

POLITICAL CORRUPTION AND FUNDING OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Abubakar Abdullahi

Department of Political Science, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto

Corresponding Author's email: abubakar.abdullahi2@udusok.edu.ng



Abstract

The vigor with which political corruption features prominently in Nigeria's national discourse suggests the severity of the problem. It has become a phenomenon which pervades every aspect of governance, including political party organizations. This paper investigates the extent to which funding of political parties through political corruption has affected national development in the country. Using qualitative data, the paper reveals that the prevalence of political corruption in funding political parties could be attributed to the character of the state, unreliable sources of revenue, absence of political will and lopsided nature of anti-corruption war. It shows that the influx of corrupt funds into political parties violated party finance disclosure and transparency rules and affect democratization process in Nigeria. The study also found that monetization of election, clientelistic nature of public appointment and naked quest for power and its associated privileges are some of the factors which gave rise to political corruption in funding political parties. These inherent contradictions consequently transformed Nigeria's political parties into clientele parties with negative consequences on governance and development. The contradictions further affected the development and institutionalization of political parties and by extension Nigeria's national development as evident in the rise of poverty and general insecurity. Thus, the study recommends reforms of political party system, political finance disclosure rules and strong inter-agency collaboration between anti-corruption agencies and INEC to institutionalize stiffer sanctions and penalties against perpetrators and beneficiaries of political corruption in Nigeria.

Keywords: corruption, political parties, political finance, national development

Introduction

Provision of adequate and legitimate funds as well as other resources are important ingredients for the growth and development of political parties across democracies. As indispensable democratic institutions, political parties require funding to survive, compete and perform their democratic functions such as political campaigns and rallies, leadership training and recruitment as well as political enlightenment of the citizens. In fact democratization project is impossible where political parties are starved of funds to conduct their responsibilities. In this regard, democracies across the globe provide constitutional and statutory laws governing party funding. In some democracies political parties are discouraged from the use of illegal funds in their activities and thus regulations and penalties are provided against violation. However, substantial evidence suggests that there has been increasing penetration of illegal funds into political parties in recent times (Amundsen, 1999). For instance, in some countries, political parties receive financial support from illegal and sometimes illegitimate sources including funds from illicit drug

and arms trade, suspicious donations from private corporations and diversion of public funds through politically-motivated corrupt practices in the public sector.

Political corruption is a form of social exchange through which public officials divert public funds for political reasons. It has become a daily occurrence in some democracies and thus describe as a major problem affecting democratization process across countries. According to Hopkin (2004), funding of political parties in Western European countries such as Italy, Spain, Belgium, and France have been associated with corruption scandals. Similarly, ruling political parties in Thailand, Kenya and Japan were found to have misused public funds to finance their activities (Blechinger, 2002; Doorenspleet, 2002; INEC, 2005; Le Due et al, 2010). The parties used their elected representatives and employed different methods including shady contract deals to party loyalists and dubious welfare programs to cart away public funds to finance political campaigns. Similarly, the stolen funds are used to buy votes, hire rented thugs as well as settle other party expenditure. In a report on party financing practices in 22 countries, Denise and Bryan (2005: 53-56) show that embezzled public funds have been the major source of financing political parties in both Africa and non-African countries. The report further shows that political parties including the opposition are involved in looting public treasury to fund political activities. But in developing democracies ruling parties are found to have benefited more from political corruption than the opposition due to their access to state resources. This pattern of financing has given ruling political parties an edge over the opposition thereby affecting the capacity of parties to provide strong opposition to the ruling parties. More so, the increasing frequency with which ruling political parties are involved in corrupt practices raises fundamental questions on their capacity to entrench and strengthen good governance.

