



## Monetizing Politics in Nigeria's Democratic Fourth Republic: Delegates as a Commercialized Political Tool and a Flawed Candidate/Leadership Selection Process against the 2023 Election

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper seeks to examine the extent to which the Nigerian democratic Fourth Republic has been bastardized by money politics. There were widespread expectations that the arrival of democracy in Nigeria on May 29, 1999, would usher in an era of free and fair elections, tolerance, respect for human rights, and the strengthening of all democratic edifices (courts, civil society, a corrupt-free and independent judiciary, people-oriented development, and so on). Unfortunately, the fourth republic became ensnared in a web of protracted political, economic, and social maladies. One of these has been the pernicious issue of undemocratic methods of leadership selection and election, which have been rife with anomalies such as rigging, thugs, vote-buying, assassination, and so on. This has manifested itself in the current 2022 primary elections in Nigeria in preparation for the 2023 general election. The situation gets worse and more deplorable as the delegates who are vested with the constitutional powers to select those to run for the presidency in 2023 have been transformed into a political nightmare as huge amounts of foreign currency flood the entire process of the primary election. Based on this, the study interrogated the delegate system and how it aided the flourishing of flawed electoral processes for leadership selection, considering the overbearing tenets of money politics. The paper used a qualitative research methodology because the data was primarily obtained from secondary sources: textbooks, journal publications, internet materials, and magazines. Content analysis was used to analyze secondary data. The study discusses some technical and constitutional provisions concerning party formation, the place of the delegate in Nigeria's electoral processes, party primaries, and candidates who contested the primaries of the two major political parties, etc., before discussing issues of money politics and how delegates became a thorn in the country's electoral processes and candidate selection. The investment theory of politics and party competition was explored. The study discovered that the delegate system continues to be anathema to quality and visionary leadership, leading to its abolition and the adoption of a more inclusive and concessional approach.*

**Keywords: Monetization of Politics, Delegates System, Fourth Republic Nigeria**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Beginning on May 29, 1999, when the democratic Third Wave euphoria penetrated the global political landscape, Nigeria wasn't spared. The country has conducted several elections for political officeholders. Such elections occurred in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015, and the current general elections to continue the democratic Odyssey that liberated the country from a 32-year military junta. As pointed out by Oravee, Bello, and Danjuma (2020), the hopes of Nigerians were raised as the country journeyed into another political dispensation. This hope, however, was misplaced as a result of electoral anomalies that prevent the elections from translating into good governance—transparency, accountability, free and fair elections, independence of the judiciary, adherence to the rule of law, etc. But as would be shown in the paper, Nigerian democracy is only understood as the conducting of elections, regime change, and the commencement of a new administration. Unfortunately, even the elections are bedeviled with lots of irregularities in the form of monetization of politics and electoral processes, rigging, thuggery, delegate anomalies, etc. The recent and odious expedition of money in politics in the country's fourth republic remains alarming and intolerable, as it takes center stage in leadership selection, thus a hindrance to the country's quest for democratic consolidation, good governance, people-oriented governance, legitimate transition, and nation-building.

Ogunbiyi (2022) opined that, money is a vital component for any activity in an economy. This is factual because nothing can be done without money; therefore, it is safe to say that political activities cannot be executed without money. However, when money becomes the decisive factor in electing quality leadership, this can breed the flourishing of corruption. Money politics in a political system surfaces when a politician is bankrolled by his party members in return for financial support. One major issue with money politics, as in the Nigerian case, is the fact that money politics as a means of funding political activities and participation has now turned into a case of the highest bidder, where only those with the financial acumen and willingness to spend huge money are considered eligible candidates. With such a scenario, the capacity to deliver quality governance is determined by the financial strength of a candidate instead of merit, competency, and track records. Recently, the media revealed the extent to which politicians now go in order to win an election. Reports have it that in preparation for the primary elections, many of the party delegates and party members were paid in dollars. Bearing in mind that each local government is to be represented, this by implication means that even if each presidential aspirant spent at most \$6 million on each delegate, each of the presidential aspirants would have expended not less than N4.6 billion in total, considering that Nigeria has 774 local governments.

Baje (2022) eloquently opined that, the recent public outcry spurred by the high costs of nomination forms for the various political posts as announced by the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) party is alarming. Money has become *ultima ratio* and decisive factor in politics, as evidenced by the presidential candidate for the APC's N 100 million versus the opposition party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP's) N 40 million. Given Nigeria's bleak socioeconomic realities, where, according to World Poverty Clock data as of March 2022, 70 million people were living in extreme poverty, accounting for 33 percent of the country's population, the costs of nomination forms are a direct affront and insult to the long-suffering Nigerians. As reported by the Business Insider Africa media platform, only India surpassed Nigeria with 83 million people living below the U.N. estimated poverty line in 2022. Worrisome still is that the country with the highest number of school-age children still out of school, put at 10.5 million, representing one-third of Nigerian children and one in five out-of-school children in the world, has politicians that are not worried by this scandalous scenario. Neither are they concerned that the beleaguered country has overtaken Iraq as a country vulnerable to terrorism in the whole wide world. Their concern is that of battling for political power by all means—legal and crooked—and retaining it more by the latter than the former. The grave implication is that Nigeria's brand of democracy is completely not that of "a government of the people, by the people, and for the people." but of the rich, by the rich, and for the rich political juggernauts. That is plutocracy or plutarchy for you! That is a society that is ruled or controlled by people of great wealth or income, as occurred in England in 1631.

On this backdrop, the paper analyzes the technical issues surrounding the 2022 primary elections as a prelude to the 2023 general election, which will oust the current administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. Salient and technical issues such as party formation and registration, party conventions, the *modus operandi* for selecting delegates, the primary election outcome for governorship and presidency, and the challenges of the monetization of politics will be critically examined.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

