



Corruption and Political Party Performance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic; Focus on People's Democratic Party

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Abstract

One of the perennial challenges facing the Nigerian polity is corruption and the political space was not left out in this regard. Despite the fact that political parties are the bedrock of democratic settings as they perform the functions of political recruitment, socialization, articulation as well as strengthening the competition in the political space, lack of ideology, corrupt practices and intra-party contradictions have hindered them from meeting their expectations. This paper interrogated the effects of corruption on political party performance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic with much focus on the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and to proffer solutions on how the menace could be curbed to enhance the internal democracy and potential of the PDP to capture the state power. The paper adopted qualitative research method through the use of secondary data such as journals, textbooks and periodicals and also utilized the clientelism model as a framework of analysis. The study reveals that corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of all democratic institutions in the state including the political parties as the electoral processes have been monetized beyond reasonable doubt. The study, therefore, recommended among others that the democratic institutions in the state such as political parties and the electoral commission be strengthened so as to promote good governance, values ethics and national prosperity. Again, there should be focus on meritocracy in selecting the leadership of political parties and party candidates rather than emphasis on nepotism and relying on patron-client agreements where the patrons decide who and how leaders are elected. This will go along to establish a just, fair and an egalitarian society.

Keywords: Corruption, Election, Fourth Republic, Nigeria, Political Party.

Introduction

The monetization of Nigerian politics continues to shrink the political space as the phenomenon has become a key factor in determining who get the party ticket to contest in an election and those who occupy the leadership of the party itself. The hazard has turned the political atmosphere to a market where the highest bidders determine and control the socio-economic and political affairs of the state as this is evident in the way the politicians spend lavishly during the electoral process by engaging in vote buying and other electoral irregularities [24] Corruption has captured all the structures of the Nigerian

state as there is no aspect of the society that is exempted. In the political context, several concepts have been used to express corruption such as money politics, dollarization of politics and host of others.

It is not a gainsay that money is an essential component of democracy as the electoral process will be a mirage without the use of money. However, it will be a contradiction to democratic tenets if it is used to determine who wield power both at the party level and the state in general as the unrestricted political finances will hinder the survival of democracy [42].

The beauty of democracy is premised on the availability of political parties to compete elections and also serve as watch-dogs in terms of opposition. The survival of democracy would be an illusion without election because there are no better means to change government and transfer political power except through a peaceful and credible election (Sule et al., 2018b).

Theoretically, arguments about groups and association of individuals seeking to control the state power were rejected initially as their appearance was fundamentally incompatible with the radical democratic tradition that was postulated by Rousseau and the liberal doctrine rooted in the philosophy of Locke (Biazon, 2004). However, political parties proliferated and dominated the stage in the 19th century when representative government and suffrage expanded as they serve as the channel of changing political power and also an agent of political participation [29].

The roles of political parties are not limited to the conduction of primary and general elections as they perform the functions of political socialization and recruitment, interest articulation and also bridge the three concentric layers of the state, civil society and government [40] Political parties serve as the machinery for the organization of participation in the conduct of public affairs in a complex society. In furtherance, they sharpened the pattern of political socialization, political recruitment, participation, competition as well as government performance [12].

Despite the importance of the existence of political parties in a democratic system, the uncontrolled use of money during the electoral process such as vote-buying, bribery expensive party's ticket prices among others have crippled the political system as those who are efficacious were relegated and the tune is dictate by the wealthy political class.

With the foregoing explication, this study interrogated the effects of corruption on political parties' performance in the Nigeria's fourth republic and tend to proffer solutions to the menace in order for true democracy to flourish in the polity. In order to accomplish this, the paper was segmented into four sections aside from the introduction. The first part covered the conceptual and theoretical framework; the second part examined the commencement of the fourth republic and the emergence of the PDP; the third part interrogated the manifestation of corruption in the PDP. The last part consisted the conclusion and recommendation.

