

African Research Review: An International Multidisciplinary Journal, Ethiopia

AFRREV Vol. 13 (4), Serial No 56, September, 2019: 37-50

ISSN 1994-9057 (Print) ISSN 2070-0083 (Online)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/afrev.v13i4.4>

Stomach Infrastructure: The Poverty of the Nigerian Electorate

Jaja, Jones M.

Professor of African and Social History
Department of History and International Diplomacy
Rivers State University, Port Harcourt
Rivers State, Nigeria
E-mail: jonesalali@yahoo.com
Tel: +2348033168998; +2348056049778

Agumagu, Joy

Department of Educational Foundations
Rivers State University
Port Harcourt, Rivers State

Abstract

After nearly fifty-nine years of Independence, Nigeria is by all standards of measurement, a poor country. Poverty is endemic in Nigeria. As a result of this, money politics and vote buying have taken the centre stage in political activities. This is because parties and candidates have shown by their conduct during political campaigns, that good party manifestoes and integrity of candidates jostling for public offices are no longer sufficient to guarantee electoral success; thus, the resort to vote buying. On the other hand, the electorates too have obviously demonstrated cynical electoral behaviour by the readiness to sell their votes to the highest bidder. This uncharitable practice constitutes a blemish on public policy and on the electoral process. Politicians influence the electorate with money, food and other items by politicians. The paper argued that democracy does not thrive in a poverty infested environment and thus attributes the major challenges facing the present democratic experiment in Nigeria to the existence of poverty on a large scale. The paper observed that electioneering in Nigeria has been marred by contradictions that threaten objectivity in voting for a preferred candidate during elections. It concluded that to sustain Nigeria's nascent democracy, the political class

must embrace good governance through prudent use of available resources, provision of critical infrastructures and social amenities, conduct of free and fair elections, and the promotion of accountability, transparency and the rule of law.

Introduction

The concept of poverty defies a single universally accepted definition. It has come to mean different things to different people; it has been defined variously as a humiliating dependence (Narayan *et al.*, 2000, p. 30), lack of multiple resources that lead to hunger and physical deprivation (Eze, 2009, p. 446), “moneylessness” and “powerlessness” (Yakubu & Aderonmu, 2010, p. 192), levels of income that are inadequate for well-being (NDRI, 2009, p. 2) among others. Poverty has various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illnesses; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by a lack of participation in decision making and in civil, social and cultural life... Absolute poverty is a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to services (Mattes *et al.*, 2003, p. 2).

While most of these manifestations of poverty are rife in Nigeria, there are also compelling evidence to show that the trends are on the rise. Estimates have indicated that about 70% of Nigerians live in absolute poverty (about 84 million people) (AFRODAD2005, p. 3). Similarly, Ogwumike and the World Bank 1999-2005 reports clearly shows a rising profile of Nigerian population living below poverty line from 43% in 1994; 66% in 1996 to over 70% in 2004 (Eze, 2009). According to Anger (2010, p.140) the severity of poverty in Nigeria is equally glaring when other indicators of services and development are considered.

Poverty is a debilitating circumstance in which individuals or groups are socially and economically denied the capacity to meet their basic existential needs in such a manner that not only encumbers them from making meaningful contribution to the socioeconomic development of their immediate community, but also disenfranchises them from the political process.

Poverty in Nigeria

Nigeria is a West African country with about 170 million people (Ploch, 2012). It is by far the most populous country in the whole of Africa (Ucha 2010, p. 48) and hosts about “one-sixth of the black population in the world” (Chukwuemeka2009, p. 405). It is a country that is highly endowed with human and natural resources. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2004 reported that Nigeria's “crude oil reserves were estimated at 24 billion barrels in 2001” (USAID, 2007, p. 1), and it has the 8th largest deposit of natural gas in the world (Chukwuemeka 2009, p. 405). By 2002, agriculture comprised 30 percent, mining and quarrying 37 percent, services 29 percent and manufacturing 4 percent of GDP (USAID 2007, p. 1), with over \$500 billion in petroleum export since independence (Lewis, 2006).