Since the return of democracy in 1999 in Nigeria, political corruption has been one of the topical issues associated with democratization in the country. There have been widespread accusations of massive embezzlement of public funds by public officials to finance their political parties. For instance, the former Plateau State Governor Joshua Dariye and currently a serving senator was accused of deploying Plateau state ecological funds to finance the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in 2003. Party members received donations and contract in disguise to finance political campaigns. In fact, it was observed that payment for shady contract, over-invoicing of expenditure and inflation of contracts are some of the common corrupt practices associated with funding political parties in Nigeria. In order to provide a level playing field, regulations were provided to regulate funding of political parties. Regrettably disregard to these rules in terms of compliance further compounded the problem of political corruption in the country. For example, there has been allegations that political parties overshot their spending limits and in most cases failed to submit their annual financial reports to Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as contained in the country's electoral act. Some of these violations are evident during the 2007, 2011 and 2015 elections than any other period in Nigeria's political history. Clear violations of financial rules and indiscriminate diversion of public funds and clear violation of financial rules characterized the electoral processes during the periods.

In spite of the efforts of the current government in Nigeria to fight corruption, the problem of political corruption continued unabated. This is evident in the way similar accusations were levelled against some top officials of President Buhari's government. The inability of the Buhari's leadership to stem the tide of politically motivated corruption in party politics posed great danger to the growth and development of political parties and by extension democratization in Nigeria. Indeed, open and transparent funding of parties and candidates is crucial in the fight against

corruption and to maintain citizens' trust in leadership and democratic governance (Ohman, 2014).

Against the foregoing background, this paper examines the extent to which political corruption in funding of political parties is affecting Nigeria's national development. The aim is to identify the factors responsible for the rise of political corruption in funding political parties and its implications on the country's national development. The study examines the allegation of diversion of \$2.1b to finance the presidential candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) for the 2015 general elections. It may interest us to note that the said amount was appropriated for the procurement of arms for the Nigerian army to fight domestic insurgency which has threatened the country's national security including the conduct of the election itself. However, reference would also be made to allegations of corruption against some public officials appointed by the ruling All People's Congress Party (APC). The choice of the APC was necessitated by the desire to assess the efforts of the party in its anti-corruption drive as its cardinal objective during 2015 electioneering campaign. Thus, the paper is structured into four sections. Following this introduction, the second section discuss the nature and pattern of political finance in selected countries with a view to providing basis for the paper. The third section examine political corruption in funding of political parties and its implications on Nigeria's national development and the last section concludes the paper with some useful recommendations.

Nature and pattern of political finance in selected countries

Party funding cannot be properly understood without a robust interrogation of the concept of political finance. This is due to the fact that the two are closely connected and could not be easily discerned. Broadly, political finance could be seen as a generic term that is used to denote all forms of funds provided to political parties for their programmes. Political party finance, party funding and/or campaign finance are terms interchangeably used to describe ways through which political parties mobilize and utilize their financial resources. It includes financing of party activities before, during and after election (NDI, n. d; Ukase, n.d). Walecki (2002), and Ayoade (2006) also described political party finance as the use of money or other material resources for political party activities. These resources are provided to cover the cost of electioneering campaigns, purchase airtime in electronic and space in the print media as well as perform mobilization and advocacy functions. Impliedly, money have to be appropriated and made available for political parties to become alive, vibrant and get consolidated. Funding thus is the life wire which strengthens political party organizations and its institutionalization.

Given the significance of political finance in the development of political parties, scholars such as Biezen (2010), Carbone (2007) and Downs (1957) have theorized the centrality of funding political parties. Some of these theories include pluralist and investment theories (NDI, n. d). On one hand, the pluralist theory argued that political parties operate in an economic market competing with other parties for votes in order to promote policy goals. Therefore parties are entrepreneurs which require adequate funding to remain active in the competition for votes. One of the leading pluralist, Downs (1957) argues that political parties are entrepreneurs in a profit seeking economy and are often in electoral competition to maximize votes. In this regard, political parties require proper funding to be able to identify, formulate and achieve their policy goals through candidates' selection for election.

