation of resources and means of resources of state.
- ii. Deliberate impoverishment of the people as a means of acquiring stupendous wealth.
- iii. Avaricious accumulation of private riches from the coffers of public wealth and at the expense of general interest.



- iv. Conscious act of frustrating evenness and fairness in the distribution of the common wealth of the public.
- v. Huge financial compensations and bribes to dissenting groups, loyalists and sycophants with state owned funds.
- vi. Unhealthy and defective tendency to financially compromise the policies, activities and decisions of the various institutions and agencies of government.<sup>14</sup>

In a corroborative contribution, Taylor posits that some of the indicators of a failing state include. rising trend of unemployment among youths and employable workforce; biting era of poverty, hunger and lack with attendant consequences as expressed by widespread frustration and depression in the society; grave incidences of social malaise and crimes; unchecked means of accessing tremendous wealth by members of the political class and their cronies in the midst of ravaging economic depression; and covert or maneuvered display of lack of political will on the part of the political class to address the situation highlighted.<sup>15</sup>

### **An Overview of the Demonstration of Money Politics Vis-A-Vis Leadership Performances in Nigeria since the Inception of the Fourth Republic in 1999**

The indiscriminate and unwarranted glorification of the overriding essentiality of money in the Nigeria system of politicking has particularly stigmatised the entire polity since the country democratised in 1999. In the views of a surging population of observers, it has become a brand name which distinguishes Nigeria from other nation states where politics is almost strictly run on established scruples and constitutional standards. This is in so far as the pattern of money politics in Nigeria has infiltrated governing processes in the country. There seems to be, a concurring method of adaption of the rhythms, played in the political arena to the overall governing mechanisms and vice versa.



An official statement credited to a former president of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo reinforces the widespread impression circulating the public space about the extent to which the influence of money has replaced the choice of the electorate in the course of electioneering processes thus; 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 the determining factor in elections. Can we not move to politics of ideas, issues and development?<sup>16</sup>

Consequently, such defective democratic development has continued to emphasise the emergence of unpopular crop of leadership who get enmeshed in an unending chain of leadership crisis on assumption of office as political leaders. The indications are often a demonstration of ill administrative performances that are overwhelmingly detrimental to the masses and some of this stage of monetisation indicators that eventually leads to crisis in leadership are; Godfatherism and election funding/financing.

### **Godfatherism**

Godfatherism has been described by I.S. Ogundiya as an ideology which is constructed on the belief that certain individuals possess considerable means to unilaterally determine who gets party ticket to run for an election and who wins in an electoral contest.<sup>17</sup> In other words, a godfather in the context of Nigeria politics is a certain individual who determines who gets what, how and when in a political system. According to M. Abutudu, godfather politics typically ensures that results are declared even when there is no evidence that voting actually took place. It typically plays electoral politics with little or no respect for the established rules of conduct governing the process and does not display any sense of moral restraint in its appreciation of what



constitutes appropriate behaviour in a democratic political order. It is not surprising therefore that election results whether at the intra-party level or at the level of general elections are always disputed by those who are declared losers.<sup>18</sup>

However, in the context of this discourse, E. E. Ojo and E. E. Lawal averred that, there exist a symbiotic relationship between the godfather and the godson; the godfather invests his resources in the godson and the godson must or atleast, should, on getting into office, reciprocate by reimbursing his godfather in cash and/or patronage and keeping absolute loyalty to the godfather in all respects, including decision making whilst in public office. As the key goal of all godfathers is to rule by proxy or rule through proteges.<sup>19</sup>

Moreso, the problem of godfatherism in Nigeria politics has historically maintained a monstrous and impregnable posture in the nation's public space. Godfathers have always been known to acquire, control and sustain the socio-economic and political structures of the society. They originally belong to the stupendously wealthy class of the society. Hence, by virtue of their access to material comfort, they mostly influence the determination of who gets what in politics. Despite the fact that this class of people might most times, not be involved in career politics, largely on account of reasons that are shrouded in ulterior intentions, they indirectly control state power and resources. They achieve this by grooming loyalists and financially empower them to contest for political positions. Subsequently, when the godsons clinch political positions, the godfathers, through the former, manipulate political leadership and recover in bounties of gains the financial investments deployed to secure state power. According to Abdullahi, the politics of godfatherism in Nigeria's fourth republic indicates a sheer departure from the pattern that played out in the first republic. During the era of the first republic, the godfathers groomed loyalists, mostly





successors who would sustain the legacies of good governance and impacting leadership tendencies, created by the former. the birth of the fourth republic in 1999 witnessed an era of a prolonged but fierce political contention between godfathers and godsons in Anambra State.<sup>20</sup>

