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## **MONEY POLITICS AND DEMOCRATIC SUSTAINABILITY IN NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Money politics and democratic sustainability in Nigeria is an empirical study that seeks to understand the influence of money in determining the ascendancy to political office. It queries the democratic culture and political behavior among Nigerians. It also seeks to measure electioneering pledges against performance of political office holders. It seeks answers to the question of when, how, and why has money become a determining factor of who wins an election in democratic processes. Relevant literatures were reviewed to enhance our understanding of the current dilemma with a view to enable our coverage of some gaps in knowledge. Theoretical perspectives of Power elite and social contract colour the line of argument and analysis in this paper. The findings of the survey are heavily discussed, while workable solutions were suggested.

***Keywords:*** *Democracy, money politics, Nigeria, power elite, social contract.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Money can be defined as any commodity that is used in the act of buying and selling. In economic terms, money is said to function as a medium of exchange, store of value, standard of differed payment, measure of value, as well as being a legal tender. In a narrow sense, money refers to currency used in the open market, in a loose sense however, money implies wealth of any form, including tangible and intangible resources. Money being wealth is a source of joy and progress. It is the reason behind the toiling and striving among human species.

Whenever it is obtained, it softens the existential conditions of its possessors, and its lack leads to hardship and want. Conversely, it is said to be the root of all evils. It has been subjectively considered a justification for wanton destruction of lives and properties; the merciless perpetration of inhumanity upon fellow humans. Money is the reason for national and international conflicts. It sets brothers against one another, husband against his wife. It is laden with unrestrictable economic; personal, group, national and international interests. While consideration for national interest is most profitable for democratic consolidation, personal interests wreak great havoc for national development. In a democratic society, personal interests kill the loyalty of the citizens.

Democratic transition is the global trend in governance. Countries either accept democracy or are coerced into democracy in the current unipolar world. Just like capitalism, democracy is propagated as being synonymous with development. Hence, the cliché “dividends of democracy”.

The woes of Nigerian misgovernance has been blamed on military dictatorship. It is however our contention that monumental achievements of the military Era have surpassingly dwarfed those of the acrimonious civilian administrations. Could we have had it better with our kleptomaniac politicians? Have we experienced an Eldorado with our democratic/oligarchic rule? What are the consequences of our democratic governance on education, health, infrastructure, economy, security, etc? When shall we drift from politics of money and materialism to politics of ideas, issues and development (Obasanjo, 2003).

**THESIS:** The commercialization of politics is the bane Nigeria’s democratic gains.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To understudy the influence of money in politics
- To understudy the democratic culture and political behaviour among Nigerians
- To ascertain whether electioneering pledges are fulfilled by politicians
- To understudy the reason(s) why money has become a determinant of winner in election in Nigeria.

- To proffer workable solutions to the problems of money politics in Nigeria.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- Is democracy, as practised in Nigeria, sustainable?
- What are the democratic culture, and political behaviours among Nigerians?
- Do politicians fulfill their electioneering campaign pledges?
- When, how and why has money become a decider in Nigerian politics?
- Is it possible to contest elections into public offices in Nigeria without a godfather?
- Why do people collect money from politicians?
- Is military rule better than democratic government?
- What can be done to stop the influence of money in Nigerian elections?

### **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION**

- Money politics: What is meant is the political enterprise characterized by extravagant spending and vote buying as well as the commercialization of party politics by political parties and their “money bags”.
- Democracy as is meant here is as has been variously defined. There's therefore, no universally acceptable definition of democracy. Boron (2008) cited by Aderinto and Adewale (2010) had categorized democracy into four distinct forms. He called the first, electoral democracy, being the process involving regular elections as the only means of attaining leadership and power shift. Political democracy which is characterized by the establishment of some degrees of effective political representation, a genuine division of powers and improved mechanisms of popular participation. The third level is social democracy, which combines elements of electoral and political democracies with provision of citizens' rights including universal access to educational, housing or health services. While the fourth level of democratic development is economic democracy based on the inclusion of private firms in the democratic process given that the public

implications of their activities call for some degree of democratic development.

## **SYNOPSIS OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW: DIMENSIONS OF MONEY POLITICS IN NIGERIA**

The phenomenon of money politics is variegated and its forms are inexhaustible. However, for a simplified understanding of this scourge, the following have been unraveled as an abridged desktop review of what constitutes money politics:

- High nomination fees for aspiring candidates results in the foreclosure of equal opportunities.
- Delegates buying during party primaries (dollarization) (Sakariyau, Aliu and Adamu (2015)).
- Distribution of items such as food, T shirts, caps, etc.
- Unreasonably high cost of conducting elections.
- Lavish spending, antithetical to democracy (Ojo, 2008).
- Money politics, a factor in political corruption (Davies, 2006).
- Money politics entails party financing during party registration, campaign, primaries, support gathering etc.
- Money drowning of votes and voices of Nigerians.
- Money politics entails vote buying in an auction sale to the highest bidder.