Conceptual Analysis

The inability of the social science concepts to have a universally acceptable definitions has become part of its norms as various scholars have defined the concepts within the social science disciplines based on their perceptions and ideological background. The concept of corruption and political party are not an

exemption in this wise. However, it is imperative to note that relevance definitions to this study would be considered.

Corruption

The systematic study of corruption is hindered by the lack of adequate definitions as the ambiguity of the concept is attached to the societal reactions because not all kinds of corruptions are sanctioned by the society [26] The conceptual difficulty of corruption is of two folds, the first is the actual conception of the subject matter while the second revolves around the perception of corrupt practices within the socio-political culture of the developing nations [4].

In the word of [27], corruption manifests in variety of ways such as accepting bribe before discharging lawful duties, nepotism, privatization of state properties by the public officers, abuse of official position, electoral bribery and host of others. Corroborating with this, [26] argues that corruption provides an avenue for groups other than political parties to articulate their interests, maintain a channel and get represented in political affairs of the state.

Adopting the sociological prism, [22] conceived corruption as a form of social deviance and the lack of will to respect the norms of social interactions. In furtherance, he opined that it is an allegation on the ineffectiveness of society's socialization functions and weakness of agencies of social control which should punish rather than reward the perpetrators of corruption.

Corruption has led to bad government as the menace has swallowed substantial amount of the national treasury and this inevitably increased the unemployment rate, poverty level as well as promoted illiteracy in the country [2]. It should be noted that part of the traditional values in Nigeria is gift-giving and tributes to leaders as this was captured by Achebe in his popular novel *'Things Fall Apart'* when a young man Okonkwo went to a great man in his community and asked for favor as he presented a cock, coolant and alligator pepper in order to seek for a loan of yam seeds and this action was termed as a polite corruption [31].

Corruption is seen as achieving several advancements through personal networking, paying gratitude money or giving money for usual services. To buttress this point, [17] asserted that corruption is the misuse of public offices for personal and unofficial ends. Broadly speaking, corruption is an illegal act which involves attraction of people in both public and private domains to act contrary to the laid down rules and regulations which normally guide a particular process. The existence of corruption has been one of the bedrocks of challenges facing the African society as those who control the state affairs continue to use the public funds for personal gain and this has hindered development across the continent.

Political Party

The doctrine of direct democracy that was practiced in Anthen cannot be put in place in the modern world and this necessitated the need for representative government. To achieve this aim, there must be groups to compete for the state power and articulate the interests of the masses.

In addendum, one of the prominent factors that distinguish a democratic society from the military rule is the existence of political parties. According to [13], a political party is much more than an organization that seek to control political power but in extension express and harmonize interests and perform the functions of intermediary between the citizens and political society, government and the state.

[21], contends that political party is a group of people who have common perception of how and why the state power should be captured and used. While the ultimate objective of political party is to contest for governmental power through the auspices of elections, it should be noted that the mere existence of political party doesn't simply means that a society is democratic or otherwise as competitive and periodic elections express the tenets of liberal democracy [20].

Salient features differentiate political parties from other socio-political organization in the society as they compete with one another to capture the state power, they have labels that distinguished them from other institutions, they are voluntarily formed association with members having the same ideology [43].

Considering trendy perceptions of political party around the world, members of the public have negative views about many of them. Some of the negative views range from identifying some parties as megalomaniacs, corrupt, lacking ideology, patriarchy, elite dominated, lacking internal democracy, flawed with the grassroot and in some cases aggressive and dangerous (Carothers, 2006 cited in [9]. This view was buttressed by George Washington when he argued that political parties are likely in course of time become channels through which cunning and unprincipled men will subvert the people's power and usurp the reins of government destroying afterwards the apparatus that raised them to unjust dominance [9].