Chinwoke Mbadinuju, the then governor of Anambra State was caught in a misty waters of dilemma as he was under constraint to financially compensate several quarters that aided his victory at the polls, at the expense of administering effective social services to the people. Specifically, according to Adoyo, he was mandated to pay an unofficial monthly 10 million to a foremost godfather in that state, Chris Uba. Chris Uba engulfed Mbadinuju's administration when he could not exhaustively satisfy the pressing demands of godfathers, while governance suffered setback. Workers salaries were not paid, while infrastructural development in the state experienced a monumental neglect. consequently, that development cost him his second term bid in office and following this, Chris Ngige who succeeded Mbadinuju was compelled to sign documents showing evidence that he had inherited a backlog of monetary royalties paid to the old faction of godfathers. Also, he allegedly signed an undertaking, purporting that he would serve as Anambra State Governor for a single term. Chris Ngige allegedly violated this agreement and the stage was set for the intensification of leadership crisis in the state. The then incumbent governor, Ngige was abducted with his aggrieved godfather, Chris Uba turning the state into an ungorvernable entity.<sup>21</sup>

Another case in point as recounted by Oviasuyi, was how in 2003, the Governor of Oyo State, Rasheed Ladoja was compelled by a famous godfather in that State, Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu to share the monthly security vote fund with the latter. Adedibu had claimed that he invested hugely on Ladoja's governorship position bid hence, deserved such financial compensation. That



request by Adedibu was met with stiff resistance by Ladoja.<sup>22</sup> Also, according to Abdullahi, Adedibu was crossed with Ladoja's perceived excesses on the grounds that the latter, with regards to previous agreements still kept the former Oyo State's Chairman of National Union of Road Transport Workers[NURTW], Alhaji Lateef Akinsola in prison for 29 months. Aside that, Ladoja's disgruntled godfather, Adedibu still complained about the former's impudence in abandoning the human elements that contributed meaningfully to his success at the gubernatorial polls without compensating them with appointments and financial rewards. Consequently, the centre could no longer hold in Oyo State Government as the governor got enmeshed in a cluster of leadership crisis that culminated in his eventual impeachment in 2006.<sup>23</sup>

According to Bello, the political impasse in Edo State is chiefly traceable to the soured relationship between a political godfather [Oshiomole] and his godson [Obaseki]. Shortly after the latter's swearing in as the executive governor of Edo State, he shut out party leaders from unauthorised visits to the Government House. According to the governor, public finances were strictly meant for projects and other aspects of socio-economic development of the State and not for sharing. Frustrated by this development, the party leaders and loyalists now flock the residence of the former governor to get the pecuniary compensations they should have been getting from the government house. Oshiomole on his part, felt betrayed by what he described as act of betrayal by Obaseki even after he went all out to make him the Governor. Consequently, there came a grand plan by the All Progressives Congress leaders in the state to deny the incumbent governor the party's ticket for a second term bid.<sup>24</sup> It is pertinent to note that, this rivalry between the godfather and the godson brought on its trail serious governance stagnation and setbacks as the governor was not only distracted. But, monies meant for the development



of the state was used in monetising electoral and supremacy contestation.

### **Election Funding/Financing**

Over time, scholars and critics have established a fundamental trace of the negative impact of money politics or political power monetisation on leadership performance in Nigeria to the institutionally enshrined exorbitant system of political campaign funding. While it is widely observed by scholars that the financial cost of aspiring for political positions in Nigeria is high, there is the absence of effective mechanisms to check over stepping of limits by political parties and their candidates. The constitutional permissiveness granted political parties to exclusively determine the cost of purchasing Expression of Interest and Nomination Forms by candidates gives rise to the tendency of political parties to charge exorbitantly for the purchase of their forms.

According to Ayitogo, in the build up to the 2019 general elections, the Peoples Democratic Party [PDP] pegged both the presidential nomination and expression of interest forms at 12 million naira. For the governorship cadre, it is put at 6 million naira. At the level of the legislature, the party sold to aspiring senatorial candidates, both nomination and expression of interest forms at 4 million naira, while that of House of Representatives was 1.5 million. at the state level, it was placed at 600 thousand naira.<sup>25</sup> Advancing this further, Opejobi asserted that, the governorship position has been further reviewed upwards to 20 million naira to the build up to the Kogi and Bayelsa States gubernatorial polls.<sup>26</sup> According to Lawal, the ruling All Progressives Congress[APC] had both the nomination and expression of interest forms for the post of the president is put at 45 million naira while the fees for the purchase of governorship aspiration forms is totaled at 22.5 million naira. For Senate, it is 7 million naira while House of Representatives is 3.85 million naira. for the House of Assembly, it is 850 thousand



naira.<sup>27</sup> Lawal further revealed that in 2014 when the APC sold its Presidential nomination form for 27.5 million naira, it was reported that President Buhari who was then a prospective aspirant had to obtain a bank loan to purchase the form. Again, Lawal reports that in the year 2018, members of a group known as "Nigeria Consolidation Ambassadors Network" contributed 45 million naira for the purchase of both nomination and expression of interest forms for President Muhammadu Buhari. To this end, Bara observes that party politics in Nigeria has suddenly turned into a business venture. Hence, if occupying elective office requires selling off properties or acquiring loans, some members of the political class will see an elective position as a business and an opportunity to increase their wealth.<sup>28</sup>