## **THEORIES**

**POWER ELITE:** this is the radical version of the elite theory, closely associated C. Wright Mills, who sees our society as being divided between the politically dominant elite and passive masses, which are manipulated by the elite. The power of the members of the elite comes from their structural position at the “command post” of the society. Their power continues to grow stronger because of the articulation of their common interests, common background, and common contemporary patterns of association with which decisions are made to their benefits at the expense of the masses.

**SOCIAL CONTRACT:** Propounded by John Locke, J. J. Rousseau and Thomas Hobbes as the contractual arrangements between the ruler and the ruled, where the former hold in trust the common wealth in exchange for good

governance and protection of the public interests. While the Lockean version has granted the masses the power to change a dysfunctional ruler via its two treatise, Hobbesian and Rousseauian theories have granted absolute power and unchallengeable authority to the ruler. It is therefore our proposition that, while the Lockean tradition was instrumental to the success of the American (1776) and French Revolutions (1789) and their constitutional supremacy, where the rule of law is sacrosanct; the Nigerian parliamentary supremacy and constitutional immunity of the ruling class, as well as the selective application of justice are derivatives of Hobbesian version of social contract. This explains the paradox of the Island of pervasive poverty in the sea of enormous resources.

**DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

Sequel to the dissemination of questionnaires in a quest to proffer answers to the research questions supra, the following tables are distribution of responses on the questions, the analyses of which follow the data presentation.

**Table 1. WHETHER POLITICIANS CAN FULFILL THEIR CAMPAIGN PROMISES?**

RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE
Yes	25%
No	68%
Partially	7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Researcher’s Field Survey 2021**

It can be inferred from the above distribution that majority of the electorates do not believe that campaign promises are fulfilled, or rather that Nigerian politicians are incapable of fulfilling their campaign promises. The implication of this is that politics of deceit is the norm in the political arena. It is unfortunate that this is antithetical to the underlying principles of social contract.

**Table 2. POSSIBILITY OF POLITICS WITHOUT GODFATHERISM IN NIGERIA**

RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE
Impossible	50%
Possible through popularity	12.5%
Possible through personal achievement	12.5%

Possible through good laws	6.25%
Possible through option A4	6.25%
Undecided	12.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Researcher's Field Survey 2021

It is clear from these statistics that many Nigerians have conceded defeat to godfatherism. This is therefore generating some sort of Stockholm Effects. However, there are divergent views on avenues for the possibility of politics without godfatherism. These include candidates popularity, records of good achievement, as well as the institution of good laws and healthy political practices.

**Table 3. WHY PEOPLE COLLECT MONEY FROM POLITICIANS**

RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
NATIONAL CAKE	42.8%
POVERTY	35.7%
STOLEN MONEY	14.2%
ILLITERACY	7.1%
I DON'T KNOW	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Researcher's Field Survey 2021

All the reasons adduced here can be summed to have a common origin which is the "poverty of idea". It is the mother of all Poverties. It is unfortunate that many Nigerians have the notion that an opportunity to serve in public translate into illegal amassment of wealth. Hence, they justify politicians' vote buying as their cut of the national cake.

**Table 4. WHETHER MILITARY RULE IS BETTER THAN DEMOCRACY**

RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
YES	37.5%
NO	62.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Researcher's Field Survey 2021

This survey shows that majority of Nigerians prefer civilian rule to military dictatorship. This may be due to the preponderance of human rights violation under the previous military regimes in Nigeria. Either has been culprit of what Ovwasa (2013) described as bad policy options and implementation leading to the denial of basic necessities of life such as uninterrupted electricity, water supply, employment and quality education which are lacking in Nigerian society.

### **WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ELIMINATE THE INFLUENCE OF MONEY IN NIGERIAN POLITICS**

- Government should vigorously pursue poverty eradication mechanism
- Government should emphasize social reorientation on morality.
- Rule of law should be strictly adhered to.
- Immunity clauses should be removed from our Constitution.
- There should be mass sensitization against vote buying and selling.
- There should be electoral reforms.
- Political offices should be made less financially attractive.
- People should be taught to vote for ideologies and not for ethnicity or religion.

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