Despite the shortcomings of political parties, they have been able to perform the essential roles of mediating between citizens and the state, recruiting and preparing individual for political leadership, organizing election campaigns, aggregating societal interests, breeding consensus and promoting political communication among others [28]. In this paper, political parties are conceived as one of the prominent ingredients of democracy as they enhance political participation and make the political space more competitive.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted Clientelism as the framework of analysis for explaining the context of the literature and strengthening the discussions and findings. Clientelism is a model of explaining the political economy of election in some democracies like Nigeria and, indeed, worldwide.

Clientelism as a model has been adopted by different scholars in various dimensions to explain the political economy of corruption in the electoral process and the entire political process in democracies worldwide. The origin of the word could be traced to the Roman word 'Clue', which means to submit or to be subservient. The other term, 'Clientele', refers to someone or the group of people pursuing a given political interest on behalf of their clients. At the same time, 'Patronus' means the clients of the aristocrats. The patrons offered their clients incentives in cash, kind, payback, kickbacks and other means in return for political support [32].

Clientelism has four basic assumptions. The first is that the relationship is dyadic in that it involves two parties and processes between the patron and client. The patron controls money, material benefits and appointments while the client controls vote, but there are brokers sometimes. The second assumption is the relationship is always asymmetrical, either vertical or horizontal, where the two actors are not equal in terms of the reward and benefits of the outcome. The third assumption is that the relationship is personal because it is not an official dealing but a personal affair clandestinely and covertly. The fourth assumption is that the relationship is reciprocal because both the patron and client stand to gain personally from the deal.

Clientelism is a model and tool for explaining the political process, which involves vote-buying and compensating opposite voters who switched their votes to the bidder illegally, which can involve corrupt practices and abuse of political office. The above statement simply means that the political process, especially elections, was subverted and manipulated with patronage and corruption that is reminiscent of the emergence of corrupt public office holders who, in return, use the advantage of holding a public office for private gain such as personal enrichment and rewarding of political allies instead of just, fair and equitable distribution of public projects. Nigeria was a good example of this practice, where vote-buying has been the norm and constant practice during an election [11].

The patron client framework entails the offering of money, food items and other material benefits to influence the voters in general elections and the delegates in intra-party elections during the selection of the party officials, flagbearers of the party in a general election and the allocation of political appointments, projects and distribution of resources are premised on those who support the political leaders [34].

The above assertion was evident in the electoral process in Nigeria since the transition to civilian rule in 1999 as all the elections were full of irregularities such as vote buying, bribery and corruption, pre and post electoral crises among others as all the candidates haven gotten funds from their patron spend lavishly to win the political race. Part of the adverse effect of this menace is the suppression of democracy as the voters who are willing to use their votes to effect changes in the state are overshadowed by the majority who sell their votes for material benefits therefore promoting corruption and ineptitude leadership.

Clientelism model is relevance to this work because it is a clear illustration of the happenings in Nigeria's political space both internally during the party primaries and the general elections. The weakness of the model is that other factors also influence the political behaviors of the electorates such as religion and tribal affiliations.

Party Politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

The death of General Sanni Abacha in 1998 who was then the head of state and the efforts of General Abdul Salam Abubakar to install a civilian rule gave birth to the fourth republic in Nigerian history as this witnessed the formation of different political parties who compete for power in the General Election that was held in 1999 [3].

Suffice to note is the fact that party politics is one of the inalienable ingredients of democratic setting as the activities will give the electorates the chance to have different options in terms of voting and political affiliation and by extension this will strengthen political participation and make it more competitive.

The lift of ban on political party and elections in the country marked the emergence of many political associations who are willing to be registered as political parties to compete in the 1999 General Election.

The pressure to decongest the political space made the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to stipulate that the requirements for any association to be registered as a political party is the ability of such group to win at least 10 % of the total votes in the council elections Of 1998 in at least two third of the states across the federation.

The results of the council elections affirmed that only three of the associations were strong enough to be registered as political parties' ad these were Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) ad they were granted the approval to contest in the 1999 general election across the local, state and federal level.