More than three decades after seizing power in a military coup, Muhammadu Buhari emerged as the first Nigerian former military head of state that came into the democratic political era to oust an incumbent and seat an opponent (President Goodluck Jonathan) via the ballot box. thus putting him, President Buhari, in charge of Africa's

largest economy and one of its most important but turbulent democracies. The election, which took place on the 28th and 29th of February 2015, came to an end with Muhammadu Buhari emerging the winner with a total vote of 15,424,921 (54.55%). While former President Jonathan got 12,853,162 votes (45.45%). (Reuters Publication, 2015). Although there were 14 candidates for the presidency, the most popular contestants were President Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari. The election that saw the emergence of Muhammadu Buhari was not without some irregularities (Sule, Sani, & Mat, 2018). Gabriel (2014) argued that Jonathan severely got admonished on every issue ranging from security, conflicts, politics, governance, infrastructure, and the opposition, which threatened to make Nigeria ungovernable and made good on their intentions to form a parallel government should Jonathan win the 2015 presidential election. The abduction of about 300 Chibok schoolgirls and the subsequent inability to rescue them have been one issue of contention both at home and abroad. This was distasteful news to a country where, already, 10.5 million children of school age were out of school and where no more than four percent of girls in the northeast of Nigeria ever manage to complete secondary school. Ibekwe (2015) pointed out the corrupt practices in Jonathan's regime; thus, the granting of a presidential pardon to former governor of Bayelsa State, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, who was convicted of money laundering, sparked outrage among Nigerians. He also did nothing until it was too late, when the former Aviation Minister, Stella Uduah, bought two armored BMW cars for N255 million. When he eventually acted, he only notified the minister of her appointment without ordering or calling for her prosecution. Based on the foregoing premises, which correspond to the shortcomings of Jonathan's regime, Mr. Jonathan handed over the constitution and national flags before President Buhari took the oath of office at Abuja's Eagle Square. Mr Buhari reiterated his commitment to combating Boko Haram, which he described as "a mindless, godless group that is as far away from Islam as one can think" (BBC News, May 29, 2015).

Buhari pointed out different issues that bedeviled the Nigerian state as his reasons to contest for the presidency, so he could fix them. For instance, so many failures on the part of his predecessor, President Jonathan, were obvious: his obnoxious policy of fuel subsidy removal on the 13th of May 2010, which saw fuel prices kick up from 65 to 97 naira. This was after a terrible and unbearable strike embarked upon by fuel tanker drivers and petrol importers, during which fuel rose to \$500,000 per liter. The government of President Jonathan struggled for years to counter the Boko Haram insurgency, which was one of the destabilizing forces that dragged the regime to the mud. However, the regime militarily responded while the bloodthirsty group ran amok, killing, maiming, and displacing Nigerians in mostly northern states in its bid to form an Islamic caliphate within Nigeria. President Jonathan's inefficiency and maladministration were more visible in his handling of the insecurity caused by Boko Haram. Critics observed that Goodluck Jonathan didn't act decisively until the eleventh hour, when it became clear that his failure to put down the group was going to affect his chances at the polls. Despite international outcry and calls, particularly from "Bring Back Our Girls" campaigners, for the over 200 schoolgirls kidnapped by the extremist group from Chibok to be rescued, his government failed to do so (Ibekwe, 2015).

The cable news network News, of June 17, 2019, reported that, when President Muhammadu Buhari was campaigning for the 2015 general elections, he and his party, the All Progressives Congress (APC), made several promises to the electorate. The party's campaign was based on the catchphrase "change" and was implemented with a most spiteful, abrasive, and propagandistic forcefulness that crowded out every message of the then ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and its president, Goodluck Jonathan. Such promises included: a ban on government officials from going abroad for medical treatment; a public declaration of assets and liabilities; the creation of three million jobs per year; the revival of the Ajaokuta Steel Company; the creation of a social welfare program where a minimum of N5000 would be paid to 25 million of the poorest and most vulnerable citizens; the generation, transmission, and distribution of at least 20,000 MW of electricity within four years and increasing to 50,000 MW with a view to achieving 24/7 uninterrupted power supply within 10 years; the revival of the establishment of a free-tuition and scholarship scheme for students who have demonstrated exceptional aptitude in science subjects at O/Levels to study ICT-related courses; establishment of a National Conflict Resolution Commission to prevent, mitigate, and resolve civil conflicts within the polity; stabilization of the naira in the international market; allocating up to 20% of the national budget to education while also making significant investments in training quality; the defeat of Boko Haram and the rehabilitation and reintegration of repentant insurgents, among others.

The failure to achieve the above campaign promises is revealing, considering the current realities on the ground as of the time of writing this paper. For instance, while he initially denied many patients the ability to pay for their treatments abroad, President Buhari, as of May 2018, had gone to the United Kingdom five times for the treatment of an undisclosed ailment. Apart from treating himself in the London hospital against the promise he made to end medical tourism by improving the quality of healthcare delivery in the country, his son, Yusuf, was flown in an air ambulance to the UK for treatment of injuries he sustained in a power bike crash in Abuja. After his treatment, the boy was flown back to the country in a chartered aircraft, a situation that triggered a public outcry. Also, he failed to

declare his asset when asked, even though he claimed to have one. Asked during his first media chat on December 30, 2015, the president said he had declared his assets four times but declined when pressed to release the document to Premium Times, which had earlier sent an FOI request to the Code of Conduct Bureau to make the report available to it (The Cable News, January 17, 2019).

In terms of corruption, Fasan (2022) stated unequivocally that the rhetoric is unmistakable: President Muhammadu Buhari's administration, we are told, is fighting corruption. Yet, incidents of chronic corruption remain prevalent. Transparency International has repeatedly stated, much to the chagrin and anger of the Buhari administration, that the perception of corruption has not improved since the administration took office in 2015. In fact, Nigeria's ratings are on a downward spiral! Earlier this year, in January of this year, Transparency International (TI) released its 2021 Corruption Perception Index. According to the Index, Nigeria scored 24 out of 100 points and ranked 154 out of 180 countries surveyed, thereby dropping five places from its 149th ranking in 2020. This also makes Nigeria the second-most corrupt country in West Africa.

Another area is the excessive use of money in politics in the current dispensation. This has truncated democracy and the leadership selection process in Nigeria. Eghaga (2022) argued that the initiators of democracy in 5th-century Greece never envisaged a situation in which only the wealthy or super-rich would become representatives of the people, whether in the legislative or executive arm of government. Its original meaning, "rule of the people," is quite instructive in this regard. Ali Mazrui warned that "it is suicidal in any democracy for a majority without economic power to hand over political power to a minority with economic power!" which is the current scenario in Nigeria. And the nation is paying for it. The last special conventions orchestrated by the All Peoples' Congress (APC) and Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) in Abuja brought to the fore the power of money at the heart of politics and politicking in Nigeria. There was a time in our history when the political rulers in Nigeria managed to pretend about public morality, pretend to respect the naira, pretend about fighting corruption, pretend about setting the right standards, pretend about inclusive politics, and pretend about their image in the eyes of the people. But that era has gone with the wind of time. The odious display of money politics in Abuja during the conventions is a breaking point for us all. Sadly, it happened under the watch of the unsmiling general, who campaigned on an anti-corruption mantra. This signals the end of hope that mainstream politics can resolve the deep contradictions of the Nigerian state.