The second theory is the investment theory which argues that business elites, not voters, play the leading part in political systems (Ferguson, 1983). He further admits that the reasons why wealthy investors are able to influence politics to their advantage is that much of the politically relevant information that is so expensive for ordinary citizens to acquire comes quite naturally to

businesses in the course of their daily operations. The elites in the course of their business come into contact with different social groups who in one way or the other influences people to vote for political parties. The theory maintained that voters have little or no authority in the campaign process because funding is the prerogatives of business elites who invest money in it. This presupposes that political parties must identify and attract rich and wealthy individuals that could finance the cost of their activities. It also shows that there is hierarchy of membership in political parties with the wealthy occupying the top position of political parties. Although, both the pluralist and investment theories have tried to explain the significance of funding to political parties, they could however be criticized for limiting and defining political party finance within the context of election and candidate selection neglecting blatantly other functions such as political advocacy, leadership training and other forms of social responsibilities. These neglected functions are equally important as they influence voter behavior and by extension increase the chances of a political party in competitive elections. More so, both theories emphasized the rich few as the major source of financing political parties ignoring other sources of party finance such as membership dues and state subsidy etc. Regardless of the criticisms against the theories, it is important to note that there is a strong connection between availability of financial resources and the evolution and development of political parties as political institution for influence in the sustenance of democratic governance.

It could be argued that political party finance is both an indispensable activity and a requirement for the functioning of political parties and democratic rule. Both new, established and consolidated democracies adopts different methods of funding political parties. Empirical studies have shown that there are three different sources of financing political parties. These sources include internal sources such as membership dues and fees for nomination forms, the second is private donations from individuals and groups, and the third is public funding or state subsidies provided to assist political parties (Mozaffar, 2005; Salih & Nordlund, 2007). In some countries such as Britain and Switzerland, state do not provide subsidies and thus political parties relies heavily on membership dues, fund raising activities, business donations and funds from constituency associations to finance their activities (Terracino & Hamada, 2014).

However, in the United States and France, the constitutions and the electoral laws provided for financial support from the federal government through the election management body. For instance, in both the U.S and France, presidential candidate who receives 5% of the vote shall be entitled to financial assistance in form of matching funds, grants to cover nomination convention expenses (Biezen, 2010). In Africa, the situation about political finance is by no means similar to the Western democracies (NDI, n.d). This similarity could perhaps be connected to the influence of colonialism as well as the sheer pessimism that Western democracies are the only models or framework for African democracy to strive and prosper. Indeed, the formation, development and funding of African political parties could be argued to have originated during the colonial period. It may interest us to note that some African political parties began as nationalist platforms created to resist the imposition of colonial rule. Following political independence, the parties transformed and institutionalized themselves into ruling parties. Regrettably bad governance arising from looting of public treasury and intimidation of minorities and opposition groups have affected the performance of some of these political parties as evident in Zimbabwe's ZANU-PF under late Robert Mugabe and the ANC under Jacob Zuma in South Africa.

Due to the nature of colonial system, the colonial state could not fund political parties and thus there was no clear cut legislation or regulations on funding political parties. Thus, political parties have to find ways of mobilizing resources to fund their activities. For instance, during the days of

colonialism in Nigeria, Zimbabwe as well as apartheid regimes in South Africa, political parties received financial support both from among the citizens who paid membership dues and foreign support from black associations in diaspora and opposition or left-wing political parties in Europe (Carbone, 2007). This indicates that funding of political parties during the colonial period was purely by private individuals and groups who share similar philosophy and objectives with the political parties in Africa. The state has no role in funding political parties until during the Second Republic where a combination of private and public funding was used (Adetula, 2008). The 1979 Constitution of Nigeria provided for the funding of political parties through annual grant and/or subvention provided through the Federal Electoral Commission. Similarly, private funding except from outside the country was allowed and without any limitation on how much corporate bodies and individuals could contribute to political parties. Due to lack of regulations on spending limits, ambitious politicians deployed their wealth to influence the programmes and decisions of political parties. For instance, ten members of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) donated ₦5m a fund raising dinner held in Lagos in 1982 (Adetula, 2008). Similar fund raising was also held in different parts of the country and wealthy politicians donating millions to support their political parties in exchange for lucrative contracts and other favors from the parties. This paved way for political parties to become transit camps where politicians used their ill-gotten wealth to promote their political interest. Invariably, this transformed party politics into client-patron platforms as well as an enterprises with benefits accruing to patrons and their clients within political parties.