Despite the great endowments in both human and natural resources, particularly, the huge oil wealth, Nigeria remains a poor country with per capita income average of \$350 as at 2003 (USAID, 2007). In the words of Nwaobi, “Nigeria presents a paradox” (Oshewolo, 2010, p. 264), owing to the fact that since independence, majority of its population has remained poor

in the midst of abundance. The UNDP has classified the country as the 141st poorest nation on human development index. In its report, Nigeria is considered one of the 20th poorest countries in the world with 70% of the population classified as poor and 54.4% living in absolute poverty (Ugoh and Ukpere, 2009, p. 849). Similarly, about 70.2 percent of the Nigerian population lives on less than \$1 a day, while 90.8 percent lives on less than \$2 a day (Oshewolo, 2010, p. 267). The state of poverty in Nigeria is compounded by the widening inequality between the rich and the poor as “up to 95 percent of this great wealth is controlled by about 0.01 percent of the population” (Oshewolo 2010, p. 265). Grim statistics of the population of Nigerians in abject poverty released by the National Bureau of Statistics stated that about 112 million Nigerians live below the poverty line. This followed another depressing disclosure by the World Bank, which also said that the population of Nigerians in poverty has increased considerably. The figure represents about 67 per cent of the entire population.

Amis and Rakodi rightly observed that the major impediment to democracy in Africa is poverty. Masses are easily cornered, brainwashed and their right of choices manipulated to a point that some of them are susceptible to bribery and can be used as political thugs to cause confusion, harassment or intimidate an opponent during elections (Maiangwa, 2009, p. 349). Poverty decreases both participation in democratic life and popular support for democracy (Mattes, et al, 2003, p. 35). Since the return to multi-party democracy in 1999, the political space has been the exclusive preserve of the elite as majority of the population have been excluded from the political process. While there seems to be a consensus that mass poverty could cast a shadow on democratic consolidation, “precisely why poverty undermines democracy, however, has been much less clear” (Mattes, et al 2003, p. 1). Thus, the focus of this paper is to interrogate the subject of poverty, inequality and the challenges of democratic consolidation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

Poverty in all its manifestations and magnifications is antithetical to development. Therefore, we cannot meaningfully talk about development without addressing what is happening to poverty as it is in Nigeria. Poverty is one of the major problems against development in Nigeria. As in most developing countries, this has been the remote cause of almost all the social ills in the country. Despite her abundant human and material resources, Nigeria has been classified as one of the poorest countries with high suffering indices (Chika, 2004).

Poverty is often defined as lack of adequate income transfer and severed access to basic and pressing amenities. Looking at it critically, we can redefine it as the lack of access to standard social life, as in the case of contemporary Nigeria. The rhetoric is that democracy is expected to ease the poverty of the people more than any other form of government; contemporary Nigerian democracy has failed to give credence to this cliché. Deng (1996), Atoloye (1997) and Englama and Bamidele (1997), defined poverty as “lack of the basic necessities of life.” Based on these concepts, Anyanwu (1997) categorized the following as poor, especially within the Nigerian context:

1. Households or individuals below the poverty line and whose income are insufficient to provide for their basic needs,
2. Households or individuals lacking access to basic service, political contracts and other forms of support:
3. People in isolated rural areas who lack essential infrastructures;

4. Households headed by women whose nutritional needs are not being met adequately;
5. Persons who have lost their jobs and those who are unable to find employment as a result of economic reforms, social reforms and accidents or disaster and those who are in danger of becoming 'new poor' and
6. Ethnic minorities, who are marginalized, deprived and persecuted economically, socially, culturally and politically.

From the above, it means what is considered as poverty has everything to do with one's inability to meet their basic needs.

Stomach Infrastructure

The necessities of life such as electricity supply, water supply, employment and quality education are lacking in the Nigerian society. Democracy which is adjudged to be the best form of government all over the world is also being constantly assaulted in Nigeria due to the phenomenon of money politics and stomach infrastructure. Although, Nigeria enthroned democratic governance in the fourth republic on May 29th, 1999, the dividends of democracy to the people are very scant and far apart. This is because the concept and practice of democracy appears to be at variance in Nigeria. Money and vote buying have vitiated the good qualities of democracy in the country. The role that money and vote buying play in Nigeria politics today have earned them a dominant position in the election of officers into position of authority where they can authoritatively decide who gets what, when and how. Money seems to have taken the centre stage in the political process in most countries and in Nigerian politics, it is, sadly, now playing an increasing critical role to such an extent that the word, 'money politics' with a pejorative connotation, have crept into the country's political lexicon" (Davies 2006, p. 5). The problem with this situation is that the electoral process is often compromised resulting in elections not being free and fair.

