

MONETIZATION OF POLITICS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN ABIA STATE IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

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Abstract

This paper explored the implications of monetization of politics for political development in Abia state, Nigeria. It examined the influence of money and material inducement in politics which expressed itself in Abia state in the Fourth Republic as well as the implications for political development with respect to mass participation and gender equality in the State. Two theories: Investment theory of party competition, and Golden Mean were used as theoretical frameworks. Survey design was also adopted and the sample size was 400, systematically drawn from four LGAs in Abia State using the stratified sampling technique. Primary and secondary sources were explored for gathering data, while data gathered were analysed qualitatively and descriptively. The study found that monetization of politics in Abia State in the Fourth Republic created room for less mass participation in politics in Abia as the political system cum political positions have been occupied by the same set of persons from 1999 to 2019. It was found that there was less women participation which was a demonstration of gender inequality in the state. The study recommended amongst other things, ensuring gender equality in terms of mass participation in politics through proper sensitization programmes in Abia and Nigeria at large, demonetization of politics through costs-cuts in electioneering in the country, as well as slashing salaries and entitlements of political office holders to conform to educational qualifications in line with Nigeria's public service salary and entitlements scheme.

Key words: Monetization, Politics, Political Development, Investment, Inducement, Entitlements.

1. Introduction

It has been established that money is inextricably tied to political activities in societies across the world through various electioneering processes, such as the process of clinching party tickets, election campaigns, etc. In Nigeria and many other countries, these processes have been conceived and perceived to be money-driven. However, the implication of the role money plays in the contemporary political system in Nigeria has made it imperative to investigate its implication on political advancement and good governance.

It is a social reality that the relationship between individuals in a political community is often characterized by economic undertones. In other words, the issues of who gets what, when, and how in a political community usually boil down to interests of economic nature. The processes of election or selection for leadership in a State involve relationships that are economic in nature between the political aspirants and the masses. This process manifests in the establishment of a voluntary association formed on the principle of freedom of association through which aspirants make known their political and leadership intentions.

This voluntary association formed by people driven by similar ideological persuasion for the purpose of winning political power recognized by the law cum constitution of the country is what is referred to as a political party. It is through the platform of this political party that candidates show their interest to be elected into political leadership positions. It is also on that platform that the candidates organise political rallies and campaign to create public awareness and political education. This is common wherever democracy is practiced as a system of governance also known as representative government where the people through periodic elections, vote in or elect their representatives.

There may be nothing wrong in having political parties or organising political rallies and campaigns for awareness creation, but there is everything wrong with monetizing the processes through which political aspirants get into political offices. Monetizing the electoral process through expensive party nominations, interest-form costs, and campaign costs, tend to corrupt the system since the aspirant or candidate would strive to recover the losses upon assumption of office by hook or crook. This is what this paper conceptualizes as the monetization of politics. When politics is monetized, political development is put at risk.

While, monetization of politics is associated with the use of different forms of monetary or material inducement on citizens by politicians to secure votes and emerge victorious in elections (Okunloye, 2017; Ovuwasa, 2013; Audu, 2016; Chul et al., 2017). Political development denotes equality in terms of mass participation in politics irrespective of gender or economic status, and recruitment on the basis merit. It also involves capacity building in terms of government performance, efficiency and effectiveness through political office holders. Another dimension of political development is differentiation in terms of division of labour and specialization in governmental functions (Pye, 1965; Almond & Powel, 1966; Ake, 1979). In this Fourth Republic, monetization of politics has the potential of undermining political development in Nigeria and Abia in particular.

2. Theoretical Framework/Conceptual Review

The Golden Mean Theory propounded by Aristotle (ca 350 B.C.E/1996) and Investment Theory of Party Competition (The Golden Rule) by Thomas Ferguson (1995) were used as theoretical framework of analysis in

the study.

2.1.1 The Golden Mean Theory:

This Aristotelian theory (Aristotle, 1996) explicates the outcomes of excessive possession or acquisition of anything, particularly property by elected public officials. It also applies to the size and population of a state, cost of party nomination forms, compensation packages, political office holders' welfare benefits, and so on. For the purpose of this paper the symbolic importance of the Golden Mean applies to streamlining and retooling a state and her political system for political development. In other words, an overabundance of even the most valuable things in life would not provide any advantage to the owner, rendering the overabundance unnecessary if not detrimental (Ndu, 1998). It is equally a general conception that the rich's full stomach (as a result of excess) denies them sleep. The theory proposes, however, that moderation enhances the effectiveness and performance of individual citizens in a state in the process planning and implementation of public policies for the general good or welfare of all citizens (Aristotle, 1996; Norman, 2007; Perry, 2007).