The foregoing implies that political party finance regulation is a recent development in Africa. In fact, the phenomenon of regulation of funding of political parties coincided with the end of the cold war and the development of third wave of democratization. The collapsed of the Soviet Union created a unipolar world and allowed the capitalist world to turn its attention to the promotion of democracy across the globe. This development led to the provision of democracy assistance fund available for developing countries. The developing countries as part of requirements to access the democracy funds are required to develop rules on how the funds would be utilized. In this regard, different countries across Africa enacted electoral laws to regulate funding of political parties. Disclosure rules and spending threshold were some of the major provisions in disclosure rules and regulations of political finance. The rules are provided to guard against abuse of money and ensure that the cost of election remains reasonable and affordable within the reach of the citizens. It is equally designed to strengthen political competition, empower voters and institutionalize political parties as democratic actors (Fogg, Molutsi and Tjernström, 2003). In this regard, the Nigeria's electoral Act among others provides for the funding of political parties through state grants and further provides clauses detailing on sources of political party finance and spending threshold (FRN Electoral Act, 2006; 2010; Aluaigba, 2015). While Mali banned foreign donations to political parties, in Ghana disclosure rules concerning donations and contributions to political parties were provided to guide political parties' expenditure (Austin, 1964; NDI, n.d). This clearly demonstrated that efforts have been intensified across the African continent to monitor and regulate political party financing but regrettably the compliance level could be said to be low as evident in Nigeria, Kenya and Zimbabwe.

The foregoing signifies that political party finance could be examined from three different perspectives. The first is regulation which has to do with the extent to which political parties comply with the extant regulations in sourcing of funds, collection of donations and compliance with spending limit. The second dimension relates to accountability and transparency which deal with the ability of political parties to subject their income and expenditure to outside inspections for everyone to see. The third perspective has to do with the availability in terms of access to various forms of direct and indirect funding as well as the extent to which political parties use

subsidized services provided by the state for their development (Biezen, 2010). Where all these perspectives are taken together and thoroughly complied with, some level of sanity could be introduced in funding political parties and party membership could also have ownership and control of their parties. More so the credibility of parties would be enhanced and their legitimacy among the electorates would be guaranteed, which eventually affects the quality of governance and democratization.

Against the foregoing, it could be argued that political party finance and its regulation is not only required but significant for the development of political parties in both new and old democracies. In fact, it is even more significant for new democracies that are trying to establish strong and effective democratic institutions. Indeed, funding of political parties is one of the critical elements for the functioning of every successful democracy. It is often argued that political parties as pillars for the building of a strong democracy require healthy funding to fulfill their core functions both during and in between elections. Provision of funds is absolutely necessary for the functioning of political parties without which it would be difficult for them to articulate their ideas let alone actualize their objectives. Little wonder that U.S Senator Bill Bradley (NDI, n.d) argued that trying to take money out of politics is like trying to take jumping out of basketball. This shows the centrality of funding in party politics. Indeed, it further indicated that funding is an integral part of the political process and where it is regulated, it guarantees party institutionalization and promote democratic governance (Terracino and Hamada, 2014).

Implications of Political corruption on Nigeria's national development

While trying to justify the significance of political party funding for effective performance, we should not lose sight of the fact that unregulated funding could as well hamper credibility of political parties and as well affects national development of a nation. This was aptly captured by Biezen (2010) who maintained that although money should be seen as a normal and necessary element of the democratic process, its relationship with politics is blemished by its frequent association with practices of fraud, bribery, and corruption. In fact, it has been observed that one of the most challenging problem affecting African democracies has been the spate and incidence of corrupt practices in funding of political parties across the region. Worst still corrupt practices not only related to funding of political parties are hardly reported or punish partly due to its long historical presence in African politics, high level of secrecy and the caliber of people involved in it. For example, it was observed that African political parties often blatantly abused political party financial regulations and in several cases receive stolen funds, grants from foreign donors and illicit funds to finance campaign and other party programmes (INEC, 2005; Walle van de, 2002). Due to the magnitude of the problem, Kura (2011) argued that series of corruption scandals were discovered which affected the integrity and credibility of political parties with serious implications on national development.