It is pertinent to observe that it is not in any way being suggested that the use of money by political parties or any person or group of persons in politics has inherent corruptive influence. The truth is that money is needed for sundry services and logistics such as mobilization for political campaigns and rallies, printing of posters and manifestoes, production of party emblems and other symbols, etc. The only worry, however, is the corrupting influence of money and vote-buying, and their negative impact on good governance in Nigeria. Poverty has made electorates to sell their voting rights, leading to the election of corrupt and arrogant politicians who neither have respect for the rule of law or genuine desire for sustenance of the democratic system.

The concept of the 'stomach infrastructure' has gradually crept into the Nigerian political lexicon. It can be traced to the shock victory of PDP's Ayodele Peter Fayose over the then-incumbent APC's governor Kayode Fayemi in the 2014 Ekiti gubernatorial elections. He was accused of utilizing the 'stomach infrastructure' to entice the electorate. This, to me, is highly misplaced. The concept of the stomach infrastructure is not an entirely new phenomenon. It has always been in existence, dating back to the days of the pre-independence regional elections across the country. Politicians who appealed to the conscience of the masses via their stomach always had the upper hand against those who tried to use other measures. From then till now, almost all the elections that have been conducted in the country, irrespective of the level, were won and lost courtesy of stomach infrastructure.

Chief MKO Abiola of the Social Democratic Party was able to overcome his opponents and win the highly controversial and subsequently annulled 1992 presidential election by relying on stomach infrastructure. He went around the country campaigning and distributing bags of rice and other edibles to cheering Nigerians. They were held spellbound by his seemingly bottomless pockets that he was ever willing to dip into and generously dish out the goodies that flowed to the long-suffering and economically disadvantaged populace.

From all indications, he was able to gain the love of Nigerians and massively garner their votes not because of the policies he promised to initiate when elected into office, but because of his large-heartedness which appealed to the masses. He knew exactly what the masses needed. Today, however unfortunate it may be, the masses are still yearning for the same thing. Nutrition is a priority. It is the fundamental responsibility of the government of a country to ensure that the physical and safety needs of its citizens are met. Food, as part of the physical needs, is the most basic in man's hierarchy of needs, according to psychologist Abraham Maslow. It is only a well-fed man that makes use of the physical and social infrastructures that are built for him. A hungry farmer cannot muster the strength to till the ground. A hungry father cannot send his children to school – except when the education is free, which is not the case in most parts of Nigeria. Food is deemed more important than everything else. It is a precursor to good health and rest of mind. It signifies a form of security, especially for those who are impoverished. The reality remains that many Nigerians are hungry with little or nothing to eat and any politician that looks after their nutritional wellbeing is seen as an astute statesman, a humanitarian and a shrewd politician.

This phenomenon has gone beyond food. This was observed in the build up to the 2015 Presidential and gubernatorial elections. Politicians cashed-in on the love of most Nigerians for material goods and gift items. Hence, all kinds of gifts that were branded with party symbols and candidates' photographs were distributed. These included recharge cards, mobile phones, T-shirts, exercise books, hand bands, bags and so on. As could be expected, the electorate thronged the venues of party rallies with the hope of carting away some of these items. Where huge crowds were present, many people squabbled over these items. However, we should not turn a blind eye to other things that really matter. Excessiveness of anything is bad. Investment in stomach infrastructure, however good, must be a short-term measure and not a long-term policy. It should be in tune with strategic investments in physical and social infrastructures. Food only meets immediate, basic and pressing needs, while adequate physical and social infrastructures, as well as stable institutions, increase the possibility that those pressing needs will always be met in the future. Neither of these measures should be neglected or cast aside. One way or the other, they contribute to the sustained improved well-being and upliftment of the masses.

Money Politics in Nigeria

Electoral corruption includes purchase of votes with money, promises of office or special favours, coercion, intimidation, and interference with freedom of election. Nigeria is a good example where this practice is common. Money politics can be defined as the phenomenon in the Nigeria electoral process whereby contenders for elective positions use money or money is used on their behalf as an inducement to sway their support which is not based on persuading the electorates to vote according to their wish and conviction but on the force of money that has changed hands. Related to this, is outright vote-buying. Vote-buying in its literal sense, is a

simple economic exchange. According to Fredrick Charles and Andrea's Schedler (2005) candidates 'buy' and citizens/electorates 'sell' "votes, as they buy and sell commodities". The act of vote-buying by this view is a contract or perhaps an auction in which voters sell their votes to the highest bidder. Parties and candidates buy vote by offering particularistic material benefits to voters. Candidates may generally aspire to purchase political support at the ballot box in accordance with the idea of market exchange. For analytical purpose, it is necessary to point out, that the commercial aspirations of vote buyers may run into two barriers, namely; objective and inter-subjective barriers. On the objective side, seller compliance is uncertain, as vote buying is an illicit business and as such does not take place within a "normal" market protected by social and legal norms. On the inter-subjective side, empirical accounts of participants' perspective revealed that those electoral practices we describe as "Vote-Buying" may carry different meaning in different cultural context.