2.1.2 Investment Theory of Party Competition

Thomas Ferguson's (1995) investment theory emphasizes the dynamics and implications of money-driven politics on a country's political development. The theory's central argument and relevance to this study are that the cost of campaigning, information, nominations/interest forms, and so on in many political systems is prohibitively expensive and cannot be incurred solely by political candidates. As a necessary consequence, political parties and candidates seek investors in order to stand a chance of achieving victory in the electoral process. It also believes that democracy as rule by the people is an ephemeral concept because business or wealthy elites commonly referred to as investors, not voters, dominate the political system.

In the same vein, it is projects that make voters to choose to support candidates or political parties whose manifestos represent their interests, but still the reality remains that the electorate do not ever have the opportunity to explicitly choose candidates based on any public policy evaluation. With this, it suggests that electoral/campaign reforms such as cost-cutting, community and voter (mass) participation in both the preference of political representatives and investing in the victory of the chosen candidates during elections will result in fair representation and transparency to the masses (Ferguson, 1995; Einstein, 1945).

2.2.1 Concept of Monetization of Politics

It is argued that electoral processes and political activities in a democratic system ab initio involve the use of money. To this effect, every country practicing democracy establishes for itself constitutional provisions that stipulate the extent to which money is used in electoral cum political related activities. For example, in Nigeria, the 2006 as well as 2010 Electoral Act (as amended) stipulates the degree of the involvement of money in

electioneering in the country. Sections 91(9), 93(2)(b), etc provide certain amounts to be used in various electoral processes. This shows that the use of money in politics may not be completely ruled out in electoral processes hence its recognition by various laws. However, monetizing the process through expensive party nominations and interest form costs, campaign costs, etc (which the aspirant or candidate must recover by hook or by crook upon winning election and assume office) simply means monetization of politics.

So, monetization of politics is captured here as the procedure of excessively using various forms of monetary cum material extra incentive on community members for guaranteeing support, willingness to participate, or getting votes during elections. It is also a process where political stakeholders seek undue favor to make concessions or jeopardize the electoral process in order to emerge triumphant in party or general elections (Okunloye, 2017).

His contention is that when voting at intra-party and general election levels becomes a game of political zero-sum or winner takes all/win at all cost by all means (including illegitimate or extra-constitutional means) and voters begin to vote in accordance with the ability of politicians to offer the highest bid or material inducements, then politics or electoral politics is said to be monetized.

The above conceptualization given by Okunoye is partly in consonance with that proffered by Adetunla (2013) who argues that monetization of politics actually involves expensive rent-a-crowd political rallies, press conferences, political processions/demonstration of opposition or support, voting, manipulation of voting procedure against or in favor of specific political parties and candidates, provision of security coverage/report to compromise electoral process, etc, based on offered or accepted monetary or material inducements.

Monetization of politics in the same light refers to a condition in which candidates for elective positions utilize money or money is utilized on their behalf as an enticement to skew the process and get support. In this situation, voters are persuaded through material inducement to vote not according to their wishes and convictions, but on the force of money that has changed hands (Owasa, 2013). His conceptualization sees vote-buying and vote-selling as the major ingredients of monetization of politics.

The implication of this definition is that monetization of politics, at the mention of the concept, explains that there is an illegal presence of money in the political and electoral processes which has the potential of altering the electoral outcome with attendant consequences. Elective offices have become merchandised to be procured by the highest bidder, and those who participate see it as a means to recover investment and maximize profit. Politics now becomes a kind of business, and this business of politics manifests simply in form of diverting funds away from the people's desperate needs for real development in their lives (Obasanjo, 2003; 2015).

Both Nwaorgu (2003) and Mandel and Mandie (1999) have also lamented on the capital intensive nature of election and its consequences and are of the view that when private wealth is employed to finance expensive political campaigns, political equality is put at risk as paying for expensive electoral campaigns with individual donations can only place wealthy individuals in developing countries in a position to exercise greater political influence than the economically less-privileged.

2.2.2 Political Development

In the literature of Political Science, political development has a variety of meanings, but its discourse fixates on the progression and advancement of changes that exponentially dissipate to diverse groups in order to modify its socio-political structure from tradition to modernization (Moshood, 2014).

Pye (1965) identified three essential attributes of political development. These are: Equality – mass participation, universal laws, recruitment on the basis of merit rather than secretive criteria; Capacity – governmental performance, efficiency and effectiveness, secular orientation; and Differentiation – diffusion and specialization of structures, division of labour, and specialization based on integration. In the same vein, political development has been seen by Rustow (1979) as “an increasing national political unity plus a broadening base of political participation. It has also been seen by Riggs (cited in Sikander, 2005) as a “process of politicization: increasing participation or involvement of the citizen in state activities, in power calculations and consequences.” It is a general contention, as buttressed by Sikander, that political development cannot take place in the absence of effective institutions that allow mass participation. Simply put, political development depends on political participation whereas political participation depends on institutionalization.