In recent times hardly a day passes by without report on the media of cases of political corruption in Nigeria. This could be attested to by the rising increase of cases of political corruption been investigated by anti-corruption agencies in the country. Given the severity of the problem, it could be argued that political corruption has affected Nigeria's democratization process and national development. It is however, important to note that political corruption has a long historical trajectories in Nigeria. It has been in existence since the colonial period in which allegations of diversion of public funds against the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and Action Group (AG) from the African Continental Bank (ACB) and Western Nigeria public corporation were investigated in 1956 and 1962 respectively (Adetula, 2008). Similarly, the Arewa People's Congress (APC) leadership was also accused of mismanaging revenue of the northern region for political

purposes as early as 1950s (Adetula, 2008). This and many other problems compounded the political crises that led to the collapse of the First Republic. The emergence of the Second Republic heightened the level and intensity of political corruption as politicians, contractors and relatives of party leadership were accused of mismanaging public funds for political benefits. In some of these cases, political parties are partly the major beneficiaries of corruption as some of the mismanaged funds were used to fund party programmes.

Political corruption has become a major source of funding political parties, especially party campaigns and other election-related programmes. One of the celebrated cases of political corruption involving political parties was during the Nigeria's 2015 presidential election. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) which was the ruling party before 2015 was accused of diversion of public fund to finance its presidential candidate. It was reported in both print and electronic media that substantial amount of tax payers' money was allegedly shared among PDP members across the country. While some of these cases were reported and are been investigated by Economic Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), several others, especially at the state and local government levels were either under reported or not reported at all. This may not be unconnected with the alleged widespread use of money during the 2015 election as well as the inability of anti-corruption agencies to expand their net of investigation to state and local government levels. The table below contains some of the alleged cases of political corruption to finance political campaigns of the PDP.

Table I: Some selected sources of political corruption for 2015 PDP Presidential Election

S/NO	Sources of stolen funds	Amount stolen (₦)	Alleged Beneficiaries
1	Office of the National Security Adviser (NSA)	₦567b	National Security Adviser (NSA), retired service chiefs and some PDP members
2	Ministry of Petroleum Resources and Fidelity Bank	₦23b	Minister of Petroleum Resources, Politicians, security personnel and INEC staff
3	Ministry of Defence	₦109b	30 serving and retired public officials and 24 chief executive of companies
TOTAL	₦699b		

Source: Compiled from National Dailies (2016)

Table 1 above shows the alleged stolen funds stood at ₦699 b and originated from three major sources which include the office of the NSA, Ministries of Petroleum Resources and Defense respectively. The involvement of these agencies was confirmed by reports of investigation conducted by the EFCC on politicians, retired and serving public officials and chief executives of contracting companies who were alleged to have received the stolen money on behalf of the PDP. The table indicated that the PDP utilized the opportunity of been the ruling party with powers to appoint and dismiss public officials at any time and established a clientelistic network to distribute the alleged stolen fund to facilitate the success of the party during the 2015 presidential election. This network was further expanded and employed for the distribution of money to state and local chapters of the party across the country. Table II below shows some of the beneficiaries of the

diverted funds appropriated for the supply of arms through the office of the Nigeria's National Security Adviser.

Table II: Some selected beneficiaries of diverted funds from the NSA's office for the 2015 PDP Presidential Election