This is so because, in both historical and comparative perspective, vote-buying as a phenomenon is neither system specific nor space bound (Ojo 2006, p. 5). In all systems, be it developed or developing, medieval or contemporary, vote buying occurs in all regions and climes. This practice which rests upon pay offs that are not directly and explicitly tied to reciprocity in the polling booth, is sometimes referred to as indirect vote-buying. In Taiwan, vote brokers typically approach relatives, friends and neighbours. A similar tactic is also employed in Thailand. For example, in the 1992 election in Thailand, campaign workers for one candidate sought in each village "to recruit the person best placed to deliver support, generally someone with significant social status in the village. Other qualifications include being respectable, well known, a local leader (either official or unofficial), the candidate's relative or close friends, or some other characteristics that would make people honour their vote promises (Callahan, 2000).

The use of money to buy votes does not stop at election time. It is a common practice in Nigeria as it is in many other countries, for numerous private interest groups and political action committees which seek policy goals and legislations to serve their narrow private needs to continue to use all the means at their disposal including money, to solidify or expand their influence on the elected officials (Wright, 1985). It is observed that the relative ease with which the elected officials show their gratitude by endorsing the legislative and policy proposals of campaign contributors seems to support the hypothesis that there is a correlation between special donations to political parties and candidates and legislative votes.

Consequently, according to Sohner (1973, p. 190) "money has, in fact, been made to become the mothers' milk of politics, which the political gladiators must drink to remain in business".

The phenomenon of money politics and vote-buying only became prominent in post independent Nigeria. Even then, their influence was very minimal in the first republic between the years 1960 to 1966. During the first republic, appeals to ethnic and religious sentiments were the most important weapons the political leaders and tribal heroes deployed to ensure electoral victories. This was possible because the strength and popularity of the major political parties and their allies were essentially enhanced by the primordial ties they had with the people in their regions.

The parliamentary system that was being practiced then, also made it possible for the political parties to exercise considerable control over the candidates to be fielded for elections. As Dudley (1982) correctly observed: Candidates in the elections were less important as the parties

took the centre stage, appealed to ethnicity, played alliance politics and used highly emotive terms which in most cases incited people to violence. Election expenses were borne by the parties from the funds they were able to raise. It should be noted, however, that although politicians were known to distribute T-Shirt, Caps and badges with party emblems, some food stuff and sundry items, to voters at political rallies, there was no huge spending by individual candidates to win elections as obtains currently in the political activities of candidates.

Money politics and vote-buying escalated to greater dimensions during the second republic which started in 1979. It was perhaps, encouraged by some wealthy Nigerians who made their money during the Nigerian civil war between 1967 – 1970, by probably supplying arms and ammunition to both parties to the war and those who were government contractors, reconstructing projects, after the destructive civil war. As soon as the military signalled the commencement of competitive politics, these people ventured into politics or sponsored candidates for elective office. Davies (2006), in a recent work, summarizes the situation as follows: There was so much display of affluence and use of money by the wealthy contractors and the mercantile class that those who emerged victorious in the conventions and the primaries of some of the political parties, notably the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) belonged to the business-managerial group.

The situation worsened in 1993. This was because the political campaigns for the conduct of the 1993 election demonstrated excessive use of money during the party primaries and the presidential elections, even though the elections were conducted under the watchful eyes of the military. The rich had hijacked the two political parties decreed into existence by the military, namely the National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP). At the primaries for example, the use of money to win party nomination was pervasive while complaints of bribery trailed the results. The contestant who lost out later claimed. "Money was paid to party functionaries, who were demanding and negotiating the amount of money to be given to them for payment to win offices and others, and for how votes will be allocated to aspirants (Nwosu, 1996, p. 78). The excessive use of money during the 1993 presidential election was ostensibly adduced by president Babangida to annul the election. In annulling the 1993 election, he declared: There were authenticated reports of election malpractice against agents, officials of the NEC and voters... there were proof of manipulation, offers and acceptance of money and other forms of bribery. The amount of money spent by the presidential candidates was over 2.1 million naira (Ojo, 2000).