Literature revealed that political parties in the fourth republic lack sociopolitical ideology for recruiting and securing membership loyalty, policy inconsistency, absence of financial autonomy and genuine national outlook, cross carpeting as a result of weak internal democracy, inter and intra party conflicts among Others [6]; [19].

The dominance of the PDP made its policy inconsistency, internal conflicts and challenges of subordination between the leadership of the party and members holding political Offices more intense than its counterparts [16]. Some Of the aforementioned problems could be traced to the root of the institutions, structures and even legal framework necessary for democratic institutionalization in the polity as some of these were planted and germinated in less than a year (1998-1999). The lack of adequate social policies guiding the pursuit of power, the ideological gap shaping the campaigns, selfish interests of the party elites and the clumsy nature of the Organizational structures through which they manage their affairs are all manifestations of the consequences of the short period. All these factors contributed substantially in the formation of a twisted party system in which a single party dominated the political space for sixteen years while the other parties provided weak and ineffective opposition [5]; [16].

As it has been noted that political parties are the core agents of democratization, the reverse is the case in Nigeria as elections have been the weakest link in our quest for democracy [37]. This was evident as the institutions that are recognized to facilitate and participate in elections have not taken the course with the best ethical and professionalism (Adetula, 2008 cited in [13]).

Political parties turned to machineries of de-democratization as internal democracy and selection of candidates have become a contentious issue making the electoral process a do or die affair [20] Political parties in the fourth republic tend to formulate channels for antagonistic relationship and promotes enduring Oppositions frame of mind. The elites use them as apparatus for sustaining division, fighting among themselves, capturing the state power and frightening their opposition [38].

Prominent among the features of the fourth republic is the emergence of many political parties that do not primarily seek to contest elections but are limited in aims and Objectives. The number of political parties increased to 30 in 2002 but only 16 of them fielded candidates for the 2003 general elections [37]. Monetized politics, political wandering, indiscipline and lack of cohesion characterized party politics in Nigeria's fourth republic as some politicians clamored for registration of more political parties and the refusal of the federal government led to legal tussle [33]. The court order permitting the freedom of association Opened more ways for party registration. although about 30 political parties were in existence during the 2003 elections, the number proliferated to 63 as the 2011 general election approaches [33].

Evidently Nigerian political parties have continued to abandon their primary functions Of recruitment, political socialization and healthy competition, [15] argued in defense Of political parties when he Opined that it is not to say that all has been bad since May 1999 but the survival of democracy require urgent policy actions such as commitment to federalism, adherence to separation of power and strengthening the democratic promoting institutions such as INEC and Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC).

Corruption and the Pep in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

The formation of the PDP could be traced to the agitation and the political movement of the G14 against the tyrannical rule of the late General Sanni Abacha who was the head of state then. The lift of ban on political party to register as a full fledged political party to compete in the 1999 general elections and Alex Ekwueme was appointed as the chairman of the party [39].

Now and then, corruption has captured the entire sectors of the Nigerian state as the menace is at the center of crises of governance and legitimacy, the demonstration of a firm democratic setting, implementation of the rule of law, development and the provision of social amenities in the polity [10]. The cases of vote buying have been in existence in Nigerian politics from time immemorial as it has been a determining factor of who get the party's ticket contest in an election and those who hold the leadership positions of the party [35].

Interrogating the nexus between corruption and political parties, it is pertinent to examine how parties finance their programs starting from registration, sales of nomination and expression of interest forms and organization of campaigns.

The mode of financial accumulation for campaigns and other electoral processes have aroused the interests of scholars [14]. Even though the use of money cannot be eliminated in the electoral process, the use of money by politicians while contesting for public offices is appalling and that depicts the lousy political tradition in the state.