Having noted the above, it follows that there can be no mass participation in a political system that is designed to accommodate the rich few creating room for gender cum economic inequality; no division of labour or specialization, where those in the political system buy their way into leadership positions without regard to their level of education, areas of specialization or sources of wealth; no efficiency and effectiveness as the state may lack the capacity for proper evaluation of the political-businessmen that constitute the political system, as is the case with Nigeria. No organizational targets, no output measurement, but the country continues borrowing to fund recurrent expenditure even when productivity levels of different institutions remain low.

1. Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted survey design because it was considered suitable to the subject-matter which could not have been properly investigated in a constrained environment. The choice of the design was based on the assumption

of Amara and Amaechi (2010, p.17) that in field survey, “the more realistic the situation, the stronger the outcome”

Study Area

The study area of this research was Abia State of Nigeria created on the 27th August, 1991 out of the old Imo State (Ukaonu, 2011, p.1; Ofurum, 2020, p.1). Geographically, the state is located in the eastern part of Nigeria and covers an area of about 5,243.7 sq. km which is approximately 5.8 per cent of the total land area of Nigeria. The state shares common boundaries with Ebonyi, Rivers, Cross River, Akwa-Ibom , Imo state, and Anambra states (Kalu, 2009).

Population for the Study

The population of the study comprised all the people of Abia State totaling 3,727,300 (National Bureau Statistics, 2016) drawn from all the 17 (seventeen) local government areas of the state.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample size of the study was randomly drawn from four local government areas in the State with a population of 831, 500. The sample size was calculated using Taro Yamane’s (1973) formula. From a sample size of 400, 100 respondents were selected, each from four local government areas using stratified random technique adapted from Ezeah (2004).

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The study used both primary and secondary sources of data. While the former included oral interview, structured questionnaire and personal observation, the latter included texts materials from different authors, journals on the subject matter, and internet websites. The study also used qualitative and quantitative methods to present and analyze gathered data.

4. Results and Discussions:

4.1 Monetization of Politics and Political Development in Nigeria and Abia State

Monetization of politics in Nigeria has had negative implications on political development in Abia State. It has created a scenario where, in most cases, those who occupy certain political positions might not be adequately fit for the positions they occupy.

Table 4.1.1: Some Nigerian Ministers, Portfolios and Academic Qualifications as at 2019 Against the Principles of Political Development known as Merit under Equality and Specialization under Differentiation

S/N	Portfolio	Qualification(s)
1	Minister of Petroleum	WAEC
2	Minister of State, Environment	LLB
3	Minister of Education	B. Sc. Accounting /MSC Journalism

4	Minister of State Industry	B. A. English/ PGDE
5	Minister of State for Petroleum	B. Sc. English Linguistics
6	Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development	B. Sc. Sociology and Anthropology.
7	Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment	LL.B. Hons.
8	Minister of State for Education	PhD Law
9	Minister of Water Resources	B. A. Modern History
10	Minister of Environment	B. A. Law
11	Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development	Certificate from Business School
12	Minister of Works and Housing	LL. B.
13	Minister of State, Science and Technology	LL. B. Hons.
14	Minister of State, Labour and Employment	Chartered Accountant.
15	Minister of Interior	B. Sc. Mechanical Engineering
16	Minister of Transportation	B. Sc. English Studies and Literature (a degree holder not a police man)
17	Minister of Police Affairs	MBA Business Administration
19	Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management	PhD Chartered Accountant
20	Minister of State Mines and Steel	

Source: Culled from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/347816-full-list-portfolios-of-buharis-44-ministers-2019-2023.html>

With such assignment of duties which negate the principle of merit, issues of specialization, performance, efficiency and effectiveness may be relegated to the background in the Nigerian political system. In fact, it appears that provided the candidate has money to buy vote and the conscience of party leaders and of the masses or is connected to the ruling elites, the issue of specialization is downplayed.

Presently, the President, Muhammadu Buhari, is also the Minister of Petroleum, in a dual capacity, which could be referred to as self-appointment. Meanwhile, under the present constitutional arrangement, every public office holder is accountable to the National assembly, and by virtue of sections 88 and 89 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), when the National Assembly is conducting an enquiry on public affairs where money has been appropriated, any public officer can be summoned for explanation. In a situation where the president makes himself a minister as is the case with Nigeria today, what happens where there is the need for the Minister of Petroleum to be summoned? Would he be coming in the capacity of a President or a Minister? The answers to these bugging questions lie with Pye's analyses of political development that emphasizes Equality in terms of mass participation, universal laws, recruitment on the basis of merit rather than secretive criteria; Capacity in terms of governmental performance, efficiency and effectiveness, secular orientation; and Differentiation with respect to specialization and division of labour. The Minister of State Mines and Steel (Uche Ogah) is from Abia state with PhD in Accounting. His records showed that he had been in oil-related businesses before venturing into politics. Meanwhile, the constitutional arrangement allows the president (whether academically qualified or not) to appoint himself the Minister of Petroleum. That is an error.