Similarly, money politics and vote-buying reached their pinnacles in the elections that ushered in the current democratically elected government in 1999 and the civilian-civilian transition elections of 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015, as one political scientist once observed, "if the use of money in the 1999 elections was open and shameless that of 2003 was outrageously indecent (Suberu, 2001). This seemed to have ironically pricked the conscience of former President Obasanjo, who was a beneficiary of the sordid act in the two elections to admit though, belatedly that;

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 from politics of money materialism to politics of ideas, issues and development? (2005).

Money politics and vote-buying assumed a frightening and consummative dimension in the 2007 elections. This is because the use of money to buy conscience appeared to have been extended to the judiciary. The fact is that the use of money or any other inducement for that matter, to perverse justice creates problems for good governance.

It is obvious from the analysis so far, that the use of money in Nigerian politics is unbridled and the polity is characterized by this reckless use of money to buy votes and even conscience. The politicians are ready to channel their financial and material resources to secure electoral victory at the polls or at the tribunals.

Plethora of Money Politics and Stomach Infrastructure

So many reasons can be adduced as being responsible for the incidence of money politics and Stomach infrastructure in Nigeria. Some of these factors include ignorance, on the part of the electorate, apathy, and poverty as well as, deceit by the politicians. There is also attitudinal problem on the part of the people involved in both buying and selling. Our attitude towards politics is not right, because most politicians view it as a call to investment from which huge profit is expected and not as call to serve humanity. The electorates on their part see politics especially during election, as an opportunity to sell their votes to represent their own share of the national cake since they do not have access to where the national cake is being shared. Davies, in a recent work had identified seven predisposing factors which captured almost completely the reason for the very high incidence of money politics and stomach infrastructure in Nigeria. The factors as identified by Davies (2006) are as follows:

- a. The inability of many political parties and the contestants to put in place comprehensive and comprehensible manifestoes for scrutiny by the voters. Instead of clear-cutting manifestoes that would enable the electorate to make a rational political choice, slander, character and personality assassination, demagogic and hate speeches are made. Such speeches either overestimate or underestimate the political perception of the voters but are rarely educative and convincing. Many voters seem to be unimpressed by all the tricks the parties and the candidates employ, hence the need to bribe them for their votes.
- b. Political cynicism on the part of the voters who believe that political offices holders are incurably corrupt, self-seeking and incompetent, that politics is a dirty and dishonorable enterprise, that the whole political process is a fraud and a betrayal of the public trust. This cynical view of politics is further accentuated by unfulfilled promises made by winners of past elections. Thus, asking for a pay-off, another way by which the people receive their own share of the national cake. On the other hand, the candidates who gave money to voters probably believe that they are investing against electoral failure.
- c. Focusing on personalities rather than on issues. By the mode of their campaign, most candidates draw the attention of the electorate away from the political parties to themselves. The consequence of this is that the political parties and their message

become less important to the electorate. The candidates would therefore need to spend more money than their parties could afford in order to mobilize support for themselves.

- d. The peoples' perception greatly reinforced by obscene display of opulence by public office holders and ostentatious living of many politicians that every elected or appointed public officer is amassing wealth from the public treasury. This seems to have strengthened the resolve of many voters to sell their votes to the highest bidder.
- e. The desperation of politicians to win elections, even at the party primary level, at all cost, makes desperate contestants to engage in all sort of malpractices including offering financial and material inducements to voters. Working on the poverty of the people, Nigerian politicians have been known to distribute food stuff and other consumable materials to voters shortly before the elections and sometimes on the Election Day, contrary to the provision of the extant electoral law that prohibits such practice. Instances abound too, when candidates throw money into the air or out of a vehicle during campaign rallies, making people to scramble for it and getting injured in the process.
- f. The noticeable weakness in a party whip, characteristics of party politics in presidential system, when elected members exercise considerable degree of freedom when voting on legislative proposals. Such freedom makes the legislators to be more susceptible to receive gratifications from the private interest groups. The interest groups employ what is called legalized bribery. They make large donations to some spurious private or community programmes in which the target legislators are interested and give expensive gifts to the legislators or sponsor their overseas travel etc. all in the name of public relations to secure the votes of the legislators in the legislature.
- g. The absence of any legislation that puts any limit on financial contributions to political parties and candidates by groups of individual (Davies, 2006).