In the same vein, Are (2022) observed that, at a one-day colloquium on "emerging issues that will shape the 2023 general election," The event was organized by the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) in collaboration with the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) in Abuja. The INEC chairman, Yakubu, said there are three critical challenges ahead of the 2023 election, listing them as insecurity, fake news, and money politics. His third area of concern was the influence of money on politics, which is becoming more present, and the risk is that ours may soon become a plutocracy for the rich rather than a democracy for the people. NAN quoted him as saying, "The way money is exchanging hands is a source of concern. Yes, we have collaboration with the ICPC and the EFCC, and only recently we renewed our collaboration with the EFCC, saying that we are going to do something together." However, there are two dimensions to it. When you have willing connectors, it becomes a bit more difficult to contain the situation.

With this backdrop and the bleak democratic scenario in mind, the study delves into the extent to which money dominates Nigerian democracy, becoming the *ultima ratio* in leadership selection and the electoral process. Also, some salient technical issues like the *modus operandi* for selecting delegates, party formation, and party conventions would be considered while discussing the outcome of the presidential and governorship primary elections.

## 1.2 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to ascertain the implications of the delegate system in the Nigerian political landscape. The study delves deeper into the following key issues:

1. Some technical issues, such as the constitutional provision and electoral act, gave credence to the existence of delegates in the Nigerian electoral process
2. Technical issues such as Nigeria's Electoral Acts Provision on party formation and executive nomination
3. The monetization of the delegate system and how such an undemocratic act remains a flawed process for candidates and leadership selection

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Investment theory of politics/ party competition

Thomas Ferguson (1995) proposed an alternative that he calls the investment theory of party competition. In this model, candidates for political office and political parties appeal not to voters but to investors, who are the fundamental constituency. According to Ferguson (1995), "parties can be more appropriately analyzed as blocs of major investors constituted to advance candidates representing their interests." The policy arena of political parties is skewed in favor of major investors, and minor investor-voters are virtually incapable of overturning such policy choices or acting in the negative sense of voting "no confidence." As the cost of political campaigns has skyrocketed in the era of our democracy, the logic of money-driven political systems has become more and more applicable. The investment theory expects that whole areas of policy will not be contested. This will occur as a matter of routine because major investors across parties may have virtually similar preferences on many policy issues. Because major investors will almost certainly come from the bourgeois classes, and the majority of voters will come from the ordinary masses, the theory predicts a clear bias in public policy towards the nouveau rich wherever class interests are at stake (The Policy Tencor.com, 2013). Temin (2017) opined that the Investment Theory of Politics is more accurate because it shifts emphasis from voters to rich businesses and people who exert influence on voters through political advertising. The momentum gathered by the money spent on elections determines outcomes more than the candidates' policy choices. The investment theory of politics has become more crucial since Citizens United and the increase of dark money in politics.

According to Davies (2018), this is a theory that has gained popularity on the socialist left, although it draws on arguments and a way of thinking commonly associated with the free market side of politics). Davies further reiterated that the investment theory of politics is a reaction to a puzzle that emerged soon after mass democratic politics became globally prevalent in the late 19th century. The early pioneers who advocated modern democracy had deduced that once everyone had the vote, political argument and debate and the actual policies that followed would only be a reflection of the best interests of the great majority rather than those of an elite, whether aristocratic, clerical, or commercial. Also, the theory, as pointed out by Davies, reveals how financially straining it is to engage in political activities. While some of this is monetary, the opportunity cost is the central issue. Quite simply, political trends such as attending meetings, being an active member of a campaigning organization or party, canvassing, knocking on doors, and much else besides all consume time that could have been expended on other endeavors. For most people, this is extremely exorbitant.

The input and relevance of the theory to the paper clearly reflect the typical Nigerian situation. The manner in which political candidates use all crooked and unholy means, most notably extraordinary cash, to entice voters is alarming. This demonstrates that money politics is being introduced into politics as a business card of investment, and Nigerian political parties lack ideology and a blueprint for nation-building and overall national development in which the citizen's welfare in terms of security, employment, social services such as health and education, infrastructure, and so on is prioritized. However, this is not the case in Nigeria, which has been the case since independence and continues to this day. The worst is the democratic dispensation that commenced on May 29, 1999. The hope that democracy will usher in an accommodating and favorable atmosphere has been lost. Democracy in Nigeria is understood as only the conduct of elections, which are often smacked with rigging, thuggery, kidnapping, assassination, bribery, and monetization of the process. As a result, one can hypothesize that Nigerian political office seekers who run for office do so solely to exchange power and change of administration or regime in order to gain access to the common wealth.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study, which adopted the qualitative research methodology, got its data solely from secondary sources: journal publications, news articles, magazines, textbooks, and internet materials. Such secondary data was analyzed using the content analysis method, whereby existing literature was reviewed as being related to the work.

## IV. TECHNICAL ISSUES

### 4.1 Party Formation

Although there are many political parties on the Nigerian political scene, the All Progressive Congress (APC), which is now in power, and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which is the current opposition, continue to be the most influential and well-liked parties.

Nigeria has more than 90 political parties up till 2020, as was sharply pointed out by Mutsoli Wangare in (2022). However, after the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) chose to deregister every party that did not adhere to the constitutional standards, this number was cut to less than 20. Political parties that did not adhere to predetermined standards were deregistered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), in accordance with its constitutional authority. Mahmood Yakubu, the head of INEC, declared during a news conference in Abuja that after reviewing all 92 political parties in Nigeria, the commission decided to re-register 74 of them (Asadu 2022). According to [TheNigerianfinders.com](http://TheNigerianfinders.com), there are now 29 political parties registered in Nigeria, and each one has a distinctive emblem that may be used to identify them. This is crucial, especially during elections when the logo can serve as a way for voters who are illiterate to recognize the political parties. After the country's independence on October 1, 1960, and the start of democratic rule in 1999, there will be another election in Nigeria's democratic history in 2023.

#### **4.2 Modus Operandi for Selecting Party Delegates in Nigeria**

There are two types of delegates: ad hoc and statutory. The ad hoc delegates are chosen through ward congresses held across the country. The process involves party members choosing people who will vote on their behalf in the party's governorship or presidential primaries. In most cases, the National Executive Committees (NECs), the highest organ of political parties, determine the mode of these congresses. After selecting delegates, a convention is held to enable them to decide on who will fly the party's gubernatorial or presidential flag. In the statutory method, delegates have automatic members. These are party members who are currently serving as public office holders, ward councilors, local government chairmen and their vice chairs, and political party chairmen in all 774 LGAs. Others include current and former presidents, governors, deputy governors, and members of the National and State Legislatures. Only the five delegates elected from each ward for the state congresses will vote to elect governors, senators, House of Representatives, and state House of Assembly members for the APC. For the PDP, there will be three delegates elected from each ward (Iniobong, 2022).

