

Trajectories of Political Party Financing and Election Campaigns in Nigeria: Implications for Political Development

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Abstract: Democracy is recognized globally as a system in which the government is controlled by the people, and in which the people are considered equals in the exercise of that control. Essentially, unequal access to political finance contributes to an imbalanced political playing field. The astronomic growth of campaign expenditure in Nigeria has exacerbated this problem. This stems from the fact that huge amounts of money involved in some election campaigns makes it practically impossible for those without access to large private funds to compete simultaneously with those who are well funded. Recognizing the above challenges, the paper seeks to examine the dynamics of political party financing and election campaigns in Nigeria; the extant laws on political parties funding and election campaigns; and the implications of the unregulated political party funding and election campaigns for Nigeria's political development. Content analytical approach was adopted while data were collected from secondary sources. Guided by the political economy approach as the theoretical framework of analysis, the study found among other things; that the explosive growth in campaign expenditures fuels the perception that wealth buys political influence and threatens political equality; that the abuse of state resources by the ruling party to put itself in an advantageous position is also problematic in Nigerian democracy; and lack of a level playing field prohibits equal participation and representation of all citizens in Nigerian democratic and political processes. The study concludes that unequal political party financing in relation to election campaigns not only undermine democratic values, good governance and the rule of law, but also a negation of political development. It therefore, recommends an urgent need for political party finance reform and regulation of political donations and expenditures; effective monitoring and enforcement of extant laws on party financing.

Keywords: Political parties, Party financing, Election campaign, Political development, Democracy

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I. INTRODUCTION

All over the world, there has been a transformation of political engagement. Axiomatically, only very few regimes claim to adhere to an ideology of governance other than democracy. Elections between competing political parties have become the dominant method of selecting governments. In the process, political parties and candidates need access to money in order to reach out to the electorate and explain their goals and policies, and receive input from people about their views. Dynamic election campaigns increasingly engage citizens in the electoral process, and active political parties can involve people in the democratic dialogue between elections. In this process, political finance has a positive role to play in democracies. This is largely due to the fact that it can help strengthen political parties and candidates, and provide opportunities to compose on more equal terms. Apparently, sufficient access to funding that is provided with no strings attached is crucial to the overall vibrancy of an electoral and democratic system which helps citizens believe in and trust politics and politicians (Ohman, 2014).

In some democracies, political systems often work rather differently from the ideals of inclusiveness and fair play on which the idea of the democratic process is based. In essence, elections become a mere sham, offering no real choice to the electorate. Such situations can be caused by many factors, ranging from elite dominance, electoral fraud and threat of violence. Idealistically, one of the main factors preventing the political process in many countries from attaining democratic ideals is the influence of money. Even though money is necessary in a democratic centralism, but it can also be a tool for some to unduly influence the political process by buying votes or influencing policy decisions.

Scholars on political party financing are all in agreement that finance constitute one of the major insurmountable challenges in democratic experiments in the globe (Nwanegbo, 2018; Daniel 2008; Bryan and Baer, 2005; Pinto-Duschinsky, 2002; Hear, 1960; Austin and Maja, 2003; Alexander and Shiratori, 1994).

Evidently, the flows of money through the political sphere can threaten key democratic tenets. Basically, politicians become less responsive and accountable to voters if they are too closely tied to financiers, and the equality of political competition is skewed if access to funds becomes a determining factor. Essentially, the desire of various actors to hide how they raise and spend money on political activities can seriously hurt the transparency of the political process. In developing democracies, awareness is gathering momentum that organising well-administered elections represents nothing for democracy if the outcome is decided by the banknote in lieu of the ballot.

Against this backdrop, this paper attempts to interrogate the phenomenon of political party financing and election campaigns, the extant laws on political parties funding and election campaigns and its implications on Nigeria's political development.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several efforts have been made by scholars to conceptualise the etymological meaning and nature of political party financing depending on their perceptions and orientations. This is occasioned by the fact that the concept "political party financing" to a large extent, provokes a response of interest at mention. Apparently, some scholars have argued that political party financing cannot be easily conceptualised (Obiorah, 2004; Ujo, 2000; Emelonye, 2004).

Far from the above, Political party financing is looked upon as the use of money or the use of other material resources for political activities (Ilo, 2004; Walecki, 2002; Oji, Eme and Nwoba, 2014; Kukah, 2006 and Ayoade, 2006). For them political party financing also embodies the sources or means through which political activities are sponsored in a given polity. From the above, it is axiomatic that political party financing has two broad connotation viz money used for electioneering (campaign funds) and money used for political party expenses (party funds). It is possible that other forms of political party financing exists but momentarily, the two mentioned above is of our current interest.