The Nigerian constitution, however, is not completely silent on party finances, but its provisions in respect of the finances of political parties relate only to their source of funds and other assets. For example, section 225(3) of the 1999 constitution merely prohibits any political party to (a) retain any funds or assets remitted or sent to it from outside Nigeria. The requirement that political parties prepare and submit audited account to the electoral body is only intended to ensure transparency and accountability. No law presently exists that puts any limit to the amount candidates can spend in elections while the National Assembly is yet to issue guidelines to regulate the activities of lobbyist and other political action groups who operate, formally or informally, buying the votes of legislators for their causes in the legislature.

Consequences of Money Politics and Stomach Infrastructure

Good governance is based on the tenets and practice of democracy. A government that enjoys the trust and support of the majority of the people must be a legitimate one. Legitimacy engenders trust and support of the people to government policies and reform agenda. But money politics and stomach infrastructure erode this very important attribute of democratic government. This is because, it is the conviction among the people that those who rule do so, based on popular consent, freely expressed. It is the tonic required to make the people make material sacrifices that reform agenda, social, political or economic which society inevitably demand. The truth is that, without legitimacy, there is no trust, and without trust there can be

no genuine political support. It logically follows that without strong support of government policies by most of the people no reform programme, including electoral reform programme can be successfully carried out.

The dire economic condition of many Nigerians makes social vices like corruption to thrive and make the electorate susceptible to 'money-bag' politicians. The lack of economic stability in the country is a strong motivator for corrupt individuals who are willing to subvert the electoral process by making elections a 'do or die' affair to ensure they get into public office with unfettered access to public funds and also in good position to influence those who are economically impoverished to trade their votes for as little as a 'congo' of rice or the sum of N200.00 only. Poverty has therefore become a strong factor against choosing credible leaders as well as having a free and fair election. Spending money beyond what is ordinarily required to defray legitimate campaign expenses by directly or indirectly bribing voters is an electoral malpractice and the "favourable electoral results" emanating from that would not represent the true wishes of voters i.e. their actual political preference minus the intervention of money.

Accordingly, those who genuinely want to serve the people but have no money to buy votes may lose out in the electoral contest, while bad candidates with abundant financial resources or those with corrupt tendencies may get elected. Money Politics and stomach infrastructure has also made election results to have little or nothing to do with the performance in office of politicians. Because performance is not a critical factor in electoral outcome, the incentive to perform is very weak. And because stomach infrastructure is very effective in achieving electoral victory the tendency of politicians to engage in it is very high. Consequently, elected public office holders who spent huge sums of money to secure victory at the polls would usually have a greater propensity to pursue their private financial interest and sometimes those of their financiers, euphemistically referred to in Nigeria as political godfathers. They use public funds to offset huge debts incurred while electioneering and to compensate those that contributed to their campaign. In this situation, public interest takes the back seat in the calculation, thus degrading the responsibilities of the elected officials to the people.

Another negative impact of money politics and vote-buying on good governance is that the elected official, when he occupies a public office that gives him access to public fund becomes more prone to corruption. For instance, if he is a legislator, he becomes more prone to receiving gratification to promote and support the private interest of his sponsors. There is now a popular feeling, indeed thinking, among a coterie of Nigerian politicians, that political contest is a high-risk investment opportunity. The higher the risk the greater are the returns.

This kind of unwholesome practice constitutes a serious blemish on public policy and legislative process and consequently brings the highest indignity to the democratic process.

Conclusion

Good governance can thrive only when based on the tenets and practice of democracy, which is the best-known form of government. The importance of money in running elections in terms of campaign is well recognized, but the excessive use of money with the objective of purchasing votes and preying on the prevalent hunger among the electorate is counterproductive to good governance. This is because once the excessive use of money is employed to influence the outcome of elections; the election becomes synonymous with the gentle art of 'getting votes

from the poor and campaign funds from the rich by promising to protect one from the other (Sohner, 1973).

The analysis also revealed that any polity where voters are not completely or as much as possible insulated from outside pressures, most especially money and material gifts, they cannot choose freely. The situation such as this injures good governance. However, the implementation of the policy options as suggested in the way forward of this paper, can help to minimize the negative impact of money politics and stomach infrastructure on good governance in Nigeria.

For Nigeria to consolidate its nascent democracy the political class must embrace good governance through prudent use of available resources, provision of social amenities and critical infrastructures, ensure free and fair elections, and promote accountability, transparency and the rule of law.