As stipulated in the Electoral Act as amended, these delegates emerge from internal elections of the party conducted in each of the local governments, in which the members of the party participate. But after the presidential primaries, the Electoral College (delegates list) comprises ad hoc delegates elected across the wards in the state. That is based on the specified number in the party's constitution or guidelines multiplied by the number of local governments that exist in each state. However, the delegate system is shrouded in controversy. The 2022 Amended Electoral Act, signed into law by President Muhammadu Buhari, recently prevents statutory delegates from partaking in party primaries. According to Section 84(8) of the Electoral Amendment Acts, a political party that adopts direct primaries for the selection of its candidates shall clearly outline in its constitution and rules the procedure for the democratic election of delegates. The delegates, in addition to the statutory delegates already specified in the party's constitution, are to vote at the convention, Congress, or meeting, according to the act. Consequently, to change the situation in preparation of the primary elections, the National Assembly—the Senate and House of Representatives—had held an emergency session geared towards the amendment of Section 84(8) of the 2022 Electoral Act to allow statutory delegates to participate and vote in party conventions, congresses, and meetings (Iniobong, 2022).

Decrying the adverse effects of the delegate system as a system that breeds unjust electoral outcomes and an undemocratic and exclusive pattern of leadership selection, Eromosele (2022) argued that the expression "democratic election" means emergence by majority vote (be it simple or plural). It is not synonymous with appointment, anointment, or selection. A segregation of delegates at a party convention or congress for party primaries between ad hoc and special delegates where certain elected office holders get preferential rights to load delegates with their hirelings will violate Section 84(8). Regardless of whether the party chooses consensus, direct, or indirect primaries, the final stage of election for the nomination of party candidates involves congress or convention to elect, ratify, or confirm the nominated candidate: See sections 84 (3) and (11). Owonikoko (2022), further informed that, contrary to what the parties presently presume, only elected delegates can participate in party primaries either directly in indirect elections or to ratify or confirm successful candidates in primaries by consensus or direct primary elections. The latter is defined under the Act to mean "an election at which candidates for elective office are chosen by direct vote of political party members instead of by delegates at a convention or congress."

#### **4.3 Party Convention: a prelude to 2023 election**

The preparation for the 2023 elections began with party conventions in 2022. The All-Progress Congress (APC), which was earlier slated to hold on February 26, was shifted to March 26. Over 7,584 delegates from the 36 states of the Federation and the FCT were expected to attend. The delegates will elect the 22 members of the National Working Committee (NWC) from the 169 aspirants for various positions to take over the leadership of the nine-year-

old party from the caretaker/Extraordinary Convention Planning Committee (CEPC). The 12-member committee, led by Governor Mala Buni of Yobe State, was constituted on June 25, 2020, after the sack of Adams Oshiomole led the NWC to run the party and package a convention within six months. The convention saw the emergence of Senator Abdullahi Adamu as the APC National Chairman (Adenekan and Ayitogo 2022). The People's Democratic Party Congress to elect its National Executive was held on October 30, 2021, with about 3,600 delegates expected to attend the convention at Eagle Square, Abuja, to elect new leaders for Nigeria's main opposition party, the People's Democratic Party. About 21 positions in the National Working Committee (NWC) of the party were contested by at least 27 candidates at the convention (Majeed & Adenekan, 2021). Ajibola (2021) opined that the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) elected a new set of members from various parts of the country into its National Working Committee (NWC) to take over the leadership of the party. Twenty-one people were elected at the party's national convention, which began on Saturday and lasted till Sunday at the Eagle Square in Abuja.

According to Eme (2022), the new Electoral Act signed by President Muhammadu Buhari on February 25, 2022, contains some changes and amendments, including: ("the new Act") repeals the Electoral Act No. 6, 2010 ("the former Act") and is intended to bring innovations to the regulation of federal, state, and area council elections in Nigeria. As Nigeria approaches its 2023 general elections, the enactment of this law has come at the right time. We must consider some significant changes brought about by the new Electoral Act, as well as the potential consequences of these changes for the upcoming elections. Encouragement of Early Party Primaries Under the new Act, political parties are mandated to submit the list of their sponsored candidates who have emerged from valid primaries conducted by the party not later than 180 days before the date appointed for a general election. This is in contrast to the former Act, which prescribed that this submission should be done not less than 60 days before the date of general elections. The change in the time frame to submit the names of party candidates from 60 days to 180 days makes it compulsory for political parties to conduct their primaries early enough to meet the deadline for submission of their list of candidates at least 180 days before the general elections. Also, the act stressed the exclusion of political appointees from acting as voting delegates or aspirants. Section 84(12) of the new Act stipulates that no political appointee at any level shall be a voting delegate or be voted for at the convention or congress of any political party for the purpose of the nomination of candidates for any election. This means that political appointees must relinquish their positions before they can be eligible to participate in the electoral process, either as candidates or as delegates.

The Tribune of March 25, 2022, reported that, as part of the build-up to the 2023 elections, political parties are engaged in the process of nominating candidates for elective positions in government. For some of the parties that have not filled party offices, the process must begin with the national convention to elect party officials who will in turn oversee the nomination process. Thus, across the various parties, individuals have been invited to express interest in contesting for party positions or indicating interest in being nominated as candidates for elective positions in government. One outstanding feature of the unfolding process is the exorbitant and prohibitive non-refundable fees being demanded from aspirants. In the All Progressives Congress (APC), those aspiring to the position of party chairman were asked to pay N20 million and those interested in the deputy national chairmanship positions N10 million, while the forms for the National Working Committee (NWC) positions cost N5 million and the National Executive Committee (NEC) positions N1 million. Forms for other positions at the zonal level, with the exception of the National Vice Chairman, who is also a member of the NWC, are up for N500,000. However, there is a reduced fee of 50 percent for various positions for women and people living with disabilities. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has fixed N40 million as the cost of the forms expected to be purchased by its presidential aspirants. This sum consists of the Expression of Interest Form (N5 million) and the Nomination Form (N35 million).