Pinto-Duschinsky (2004) posits that political party financing is "money for electioneering". In this regard, political parties play a pivotal role in election campaigns in many parts of the world, in so far as it is extremely difficult to draw a dividing line between campaign costs of party organisations and their routine expenses, party funds may reasonably be seen as "political finance" simultaneously. He further argued that party funding includes not only campaign expenses but also the costs of maintaining permanent offices, carrying out policy research, and engaging in political education, voters' registration, and other regular functions of parties.

Gale (2008) submits that the acquisition and retention of political power require material resources and human energies. Money is the most important medium for transferring command over material resources. Its command over human energies varies among societies at different stages of development but is of great importance in all political systems with competitive popular elections.

Political financing, therefore, comprises the processes through which money is used to channel resources and energies for political purposes. Essentially, modern studies of political party financing have been concentrated in systems where important social decisions are made in competitive elections. They have been little concerned with how money is used as a source of influence in many regimes. In the democracies, observation and analysis of political financing have focused primarily on the activities of candidates, political parties and other participants in election campaigns, including organised interest groups and parallel-action organisations. Lobbying activities have usually been treated differently.

Pollock (1932) noted that the relation between money and politics has come to be one of the great problems of democratic government. This is because healthy political life is not possible as long as the use of money is unrestrained. Indeed, money provides access to the basic tools of a modern democracy. For instance, advertising, running political parties, selecting candidates, mobilising voters and polling are all elements of political finance aspects. For this reason, political finance affects almost every aspect of democratic politics in both developing and consolidated democracies.

In agreement with the above, Nassmacher (1989) maintained that campaign and party funds are only two kinds of political money and not necessarily the most important, because many extra-party actors and individuals are involved in political competition with clear political objectives like shaping public policy agenda, and influencing electoral debates and outcomes. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this discuss, political party financing is seen to mean only campaigns and party finance.

Another concept that is too critical for operationalisation in this study is election campaigns. Election campaign is to inform voters about those choices before them and to mobilise citizen participation (Norris, Curtice, Sanders, Scammell, Semetko, 1999). Giving all credit to the accounts of civil disenchantment with politics, it would be argued that campaigns remain the platform for citizens to acquire relevant information to evaluate government's performance and learn about political options.

Ipsa facto, election campaigns have undergone major transformations in the last few decades viz the changes in party loyalty, the rapid development of the mass media and the rise of political marketing. As argued

by Swanson and Mancini (1996), the process of modernisation characterised by increasing social complexity and growing fragmentation, led to a break with traditional social ties. This is so because party affiliation, which was hitherto related to class, became a matter of personal preference and in many democracies, voting seems to have been transformed from an expression of solidarity with one's group and its institution to an expression of one's opinions. Today, transformed parties had to turn to an individual voter abandoning their strong ideological positions and becoming "Catch-all" parties (Kirchheimer, 1966).

For Kotler and Kotler (1999), the first rule of effective campaigning is for the campaign to reflect the interest of the voters. Adding his voice, Newman (1994) suggests that the old concept of parties pursuing their ideologies has now been replaced by the marketing concept that segments the electorate, creates the candidates' image accordingly and targets voters with specific, finely brushed messages.

Taking cognisance of all the general concerns about public scepticism and disenchantment with politics, Grbesa (2005) argues that campaigns still enhance the knowledge of the voters about political choices they have, provide a forum to evaluate government's performance, introduce new options into political arena and bring political information to broad segments of public. The idea of early campaigns with politicians pursuing common cause and huge masses involved in a rational debate, as opposed to today's misleading and disengaging campaigns as argued by Swanson and Mancini (1996) Norris (2001) and Perloff (1999) is a rather romantic view of history.

While it is possible to widely expound the literature supporting the elements of the modern campaigns, there is one particular aspect that should be highlighted. One of the biggest contributions of modern campaigns is that they introduce new political options or devote greater attention to the already existing but not the leading ones that in the short run may affect the distribution of parliamentary seats and in the long run even change a party system.

As democratic society has undergone an evolution driven by the increasing social complexity, so have campaigns. Party derangement, the emergence of the new media and the rise of political marketing have changed the structure and the course of election campaigns. Election campaigns, therefore, should not be assessed as a socially isolated and intermittent phenomenon. The only proper way to look at them is within the macro and micro context of modernisation and specific national settings.

Whichever way we conceive the term "political Development" one pertinent point to note is that it is used to describe the development of the institutions, attitudes and values that form the political power system of a society. It is the deepening of values within a state that are held in whatever political ideology at play. Political development in democracy would be programmes and initiatives that create stronger, more legitimately held values of democracy within society. Broadly speaking, political development means the increased differentiation and specialisation of political structures and the increased secularisation of political culture.