Based on the avalanche of information obtained in the course of reviewing relevant literatures, critics have revealed that, despite the apparent high cost of obtaining elective positions' forms by political parties, the latter resort to creating myriad of illegitimate avenues to raise election funds. In consequence, prospective aspirants into elective political positions are reduced to combatants in a battle arena where the weight of money bags is the yardstick for determining the gladiator that maintains an edge over their rival.<sup>29</sup>

In defiance to the provisions of the law, political parties and their aspiring candidates sometimes raise outrageous political campaign funds which always surpass the limits set by extant electoral Acts. The electoral Act of 2010 as amended in section 91[2] and 91[9] vividly require that no individual or corporate body is allowed by law to donate more than one million naira for the political campaign of any aspiring political office holder. However, in the build up to the 2015 general elections, it was revealed that the two leading political parties, the APC and the PDP flagrantly breached this section of this Electoral Act as it was reported that, in a single fund raising dinner organised for the re-



election campaign of the then Nigeria President, Goodluck Jonathan, over 22 billion naira was realised with a single donation scaling up to the tune of five billion naira. Also, it was revealed that the Buhari Support Group in January 2015, confessed to have raised over 54 million naira for the political campaign of Buhari. Also in preparation for the 2019 general elections, it was reported that the APC mandated its governors to contribute 250 million naira each.<sup>30</sup>

Regrettably, the nation's electoral body has either shown brazen tardiness or full institutional incapacity to regulate the financial activities of political parties and their candidates. Hence, Oji, Eme and Nwoba stated that, most Nigerian political parties lack accountability and transparency in their fiscal practices. A report on the finances of the parties by the Independent National Electoral Commission [INEC] has shown that for atleast, three consecutive years the Commission has prepared damning reports on the state of finances of the existing political parties in the country. Most of the political parties are always found wanting. But in all those years, neither INEC nor the National Assembly to which the reports are sent has made a move to sanction the errant parties.<sup>31</sup>

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Money politics or otherwise, the monetisation of political power viewed from the perspective of the Nigeria situation has remained a worrisome political narrative in Nigeria's fourth republic. The over valuation of the role of money as a dominant factor that drives politics and political activities in Nigeria has remained dysfunctional to the overall administration of the Nigeria State. The import of money politics into our system was fundamentally motivated by greed, decadent level of morals and core ethical values and systemic failures. These behavioural impairments and other administrative abnormalities are antithetical to growth and development of the socio-economic



and political fabrics of the society. Incidentally, the domineering stance of money in the politics of Nigeria's democratic fourth republic has stripped political parties of unique but functional ideologies which should define core objectives and operational purposes in relation to the manifesto they wish to sell to the electorates. Also, money politics in Nigeria, especially in the fourth republic has discountenanced and played down on the importance of idiosyncratic leadership - the latter which places emphasis on leaders possessing qualities, ideals and principles that make them sensitive and responsive to the expectations of their followers. The negative derivatives from money politics in Nigeria have obvious consequences in the rampant leadership crisis and failures witnessed in most spheres of political governance.

This study, following a critical analysis of the various data obtained from relevant literatures, proffers the following recommendations;

The political culture of any given politically organised society invariably reflects the normative principles that regulate the conducts and operational ethics that guide the various institutions that make up the entire polity. To this end, it behooves the Nigerian government at all levels and arms, including civil society organisations to initiate a redefinition of the tenets of Nigeria's political culture. Such proposal can come in form of a bill to the national assembly where it should be patriotically and dispassionately adopted, deliberated upon, passed and subsequently assented to by the executive arm. The outcome should reflect a statutorily enabling prohibition of the systemic monetisation of political power.

An aspect of the redefined laws should promote the demonitisation of political positions and systemic blockages to wealth accumulation through politics.



Political godfatherism has overtime proved to be venomous to Nigeria's political advancement especially in this fourth republic, hence the electoral laws should be re-activated to discourage the personalisation of political parties which largely stems from the funding/financing of political parties by a few money bags.

The statutory capacity of the electoral body to regulate and effectively supervise election funding, financing and expenditure by political parties and candidates should be strengthened and made to function optimally.



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