## V. FINDINGS/RESULTS

The Nigerian democratic Fourth Republic, with its attempts at ensuring a smooth, transparent, and hitch-free transition, has not yielded any good results. This is indubitable, as elections are always smacked with irregularities. The recent syndrome of delegate commercialization has exacerbated matters. The views of Eromosele eloquently buttressed the doldrums of delegates as corrupting vessels, thus: Philanthropist, motivational speaker, and The Nigerian Youth Ambassador to the United States, Raymond Edoh, Secretary General of the Nigerian Youth Congress, has claimed that the reason Nigerians keep recycling leaders who are not well equipped with leadership skills is due to selfish and greedy delegates in all political parties in Nigeria, emphasizing that delegates are the country's problem. He went further to state that the delegates have done Nigeria too much harm, and as a matter of fact, this time they should realize that the power to rewrite Nigeria's political and economic history lies in their hands. "Delegates, constitutionally, have been empowered to select flag bearers of their various political parties." "This is a very critical role, but it is unfortunate that these individuals fail to understand the peculiarity of this noble and sensitive opportunity,

which determines what is attainable for the entire nation for a complete tenure of four (4) years" (Eromosele, 2022). Jimoh and Omolaye (2022) quote former President Jonathan's admonishing of the delegate system, thus: "monetary inducement for delegates at the ongoing primaries of political parties to produce candidates for the 2023 elections is totally condemnable." Speaking at the launch of a book titled "Political Party Governance," authored by Dr. Mohammed Wakil, a former Minister of State for Power, Jonathan said it was a shame that delegates were being induced for votes to the extent that aspirants even requested refunds after failing to secure tickets.

In all of this, one interesting part of the 2022 primary election is a presidential candidate, Mr. Peter Obi, ex-governor of Anambra State, who is giving the political sphere a somewhat unique but interesting feature. A man who, in the minds of some sensible and enlightened youths and Nigerians, has the necessary prerequisites of a visionary leader based on his landmark achievement as a former governor. The political environment is ecstatic to see the general public glorifying his presidential ambitions. Though a former member of the People's Democratic Party, Peter Obi resigned to join the Labour Party. In his declaration, Peter Obi affirmed that "his presidential ambition is borne out of his interest in the younger generation of Nigerians and those yet unborn." This propelled him to present himself for the task of leading the country by ensuring the current economic situation of the country, which holds no future for its children and generations yet unborn, is salvaged. Obi stated these when he met with the delegates at the party's state secretariat in Umuahia, the Abia State capital, in September 2022. He advised the delegates to tread carefully when deciding whom they are to choose as the party's presidential candidate, as their decision would be for the future interests of our children and those that are unborn. The former governor said he became successful in life not by converting public funds but rather by making his fortune through genuine private enterprise and hard work. He said, "I want to make Nigeria productive and not a consuming country; that is the message behind my aspiration" (Ikoku, 2022).

As succinctly put by Ailemen, (2022), Obi's resignation from the People's Democratic Party was contained in a letter dated May 24, 2022, and addressed to the party's National Chairman, Iyorchia Ayu, titled "Resignation from the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and withdrawal from the Presidential Contest." Obi stated that "it has been a great honor to contribute to nation-building efforts through our party." Unfortunately, recent developments within our party make it practically impossible to continue participating and making such constructive contributions. Peter Obi's presidential support is overwhelming, as it captures all nooks and crannies domestically and in the diaspora. The Eagle Online Publication reported that Obi polled 97 votes out of the 98 total votes cast to emerge the winner of the presidential primary during the national convention of the LP held in Asaba, Delta State, on May 30. The Peter Obi Presidential Global Network congratulated Peter Obi for emerging as the presidential candidate of the Labour Party ahead of the 2023 presidential election. The statement quoted Dr. Michael Chukwujekwu, Global Coordinator of the group, from his base in the United Kingdom, as saying that Obi's emergence was the first step towards rescuing the country from its challenges. Financial support for Obi is overwhelming, as it comes from well-meaning Nigerians. For instance, BudgetIT CEO Seun Onigbinde has launched a campaign to crowdfund N10 billion for Peter Obi's presidential ambition. In a tweet, the tech guru noted that a GoFundMe account would serve the purpose of funding the presidential hopeful, whom Nigerian youths deemed competent to lead the nation out of its current economic woes. This came a day after a London-based publication, the Financial Times, pegged the cost of electing a president in Nigeria at \$2 billion, or about N1 trillion (Akintande, 2022). Ukpe (2022) opined that there was also explosive nationwide solidarity support tagged "one million march" for Peter Obi, such as that which occurred in Lagos on May 21, 2022, where youths moved from Lekki Phase 1. The coordinator of the one million-person march for Peter Obi, Marcel Ngogbehei, had earlier explained that the event would be anchored by the Coalition for Peter Obi (CPO), which is made up of more than 12 support groups for Obi. Ngogbehei said that the support groups included Peter Obi Support Network (POSN), Like Minds for Peter Obi (LMPO), Nigeria Needs Peter Obi (NNPO), TakeBackNaija (TBN), Women for Peter Obi (WPO), Associates of Peter Obi (APO), Peter Obi FC (POFC), Peter Obi Movement for President (POMP), Associates of Peter Obi (APO/POE), Peter Obi Candidacy Movement (POCM), Peter Obi Ambassadors (POA), and Team OHO, among others. The group said the event would simultaneously take place across the 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) on Saturday, May 21.

Nigerians' attitudes have shifted dramatically since Peter Obi's arrival on the political scene. Many threw their weight and support behind Peter Obi to an extent unimaginable beyond the thinking of the "political bigwigs." There is, however, a nonviolent revolution in which the masses, who were previously unchallant in political and electioneering processes, are now venting their rage in order to change the narrative. The frustration in the country manifests in kidnapping, terrorism, poverty, an educational strike, and a high cost of living. Although most citizens' lackluster attitude toward electoral processes and elections was caused by the phenomenon that "votes don't count," whoever the predatory cabals anoint as a leader, beginning with the presidency, federal or state house, governors, ministers, commissioners, and so on, emerges as a leader. So with such an attitude of rigging in favor of the anointed



one, not minding his or her level of mediocrity, incompetency, criminal record, questionable academic credentials and character, etc., the bewildered masses feel reluctant to participate in elections as their votes never count.

As a result of delegates' poor choices in the 2022 primaries for the 2023 election, candidates with questionable credentials and personalities have emerged. Although the top presidential candidates include Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Bola Tinubu of the All Progressive Congress (APC), Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP), Rabiu Kwankwaso of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), and Yele Sowore of the Africa Action Congress (AAC), in Nigeria, three people dominate political debate: Peter Obi of the Labour Party, Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party, and Bola Tinubu of the All Progressive Congress.