The use of money to determine who get what is also known as money politics which is one of the popular political maxims and demanding variable in evaluating the degree of corruption in the state [8]. In one of the addresses presented at a conference by the former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo who is a strong PDP member he bewailed the peril connected with the unrestricted use of money in the

electoral process. Politicians spend more than enough funds to attain political offices and the quest to redeem the expenses propel them to divert the public funds for personal use slowing the momentum of development in the society. The foregoing speech led to the critical question ‘can we not change from politics of materialism to politics of ideas and development’? [23].

The essence of party financing has been the root of internal contradiction in PDP as this represents the economic structure which Karl Marx called the foundation upon which is erected the superstructure of politics, law and government [25] In the modern state especially the third world, poverty, high illiteracy level and underdevelopment as well as socio-cultural factors have contributed to the success of clientelist strategies of party financing. For instance, the PDP campaign team launched a movement in 2002 in preparation for the 2003 general election and billions of naira were realized and the donors (patrons) were compensated with contracts and political appointments. Furthermore, the Anambra State of PDP chapter was financed by Chief Emeka Offor and Chris Uba between 1999 to 2006 and dictates the direction of projects and appointments in the state.

Evidently, the case of vote buying and godfatherism played a major role in the electioneering process of the 2007 general election that saw the emergence of Umar Musa Aradia and Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP as the president and vice president respectively as both candidates also affirmed the irregularities in the electoral process [30]. In addition, the PDP presidential primaries in its planning for the 2019 general election was fuddle with vote buying, bribery and corruption, imposition of candidates and the declaration of the highest bidder as the winner. It was presumed that one of the contestants wooed the delegates for as much as \$5000 each amounting to about #5 billion and the candidates will also sort the party excos and other big wigs of the party. All these are nothing but a slap on the face of the state as the representatives who are expected to vote for credible candidates decided to sell their votes as money is involved [7].

The PDP traditionally espouse primaries as a means to select those who occupy the leadership positions of the party and also in the selection of the party’s flag bearers in elections across all levels in the country. Despite the party’s constitutional provision that all registered members of the party are qualified to compete for party offices and get the party’s ticket to contest in elections, there was internal contradiction as section 16.4 of the party’s constitution buttressed that any member of the party contesting for elections must be financially sound. The above assertion has made it easy for the wealthy political class to hijack the party thus, majority of the congresses and conventions always end with serious crises. In corroboration with the foregoing, a strong member of the party opined that the party should be dissolved when he lamented that the party has been dominated by strange corrupted associate whose aims is to share the national cake [1].

Intra party democracy can be examined if the members of the party don’t have a say in the decision-making process of the party. Part of corrupt practices of the PDP surfaced in the preparation for the 2007 general election as the late President Musa Aradia was imposed on the party by the powerful members and this led to the withdrawal of other aspirants such as Peter Odilia, Donald Duke among others. The

move to correct this anomaly made President Jonathan to send a bill to the National Assembly seeking the amendment of the 2010 Electoral Act which was later rejected by the Senate [36].

The PDP lacks internal democracy as the party rules are nothing but mere words. Unofficial provisions become the norms guiding the nomination of candidates at both party level and general elections. The absence of internal democracy has to a great extent contributed to the crises that surrounded the party since its inception in 1999 [18].

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study revealed that corruption is a multifaceted challenge that has eaten deep into the fabrics of the African society at large and Nigeria is not an exemption. The paper concluded that political parties in the Nigeria's fourth republic failed to meet their expectations due to lack of internal democracy and coherent socio-political ideology to guide their activities. In the course of the investigation, it was discovered that party finance largely comes from the wealthy political class who either contest in an election or have anointed candidates.

The study therefore recommends that the democratic institutions in the state such as political party and electoral commission be fortified to promote democratic rule in the country. In addition, there should be a shift from monetization of politics and patron-client arrangement to meritocracy in selecting the party leaders and candidates for elections. Also, political party financing should be regulated and monitored by relevant institutions such as EFCC and Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC).

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