To Silvert (1964) and Shils (1981), political development consists of the organisation of political life and the performance of political functions in accordance with the standards expected of a modern nation-state. In this wise, political development is thus identified with the politics of nationalism within the context of social and political institution that a modern nation-state must possess. The above definition was however rejected by Pye (1962) on the argument that nationalism is only necessary but far from being sufficient conditions to ensure political development. Political development is therefore identifiable with nation building and not with; merely a nation state.

Deutsch and Riggs (1965) see political development as stability or orderly change. They laid stress on the point that political development is a process that ensures stability and orderly change. Political stability is based on a capacity for purposeful and orderly change. For them, any form of economic and social advancement generally depends upon reduced uncertainty and the possibility of planning.

For the purpose of this discuss, political development is conceptualised as one aspect of a multi dimensional process of social change. This is because it is unnecessary and inappropriate to isolate completely political development from other forms of development. For sustained political development to take place, it can only be within the context of multidimensional process of social change in which no segment of dimension of the society can long lag behind (Nkwede, 2017).

In effect, political development leads to the functioning pattern of a political system, which is essentially responsible for its progress and building of democratic stability.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

The theoretical framework adopted in this study is political economic approach. Apparently, political economy has its root from the classical works of Marx and Engels (1962) that derived their intellectual stands from the works of great economists such as Smith (1937); Pye (1966); and Mill (1970). Political economy theory is primarily concerned with the distribution of social wealth, class relations and conflicts as well as their impacts on the development of the society from one stage to another. Political economy approach tries to explain the social relations existing among people in the society in all the processes of production, exchange and

consumption of goods and services. Political economy approach need not be mutually exclusive. The process as complex political party financing and election campaigns is obviously the result of equally complex forces, operating at various levels in space and time, party financing and election campaigns are determined by conditions in both the political actors and the receiving electorates, including the state of the economy, political stability, and freedom, and electoral laws, all of these are affected by broader forces in the nation's political economy.

Every society has a peculiar system of economic system anchored on property relations. Political economy approach gives credence to material conditions, particularly economic factors in all social lives. Undoubtedly, economic needs are the most fundamental needs of man, because he must eat before pursuing other things such as worship, culture, tourism, and other social things. This approach gives primacy to material conditions, particularly economic factors in the explanation of social life (Ake, 1976). Ake (2005:1-2) further maintained that:

Once we understand what the material assets and constraints of a society are, how the society produces goods to meet its material needs, how the goods are distributed and what type of social relations arise from the organisation of production, we have come a long way to understanding the culture of that society; its laws, its religious system, its political system and even its modes of thought.

The political economy theory looks into the interconnection of phenomenon, programmes and policies, with the sole intention of discovering the class origin, character, composition and the logic of their existence and future. The methodological implication of this approach is that special attention must be paid to the economic structure of society and indeed, it must be used as the point of reference for studying other aspects of the society, be it the legal, political, religious, etc. (Odoziobodo, 2013; Nkwede, 2015). Ipso facto, the propositions of this framework shall be instrumental in guiding this study in analysing and understanding the nexus between political party financing and election campaigns in the contemporary Nigeria.

EXTANT LAWS ON POLITICAL PARTY FINANCING AND ELECTION CAMPAIGNS IN NIGERIA

Lawlessness is dreadful and catastrophic in all facets of human lives and existence. Nigeria's political development has been chronically grappled with how to raise, spend and also control money while politicking and this has largely portrayed electoral processes and outcomes in Nigeria as mere sham, highest bidder's affairs and undemocratic thereby offering no real choices to electorates.

Political parties generate incomes basically from membership/nomination fees, subventions, donations and government grants. Other sources include foreign funding, illicit funding, direct public funding and indirect public funding (Nkwede, 2018).

Essentially, the way and manner in which these political parties raise and handle their internal and external finances depend on both their capacity and their political willingness which researchers have adjudged to be ineffective and inefficient (Ohman, 2014).

Agreed that adequate finance remains a desideratum to political development and democratic dispensation, its effective, efficient and transparent control by the responsible institutions (INEC as in Nigeria) expedient. Recognizing the nitty - gritty of the political party financing and election campaign regulations in Nigeria, the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria empowered the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in section 225 subsection (3 A & B) to handle all electioneering processes and also regulate political party financing and spendings.

Apart from the constitutional provisions, other extant Electoral laws exist (see 2004, 2006 and 2010 Electoral Acts). The 2010 Electoral Act (as amended) repealed the preceding ones. Section 91 (2-7) of the Act provides in clear terms the following as spending limits to political parties and individuals contesting elections in Nigeria respectively.