Bola Tinubu, the APC presidential candidate, has refused to attend town hall meetings held for presidential candidates to discuss with Nigerians what they have and how to effect the desired changes that will transform the battered nation that is bleeding in all areas. One of such town hall meetings was organized by Arise TV in collaboration with the Center for Democracy and Development on November 6th and November 25th, 2022, and December 4th, 2022. All this avoidance and boycotting of town hall meetings on the part of Bola Tinubu speaks volumes about his inability to constructively engage Nigerians on salient national issues. On several occasions, Bola Tinubu has showcased his inability to say something reasonable that could make the masses give him some credit and have some hope in him. His health challenge is Parkinson's disease, which, according to the United Kingdom's National Health Service (NHS), is a condition in which parts of the brain become progressively damaged over many years. Symptoms of the sickness include involuntary shaking of particular parts of the body (tremor), slow movement, stiff and inflexible muscles, and knee surgery at the John Hopkins University Hospital in Maryland, US (Sahara Reporters, 4 September, 2021). The NHS notes that a person with Parkinson's disease can also experience a wide range of other physical and psychological symptoms, namely depression and anxiety, balance problems (this may increase the chances of a fall), loss of sense of smell (anosmia), having problems sleeping (insomnia), as well as memory problems. Multiple videos have shown how Tinubu's hands and legs shake intermittently, with his aides supporting him at public functions (Fatunmole, 2022). Several issues surrounding Tinubu's personality, including cases of drug peddling and falsification of credentials, surface on a daily basis. Such is not acceptable, and it is not worth the high risk of electing him to the office of President.

The PDP, on the other hand, is led by Atiku Abubakar. From 1999 to 2007, Atiku Abubakar served as Olusegun Obasanjo's vice president. He has contested the post of president five times: in 1993, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019 (Tolu Kolawole, 2022). Atiku Abubakar has in the past been accused of numerous corruption cases. For instance, on February 27, 2007, there was a panel investigation presented to the Senate that found Atiku diverted \$145 million from the country's coffer. He was also accused by the same Senate of stealing \$100 million (The Guardian News, 2007). In 2003, it was alleged that a company, GTCN, was used to transfer over USD 10 million via wire transfers through U.S. banks on behalf of the former vice president of Nigeria, Mr. Atiku Abubakar. Also The Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN), an agency of the United States Department of Treasury, has placed Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) candidate in the 2019 presidential election, and his family members under close scrutiny for alleged financial fraud (The Vanguard, September 22, 2022). Taking a look at the personality of Abubakar and the issues of fraud surrounding him, there is no way such a person can be trusted with the nation's system and economy. The situation in the country is so bad that allowing the same politicians to man the number one seat remains a terrible miscalculation and an abaltros which will inevitably ruin the country.

## VI. DISCUSSION

### 6.1 Primary Outcomes of 2022 Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections

#### 6.1.1 Governorship Primaries Results 2022

Though other political parties vie for power in Nigeria's political market, the focus of this work is on the two most powerful parties, the All Progressives Congress (APC), the current leading party, and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the opposition. For the PDP, Olatunji (2022) explicitly captured the PDP governorship winners in the following ways: Eleazer Ikonne of Abia State; Umaru finitri of Adamawa; Umo Basse of Akwa Ibom; Ibrahim Kashim Mohammed of Bauchi; Titus Uba of Benue; Mohammed Ali Jafari of Borno; Sheriff Oborewori of Delta; Peter Mbah of Enugu; Muhammad Jubril Barde of Gombe; Lamido of Jigawa; Isa Ashiru Kudan of Kaduna; Muhammad Abacha; Kebbi: Aminu Bande; Kwara: Abdullah Yahman; Lagos: Abdul-Azeez Olajide Adediran; Nassarawa: David Omibugadu; Ogun: Segun Sowunmi; Oyo: Seyi Makinde; Plateau: Caleb Mutfwang; Rivers: Siminilayi Fubara; Sokoto: Sa'adu Umar; Taraba: Kefas Agbu; Yobe: Sheriff Abdulahi; and Zamfara—Dauda Lawal; Cross River State—Sandy Onor; Katsina—Yakubu Lado; Niger—Liman Kantigi. While Akan Udofia won the APC governorship primary in Akwa Ibom, Ikechi Emenike won in Abia, Aishatu Dairu Binani won in Adamawa, Sadique

Abubakar won in Bauchi, Uba Sani won in Kaduna, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya won in Gombe, Ovie Omo-Agege won in Borno, Bassey Otu won in Cross River, Umar Muhammad Bello: Oyo—Teslim Folarin (NJPS.com 2022).

### 6.1.2 Presidential Primaries Results 2022

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) was the first to conduct the presidential primaries election. According to the Channels TV news of May 28, 2022, the results were as follows: Atiku Abubakar received the most votes (371), becoming the party's presidential candidate for the 2023 general election. Nyesom Wike (237), Bukola Saraki (70), Udom Emmanuel (38), Bola Ahmed (20), Anyim Pius (14), Mrs. Tari Diana Oliver (1), Sam Oluabunwa (1), and Aminu Tambulwal (1) stepped down for Atiku. Such late-night substitution and stepping down by Ahmed clearly violates the Nigerian electoral act of 2008 on the issue of candidate substitution, as occurred between Tambulwal and Atiku. According to Muraina (2008), the law is very clear about the procedure for political parties to substitute their candidates and replace them with those they believe could win elections and deliver on electoral promises. Section 34 of the Electoral Act, 2006, is to the effect that "cogent and verifiable reasons" must be furnished by a political party before it makes any substitution of its candidate. The law frowns at the indiscriminate substitution of candidates by the political parties, which almost threw the democratization process off balance just before the last hours of the 2007 election. In the same vein of ascertaining the legality of Tambulwal stepping down for Atiku, Okpor (2022) opined that Section 34 of the new Electoral Act allows political parties to hold primary elections to replace a candidate who dies after the polls have begun but before the final results are announced and a winner is declared. In the case of legislative elections, the election will be rerun, and a bereaved political party can have a new primary within 14 days to nominate a new candidate.