4.2. High Cost of Politics and Mass Participation in Abia State

From 1999 to 2019, Abia State has had the same category of persons in different political positions. From the offices of the Governor, Senate, House of Representatives, House of Assembly, Chairmen, and of course, Councillors. These politicians and others that were not covered in this study for time and convenience had

grown politically from one political position to another irrespective of their level of performance in office in terms of service delivery and development of the State. Having the same set of people tussling around the political landscape of a state is against the principles of political development that emphasize mass participation.

For instance, Orji Uzor Kalu rose from the position of a governor of the State between 1999 and 2007 to become a senator in 2015. The same was the case of his successor, T.A. Orji, who equally rose from the post of the governor of the State between 2007 and 2015 to become a senator in 2019. His son also joined the vanguard and became a House of Assembly member in the same 2019 (a case of father and son in the same administrative dispensation). Another clear case of continuity is that of Uzoma Abonta who served in about four different administrations (from both victories at electoral polls and post electoral court cases). The same goes with Enyinnaya Abaribe. Another is Eric Acho Nwakanma who was a House of Assembly member in 1999 and later a two-time Deputy Governor under Orji Uzor Kalu and T.A Orji's administrations between 2007 and 2015. He was equally at the polls in 2007 for senatorial position but lost to Enyinnaya Abaribe before he was nominated by Orji as the Deputy Governor.

When the same categories of persons continue to be at the helm of affairs of the state, not on the grounds of effective service delivery but because they can afford the monetary involvement of expensive politics, political development is compromised. Below, Table 4.2 demonstrates the implication of monetization of politics in terms of women participation in Abia State in the Fourth Republic.

Table 4.2 On Participation in Politics with Respect to Gender amidst High Cost of Nigerian Politics in Abia State in the Republic against the Principle of Political Development Known as Mass Participation Under Equality

Political office	Gender and Percentage of Elected Members	1999	2019
House of Rep	Percentage of Men	87.5%	75%
	Percentage of Women	12.5%	25%
Senate	Percentage of Men	100%	100%
	Percentage of Women	0%	0%
Governorship	Percentage of Men	100%	100%
	Percentage of Women	0%	0%
House of Assembly	Percentage of Men	100%	95.8%
	Percentage of Women	0%	4.2%
Chairmanship	Percentage of Men	100%	100%
	Percentage of Women	0%	0%
Councillors	Percentage of Men	100%	80.4%
	Percentage of Women	0%	19.6%

Source: Study's calculations from the data extracted from INEC Electoral Reports from 1999-2019.

The data in table 4.2 revealed that there was low women participation in politics in Abia state. From 1999 to 2019, no woman was elected governor in the state. From 1999 to 2003, it was a total of almost 0% of women in politics in Abia as it was only one woman that was in the House of Assembly. In each of the administrations, the

number of elected women in Abia was within 12.5 to 0% on average even when the state had and still has a handful of highly educated and intelligent women that would have spurred development in the state if given the opportunity as it is a truism that women are harbingers of development. The reality of that assertion can only be established when the women are given the opportunity to fully participate in politics on a level political playing ground devoid of excessive demonstration of wealth in the name of political awareness creation called party campaigns and rallies.

5.1 Conclusion

The paper concludes that monetization of politics in Nigeria has negative implications on political development in Abia State in the fourth republic. Amongst other things, there was inequality in terms of mass participation in politics as women and the economically less privileged could not participate in contesting election because of high cost of party forms, campaign costs, etc.; selection of political office holders was on the basis of political alliance and godfatherism devoid of merit (an aspect of equality in political development); women that were supposed to be harbingers of development were discouraged from participation in politics in the state. In fact, voluntary involvement of the masses in political activities in the state was truncated as the same categories of persons have been occupying different political offices from 1999 to 2019 whether effective and efficient or not in Abia.

5.2 Recommendations

1. Ensuring gender equality in terms of mass participation in politics through proper sensitization programmes in Abia and Nigeria at large.
2. Demonetization of politics through costs-cuts in electioneering in the country.
3. Salaries and entitlements of political office holders slashed to conform to educational qualifications in line with Nigeria's public service salary and entitlements scheme.

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