1. President	-	₦1,000,000,000=
2. Governorship	-	₦200,000,000=
3. Senatorial Seat	-	₦40,000,000=
4. House of Representative	-	₦20,000,000=
5. State Assembly	-	₦10,000,000=
6. Chairmanship to an area council	-	₦10,000,000=
7. Councillorship	-	₦1,000,000=

The act repeals the Electoral Act No. 2, 2006 and Independent National Electoral Commission Act, Cap. 15 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004 and enacted the Electoral Act 2010 to regulate the conduct of Federal State and Area Council elections. The Act again stipulates in section 91(9) that an individual or other

entity shall not donate more than N1, 000,000= to any candidate. The 2010 Electoral Act empowered INEC to regulate election expenses of political parties in Nigeria. Section 92(2) emphasised thus; Election expenses incurred by a political party for the management or the conduct of an election shall be determined by the Commission in consultation with the political parties. Further, section 92(3) states that Election expenses of a political party shall be within 6 months after an election and such return shall be signed by the political party's auditors and counter-signed by the Chairman of the party and be supported by a sworn affidavit by the signatories as to the correctness of its contents. Such returns shall show the amount of money expended by or on behalf of the party on election expenses, the items of expenditure and commercial values of goods and services received for election purposes.

Equally, the Act stipulates that a political party that incurs election expenses beyond the limit stipulated in the 2010 Act commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a maximum fine of N1,000,000= and forfeiture to the Commission (INEC) of the amount by which the expenses exceed the limit set by the commission.

The cardinal aim of this Electoral law is to checkmate access to finance by political parties and to ensure that money does not constitute a veritable source for winning election in Nigeria. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, money plays a pivotal role in every election probably because of pervasive poverty and crass ignorance. Political parties in recent times have manipulated the citizenry and bought them over during electioneering campaigns and even on the Election Day using public resources at the disposal of those at the corridors of power. This is possible because the regulatory body and monitoring units over the years despite the extant laws has not been checkmating individual candidate's expenditures as stipulated by the regulations. Electoral candidates in Nigeria believe that with their money gotten from donations by individuals, corporate bodies that were not always checked, they can spend it above their limit and win election. This has been the situation in Nigeria with political parties and campaign process. It could be this that made Ibeanu (2007) to state that with the wide income disparities in most parts of the country, the devaluation of votes would be very rampant.

IMPLICATIONS OF UNREGULATED POLITICAL PARTIES FINANCING AND ELECTION CAMPAIGNS ON NIGERIA'S POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT :

Whereas scholars and experts alike are in agreement that neither political parties nor democratic processes will ever thrive without adequate funding and appropriation, they are nevertheless, not silent but very equivocal on the negative consequences of unregulated political party financing and spending during election campaigns in any political setting (Nwanegbo, 2018; Daniel 2008; Bryan and Baer, 2005; Ohman, 2014; Pinto-Duschinsky, 2002; Hear, 1960; Austin and Maja, 2003; Alexander and Shiratori, 1994).

Some of these negativities includes but not limited to lack of quality and equality among competing interests, de-legitimization of both the democratic and electioneering processes, unending corruption cases and tendencies to amass wealth illegally by the politicians in order to win elections, reduction of elections to mere sham, outcomes decided by moneybags, reducing democracy to heresy, pre/post elections violence and litigations, lack of due process and abuse of human rights, lack of accountability and probity among politicians as monetization, exchange of banknotes and vote buying gets to inelastic limit etc.

III. CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that political party financing and election campaigns not only undermine democracy, good governance and the rule of law, but also a negation of political development. The introduction of public funding has undeniably made political parties very dependent on state resources. The challenges posed by political party financing in Nigeria have to be tackled, considering its staggering dimensions in the nation with its debilitating effects on the citizenry via; economic, moral, socio-cultural, political and reputational consequences.

POLICY ALTERNATIVES

In the face of current problems and difficulties posed by political party financing and election campaigns in Nigeria, the following recommendations were made:

First, upward and Urgent review of political party finance regulations as well as upward review of political party donations and expenditures.

Secondly, the national assembly should liaise with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in order to ensure effective and efficient enforcement of the extant laws on political parties funding and spendings.

Thirdly, sanctions should be proportional or commensurate with the specific nature of offence and the violation committed by political parties/politicians.

Fourthly, creation of awareness among citizens, electorates and business moguls through National Orientation Agency (NOA) on the dangers of excessive spending by political parties and candidates.

Fifthly, government should develop strong and robust institutions that will deal decisively with the issue of corruption in the country as nobody has ever been tried and jailed in Nigeria on account of using state resources for election campaigns.

Finally, reduction on the cost of governance in Nigeria. The jumbo package for the politicians inevitably promotes elections campaign spending in the country. Until cost of governance is trimmed down, election campaign spending will not be decisively dealt with in the country.

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