The Vanguard News of June 20, 2022 reported that the APC presidential aspirants who sought the votes of 2,260 delegate were: Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, Senate President Ahmad Lawan, Rotimi Amaechi, Ogbonnaya Onu, Rochas Okorochoa, Dave Umahi, Yahaya Bello, Tein Jack-Rich, Pastor Tunde Bakare, Emeka Nwajiuba, Ahmed San Mojeed and Adebawale (2022) observed that the APC cleared a total of 23 aspirants for the primary election. According to Premium Times, seven of them resigned for Mr Tinubu at the start of the primary, while only one resigned for Mr Osinbajo. According to NJPS.Com, the following candidates contested the APC primaries based on their votes: Abubakar, Badaru (0 votes); Akapabio; Godswil (0 votes); Amaechi, Chibuike Rotimi (306 votes); Amosun Ibikunle (0 votes); Ben Ayade (37 votes); Bello Yahaya (47 votes); Fayemi John Kayode (0 votes); Jack-Tich (Tein) (0 votes); Lawan The results were collated and counted live in Eagles Square, Abuja.

### 6.2 Monetization of Politics: Delegates as a Commercialized Political Tool and a Flawed process of Candidate/Leadership Selection Against 2023 Election

One of the pernicious issues in Nigerian politics, apart from rigging, assassination, thuggery, etc., is the monetization of politics. This has been a consistent undemocratic strategy used by criminalistic political office seekers to seize power in the polity. The level of poverty, unquestionable loyalty, illiteracy, hunger, party interest, etc., has unfortunately placed the young ones in a "beggar position." Thus, there is no denying that such impoverished masses gladly accept the crumbs that fall from the table of political cum economic rapists known as politicians, furthering the phenomenon of political monetization (from the purchase of nomination forms to campaigning, electioneering, crowd renting, vote buying, and so on). In Nigeria, this has become an accepted tenet of electoral processes. It has tainted the Nigerian democratic image, defaced governance, abolished the thinking on credibility, transparency, and accountability, etc.

The price for party formations against 2023 elections, according to This Day News (March 30th, 2022), clearly brings to the fore the facts that 2023 elections will go to the "new rich." The ruling APC and the opposition PDP both set the price of their respective forms at 100 million and 40 million. Despite the mountainous cost of forms, it never discouraged aspirants from purchasing them, as numerous aspirants flooded the offices of political parties to obtain them. At the end of the sale of forms, the two political parties, APC and PDP, made billions of naira. Such an increase in form price occurred during a period in the country's history when the economy was in a coma, the naira (the country's currency) was depreciating, and educational institutions (universities) were closed due to industrial actions. During the primaries, delegates who before now voted for aspirants with little money and recognition have suddenly become political "kingmakers." Delegates make themselves available to be bought by the highest political bidders or aspirants. The struggle for who will receive party tickets in the recently concluded national assembly and gubernatorial primaries saw the spraying of naira and dollars to delegates in many states. Delegates in the hottest contest reportedly got between 500,000 and 2 million votes, and in some cases even higher (this day's news of May 30, 2022). Evidence abounds to buttress the points further, as Adam Namadi, the son of former vice president Namadi Sambo, reportedly asked delegates to refund the money, 2 million naira, he gave to each delegate before the election.

This was after he failed, as he secured two votes at the People's Democratic Party (PDP) primaries in the Kaduna North federal constituency of the House of Representatives (Sadiq, 2022).

The Daily Post Reporters of Sunday, May 29, 2022, informed that party delegates are taking advantage of their party's primaries to milk money from aspirants, with some of them describing themselves and the electioneering season as "beautiful brides" and "opportunistic premises," respectively. This raised many eyebrows about the height of corruption in our political scene. Former President Jonathan said, "The issue that surrounded the primaries across the country in 2022 was a mess." This is not a standard practice. The process has failed. "We cannot use the process to elect the president, governors, senators, members of the House of Representatives, and others." Also, the apex body organizing elections in the country, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), expressed fears over the manner in which politicians have commercialized the voting process in the country's electoral process, describing it as a dangerous trend. The chairman of the electoral commission, professor Mahmood Yakubu, and his predecessor, Attahiru Jega, faulted the practice during a one-day colloquium with the theme "emerging issues that will shape the 2023 general elections in Nigeria," organized by the Center for Democracy and Development and the Open Society Initiative for West Africa. The civil society, for its part, sees it as outright corruption. Speaking on the matter, the Executive Director of the Resource Centre for Human Rights and Civic Education (CHRICED), Dr. Ibrahim M. Zikirullahi, said what is going on is political corruption, which removes every sense of credibility from the process. He said those inducing delegates have replaced ideas with money, and they appear to be getting away with it. There are aspirants who lost after bribing delegates, and they are boldly coming out to request a refund. If the Elections Act makes vote buying illegal, we wonder why anti-corruption agencies are on the lookout for aspirants and delegates who openly buy and sell votes. According to Musowo (2022), in the just concluded APC primaries of June 7, 2022, Tinubu, who won the APC presidential primaries, was alleged to dole out dollars in the following formats: Ogun state delegate, \$25,000; Adamawa, \$10,000; while delegates rejected Osinbajo's \$500. Uwugiaren and Adebayo (2022) affirmed that a conservative estimate by THISDAY has shown that the All Progressive Congress (APC) may take in over N30 billion from the sale of nomination and expression of interest forms, giving the ruling party enormous firepower to face the 2023 general election. "With a massive war chest expected from form sales, the ruling party will have a commanding advantage in the field if the resources are properly deployed," a political analyst who preferred anonymity told THISDAY News. Omisore (2013) reiterated that politics cannot be effectively played or carried out without money. Even in those ancient days when politics started, some form of money was involved.

Olabode (2021) also observed that the phenomenon of money politics is neither new nor strange in Nigeria as a nation. A historical view of the electioneering process in Nigeria reveals that money has played a tremendous role in determining how the masses vote in elections. This goes along with the intimidation of voters. More worrisome is that, recently, it has now become a key deciding factor in who participates in the electoral process. Nelson and Saka-olakungbe (2019) argued in tandem, saying that in Nigeria, money politics, vote buying, and selling have continuously occupied the center stage of social issues and been a front-burner topic in political discourse. Even many writers and scholars, both within and outside the country, have continuously shown interest due to the adverse effects of these ugly tenets on the body politic. Babatunde, Iwu, and Osuji (2019) confirmed the influence of money politics in Nigeria's democratic dispensation; thus, the arrival of democracy in the country's political history was met with the greatest desire for a socio-political transformation that elevates citizen welfare, prioritizes nation building, and fosters development that places the country in admirable straits. Unfortunately, money-bag politicians, special-interest individuals, godfathers, and political machines have hijacked the electoral process to their advantage and the detriment of the citizenry. For the most part, this menace appears to be responsible for the emerging regime of insecurity threatening the stability of the country. Afolabi, Tanimola, and Ojomo (2022) are of the view that vote buying and selling, also known as commercial politics and money politics, is one phenomenon that is gradually taking center stage in Nigeria's electoral process. Orji (2014) queried the issue of money politics by taking a historical intellectualism approach, thus showing that in Nigeria, the issue of party funding has for long posed a grave concern to observers of our political scene. In the First and Second Republics, it was a contending issue that attracted intense debate in the state parliaments and the National Assembly. It was the fear of allowing the so-called "moneybags" to squeeze political parties into their pockets that led the regime of Ibrahim Babangida in the 1990s to make the government partly support their financing. Under current Nigerian conditions, however, most political parties are bereft of ideologies, are not issue-oriented, and are merely zero-issue alliances of notables who are fortunate to grab power and who have an interest in having preponderance of power over party structures, candidacies, and even the general electoral process.