Recommendations

It is quite doubtful that money politics and vote-buying can be totally eradicated in Nigeria. However, there should be at least some mechanisms by which its negative consequences on good governance can be minimized. Consequently, it is of primary importance to first and foremost call on all stakeholders in the Nigerian project for attitudinal changes to have a positive perception of politics. This is because a system of free and fair election is not guaranteed by officially sanctioned legal instrument alone. As Alabi (2007) correctly pointed out, while stiffer punishment for rigging may be a panacea, such can have meaning only if the enabling legal/judicial system is such that justice is always assured. This requires the cooperation and alertness of all the stakeholders- the government, the electoral commission, the political parties, the candidates, the electorate, the civil society and the press each of which must cultivate the right attitudes to make democracy work by ensuring that the game of politics is played according to the rules.

This call for the right attitudes towards politics essentially questions our democratic credentials as a people. The important issue here is the attitudes and perceptions of individuals toward election and politics in general. As Ovie-Whiskey rightly noted in respect of the electoral Act, 1982, the problem is not the law as such, but the society. If the individual can have self-examination and determine to be honest at elections come what may, there will be free and fair elections. What we need is a deep sense of patriotism and a devoted sense of selflessness. If we refuse to be bought at election time, refuse to commit electoral offences and refuse to make ourselves marketable commodities, the elections will be free and fair. Furthermore, if we are law-abiding in the absence of uninformed police officers or soldiers, the elections will be free and fair (Ovie-Whisky, cited in Alabi 2007). There is the need for some ethical codes to be enacted for all elected officials to prohibit them from exhibiting stupendous wealth which sends negative signals that election to public office gives one the opportunity to amass wealth. This type of signal will unnecessarily raise the stake, push election candidates to see the contest as akin to fight to finish affair, and consequently heat up the polity. More transparent and effective screening methods must be developed by the political parties and the electoral body, to ensure the exclusion of politicians with overt or covert tendency to corrupt the electoral process and the electorate. There is also the need for political education of the electorate to be more discerning in their electoral choices, and minimize the pressures put on their elected representatives for financial and material rewards for voting.

Finally, the Nigerian economy must be revamped to empower the people economically. This is because where poverty is reduced to the barest minimum, the electorates can then make independent electoral decisions in voting for credible politicians. The trajectory of poverty influencing the people's voting behaviour will never stop, until poverty is adequately addressed. The poor will continue to trade their loyalty for bags of rice until egalitarian policies are implemented by the government. The onus is on the poor to use their conscience and not vote for a tentative bag of rice.

A system that encourages some people to solely depend on other peoples' wealth and generosity for their livelihood will always breed high level of poverty. It is regrettable that some wealthy people, especially politicians, encourage and support this ideology of over-dependence. Let governments at all levels work in concert to reduce to the rising rate of unemployment in the country by embarking on practicable job creation drives.

References

- African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (2005). The politics of the MDGs and Nigeria: A critical appraisal of the global partnership for development (Goal 8). *AFRODAD*.
- Alabi, M. O. (2008). The Electoral Act 2006 and the conduct of 2007 Election in Nigeria. In Saliu, I. T. H. A. (ed.) *Nigeria Beyond 2007: Issues, perspectives and challenges*. Ilorin: T.A. Olayeri Publishers.
- Amis, P. & Rakodi, C. (1994). Urban poverty: Issues for research and policy. *Journal of International Development*, 6 (5)
- Anger, B. (2010) Poverty eradication, Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development in Nigeria, *Journal of Sustainable Development*, 3(4): December, 2010.
- Anyanwu, J. C. (1997). Poverty in Nigeria: Concepts, measurement and determinants. in *Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria*. Annual Conference of Nigerian Economic Society (NES).
- Atoloye, A. S. F. (1997). Strategy for growth-led poverty alleviation in Nigeria. In *Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria, Proceedings of the 1997*. Annual Conference of the Nigerian Economic Society.
- Callahan, W.A. (2000). *Poll watching, elections and civil society in South East Asia*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Chika, N. O. (2004). Poverty, Social policy, and women participation in the Nigerian democratic process. In Michael, O. M. (ed.) *Challenges and prospects of democratization in Nigeria*. Nsukka: Multi-Educational Services Trust.
- Chukwuemeka, E. E. O. (2009). Poverty and the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria: The Nexus. *Educational Research and Review* 4(9): 405-410.
- Davies, A. E. (2006). Money and politics in the Nigeria electoral process: A Memo of Department of Political Science, University of Ilorin – Ilorin.

- Deng, L.A. (1995). Poverty reduction: Lessons and experiences from Sub-Saharan Africa, *Environment and Social Development Working Paper*, No. 6, African Development Bank, Abidjan.
- Dudley, B. (1982). *An introduction of Nigerian government and politics*. London and Basing Stoke: The McMillan Press.
- Englama, A. & Bamidele, A. (1997). Measurement issues in poverty. In *Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria, Proceedings of the 1997*. Annual Conference of the Nigerian Economic Society, pp. 141-156.
- Eze, C. M. (2009). The privatized state and mass poverty in Nigeria: The factor of economic development programmes since 1980s. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, Vol. 3(10): 443-450.
- Fredrick, C.S. & Andreas, S. (2005). *What is vote-buying? The Limit of Market Model*. Being the text of paper delivered at the conference of Poverty, Democracy and Clientism: The Political Economy of Vote Buying. Department of Political Science, Stanford University, Bellagion Centre, Rockefeller Foundation.
- Ijediogor, G. (2008, May 31). Tribunal victories, an exercise in futility after all? *The Guardian Newspaper*.
- Lewis, P. M. (2006). The dysfunctional state of Nigeria. In Birdsall, N., Vashnav, M. & Ayres, R. L. (eds.) *Short of the goal: U.S. policy and poorly performing states*. Washington D.C.: Centre for Global Development. pp. 83-116.
- Maiangwa, J. S. (2009). An overview of Pseudo-therapeutic Approaches to poverty in Nigeria: The citizens and the state. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*. 3(9): 346-353.
- Mattes, R., Bratton, M. & Davids, Y. D. (2003). Poverty, survival and democracy in Southern Africa: A comparative series of national public attitude surveys on democracy, markets and civil society in Africa. *Afrobarometer Working Paper No. 23* January.
- Narayan, D., Patel, R., Schafft, K., Rademacher, A. & Koch-Schulite (2000). *Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?* New York: Oxford University Press.
- Network of Democracy Research Institutes (2009). Poverty, inequality, and democracy. A Conference organized and cosponsored by The International Forum for Democratic Studies, The Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law, The Institute for Public Affairs. *NDRI Conference Report*. Bratislava, Slovakia. April 26-28.
- Nwosu, N. I. (1996). The Nigerian Presidential Election of 1993. *Indian Journal of Politics*. Vol xxx Nos. 1-2.
- Nwosu, N. I. (1996). The Nigerian Presidential Election of 1993. *Indian Journal of Politics*. Vol xxx Nos 1-2.
- Obasanjo, O. (2005). *Political party finance Handbook*, Abuja: Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) Abuja.

- Ogwumike, F.O. (1998). Poverty alleviation strategies in Nigeria. In: Measuring and monitoring poverty in Nigeria, Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Conference of the Zonal Research Units of CBN.
- Ojo, E.O. (2006). *'Vote-buying in Nigeria' money, politics and corruption in Nigeria*. UK: Department for International Development (DFID) Nigeria Election Support 2007 Programme.
- Ojo, E.O. (2008). Vote-buying in Nigeria. In Adetula, V. (ed.) *Money and politics in Nigeria*. Abuja: Department of International Development (DFID) under IFES Nigeria Election Support Programmes, pp. 109-122.
- Oshewolo, S. (2010). Galloping poverty in Nigeria: An appraisal of the government's interventionist policies. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*. 12(6): 264-274.
- Ploch, L. (2013) Nigeria: Current issues and U.S. Policy. *Congressional Research Service*, www.crs.gov
- Sohner, C. P. (1973). *The people's power American government and politics today*. Illinois: Scott Foresman and Company.
- Suberu, R.T. (2001). *Federalism and ethnic conflicts in Nigeria*. Washington: United States Institute for Peace.
- Ucha, C. (2010). Poverty in Nigeria: Some dimensions and contributing factors. *Global Majority E-Journal*, 1(1), 46-56.
- Ugoh, S. C. & Ukpere, W. I. (2009). Appraising the trend of policy on poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria with emphasis on a National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), *African Journal of Business Management*, 3(12): 847-854.
- United States Agency for International Development (2006). *Nigeria: An economic snapshot*. USAID. March.
- World Bank (2006). *World Bank Annual Report*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wright, J. R. (1985). PACs, contributions, and roll calls: An organizational perspective. *American Political Science Review*, 79(2) 400–414.
- Yakubu, O. D. & Aderonmu, J. A. (2010). Rural poverty alleviation and democracy in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999 - 2009). *Current Research Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 2(3): 191-195.