Inibong (2022) affirmed that, as observers decried, the utilization of huge amounts by desperate politicians to arm-twist delegates and buy votes not only compromises electoral offices but also truncates and bastardizes the credibility of the nation's elections and adversely impacts governance. On the same wavelength, Adepegba (2022)

stated that foreign hard currencies (the dollar) flooded the PDP's primary election space in Abuja on May 28, 2022. The 14 candidates were ready for a deal. For the 764 delegates, the financial windfall was their bounty from the transactional primary disguised as participatory democracy, and they were not disappointed. Among the presidential aspirants were former vice presidents, state governors, ex-governors, a former senate president, businessmen, and a publisher. Atiku Abubakar gave each delegate the sum of \$20,000 as he emerged the winner of the PDP with 371 votes. Atiku's closest challenger, Governor Nyesom Wike of River State, came in second with 237 votes. Wike's camp was paid a package of \$10,000 for each delegate in a desperate bid to clinch the coveted party ticket. On failing to actualize his presidential primary candidacy for the PDP with his 25 buses decorated with his campaign banners, he quietly left the venue. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission-EFCC had declared Rivers State Accountant General Fubara Siminayi wanted for N435 billion fraud, money laundering, misappropriation of public funds, and abuse of office a few weeks before the election. Surprisingly, the same accountant general wanted by the EFCC won the Rivers State PDP governorship election in 2023.

Akintade (2022), eloquently buttressed the issue of money politics further thus: there were already speculations and signs that the Peoples Democratic Party's (PDP) presidential primary election will carry the toga of huge financing as inducement, suggesting that the party's ticket goes to the biggest money bag with dollars. Instances abound from previous elections, such as the 2019 PDP convention in Port Harcourt, where most delegates smiled to their various homes with between \$8,000 and \$10,000 thousand dollars. It was based on such an occurrence that there were already speculations that the figures for the 2022 primary election and 2023 general election were bound to be higher, as tweeted by the former presidential aide to former President Goodluck Jonathan, Mr. Okupe. He also cited instances in his home state of Ogun, where two aspirants vying for the position of speaker of the Ogun State House of Assembly had already promised \$150,000 and \$200,000 to delegates in their wards. Already, one of the contestants in Ogun State had already offered the sum of 200,000 naira, while the other offered 150,000. According to Channels Television, while financial gifts poured into the hands of presidential delegates in the form of dollars, one of the recipients, Mr. Tanko Rossi of the PDP from Kaduna State, decided to use a portion of his share to empower his people through education. He used the sum of 6 million naira to purchase over 150 NECO (National Examination Council) and WAEC (West African Examination Council) forms for 150 indigene students in the community—Sanga Local Government Area, Kaduna State—in addition to other assistance he extended to the less privileged in the same community.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

Dovetailing from above are insightful analysis and a scholarly disposition on the recent electoral processes the country is undergoing. It becomes evident that our democratic experiments have been truncated and bastardized. It becomes more worrisome that the pseudo-tenets of political transition are that "democracy begins and ends with the conduct of elections," and that "nobody cares whether such elections are smacked with rigging and other forms of irregularities as long as there is a change of government." Even at this high level, the recent primary election is a shambles on democracy and good governance.

The monetization of elections, as blatantly displayed during such a perilous time of our national life, keeps one wondering how insensitive, criminalistic, and unpatriotic our leaders are. This is so as the country is cobwebbed in dangerous pit holes of debt as we keep borrowing, resulting in the closing of universities and higher education institutions due to the government's refusal to redeem its obligations and agreements with the universities and their lecturers. So many governors and senators vying for one office or another are underperforming in their respective states and constituencies. The level of criminalization of the state was so glaring in the just concluded primary elections, as aspirants doled out cash (in foreign and local currencies) with impunity. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) stood by and watched such arrogant and uncivilized use of money go unpunished. One wonders what will befall Nigerians if such aspirants finally emerge as leaders in the future. Such a scenario depicts Nigerian politics as a market space for the mighty; hence, the youths and visionary Nigerians are unable to find a space in such a saturated political environment.

## VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Establishing true democratic principles such as the rule of law and unwavering election results This is very pertinent, as elections remain critical in any transitioning program in Nigeria. As a result, issues of rigging and other unholy political practices have plagued electoral processes.

The abolishment of the delegate system Thus, it has been a terrible political miscalculation and suicide that feeble persons who are just after their cash and carry slogan are called "delegates" and are selected to select the leaders of millions of persons in a big country like Nigeria. The idea of delegating should be styled in such a manner that we take some lead from the American Electoral College. People of integrity and honesty are to be made delegates.

Political office should be made less lucrative. Thus, beginning with the presidency, the lowest portfolio should be a thing of intelligence, qualification, patriotism, national interest, selflessness, and visionary leadership straits. This should go along with laws that are stringently made to follow up on, monitor, and sanction attitudinal deviations.

Electoral nomination forms should be simplified so that the common man with the necessary intellectual, attitudinal, moral standard, and vision can run for office. This is necessary because the current Nigerian democratic practice and governance are for the nouveau rich, the elite, and the money bags, who turned the Nigerian political theater into a "market place saturated by political gladiators and economic vampires." These people have ended up sapping the country's resources insatiably and rapaciously, which is bringing doom in all sectors. This should be complemented by making politics less lucrative, while other sectors like nurses, the military/armed forces, paramilitary officers, security operatives, teachers and lecturers, and civil servants are made to enjoy good pay and incentives.

Office holders' performance should be evaluated. This can be achieved through competent and honest quality assurance. Also, federal and state lawmakers, governors, ministers, chairmen, councilors, and other appointees at all levels should be made to face performance appraisal panels, and a trusted, corrupt-free evaluation team should be sent to confirm performance.

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