S/NO	Name of Beneficiaries	Amount Collected (N)
1.	PDP Delegates	₦10 b
2.	Former Rivers State Resident Electoral Commissioner and 2 others	₦651m
3.	S/East PDP Vice Chairman and Ebonyi State Governor's brother	₦400m
4.	Fidelity Bank	₦49.7m
5.	Alhaji Attahiru Bafarawa and his son	₦4.5b
6.	Alhaji Bashir Yuguda	₦100m
7.	Mal. Ibrahim Shekarau	₦400m
8.	Mr. Olisah Metuh	₦400m
9.	Alhaji Musa Sada	₦700m
10.	Mrs. Nenadi Usman	₦4b
11.	Rtd. Air Marshal Adesola Amosu and some senior military officers	₦5b
12.	Abia State Resident Electoral Commissioner	₦20m
13.	Alhaji Sani Isa	₦406m
14.	11 INEC Staff of Gombe State Office	₦120m
15.	Alhaji Tanko Yakasai	₦63m
16.	Mr. Tony Anenih	₦21.8m
17.	Mal. Ibrahim Shekarau and others	₦950m
18.	High Chief Raymond Dokpesi	₦2.1b
19.	Rtd Air Marshal Alex Badeh	₦2.6b
20.	Mr. Femi Fani Kayode	₦1.7b

Source: Compiled from National Dailies (2016)

As shown in Table II majority of those that benefitted from the alleged stolen funds were members of the PDP that were holding strategic positions in the party or are members of the party's executive committee or Board of Trustees (BOT). Also included were electoral officials, media executive and retired army chiefs who were appointees of the president. The beneficiaries served as the arrow heads of the PDP presidential campaign in their various states and local government areas. It was also reported in the preliminary reports of the EFCC that most of the beneficiaries used their personal accounts or that of their children to receive the alleged stolen funds (Vanguard, 2014). This is evident in the case of the former governor of Sokoto state Attahiru Bafarawa and his son Sagir Attahiru who were accused of allegedly collecting ₦4.5b for the PDP

presidential campaign for Sokoto state. It is important to note that the distribution pattern of the stolen funds was through family ties which is a strategy of building and sustaining clientelistic network. It is a design by political elites employed for siphoning public funds. This clientelistic strategy was employed by politicians such as Chris Uba, late Abubakar Sola Saraki and late Lamidi Adedibu to remain powerful in their states in the previous regimes. They used their financial and political influence to determine who wins election, how their states are governed in terms of key political appointment, contract awards and so on. This confirmed the assertion of Salih et.al (2007) that African political parties are only sustainable at the elite level because the elite depend on them to access the resources of the state.

Similarly, it could also be observed from table II that the sources and amount of the alleged stolen funds contravened basic regulations guiding party funding and money laundering prohibition Act 2010 as amended. Both tables I and II shows that the amount which is about ₦700 billion is above spending limits on election expenses as stipulated by the Electoral Act 2010. The Act in section 91(1-10) provided that maximum election expenses to be incurred by a candidate at a Presidential election shall be ₦1b (Electoral Act, 2010). In this regard, it could be argued that PDP contravened regulations relating to electoral expenses which is punishable under section 91 (a-g) of the same Act. It is significant to remind our self that regulations pertaining to spending limit is designed to reduce the influence of money in the electoral process. Moreover, it is expected to provide a balanced and fertile ground for all political parties to participate in the electoral process. To achieve this motive of political participation and expand democratic space, the 1999 Nigeria's Constitution (as amended) article 18.1 (a-f) provided public funding and donations to all political parties regardless of their position and financial capacity.

One may argue that the involvement of Nigeria's political parties in corrupt practices is related to the excessive monetization of election in the country. Election as argued by Mesfin (2008) is the founding pillar of any democratic political system, whether considered fragile or established. Regrettably, election is gradually becoming too expensive such that both political parties and their candidates have to resort to borrowing or be involved in political corruption to fund party and campaign expenses. Perhaps the poverty level and general economic condition of the citizens in the country could be responsible for the current state of affairs in financing election. Political parties are also becoming part of the factors responsible for the rising increase of the cost of election in Nigeria. Most political parties charged rate and fees that could not allow an average citizen to contest for an elected office. For example, in the last 2015 election, the PDP charged its presidential aspirants ₦20m for a nomination form and ₦2m for expression of interest, while APC imposed ₦25m and ₦2.5m for the same purpose. In addition, the cost of advertisement in the media and organization of election campaign are other sundry programmes that are also too expensive to shoulder by individual candidates and their political parties. The expensive nature of election has denied majority of the citizens from contesting election and thus, transformed election into an affair involving the rich and wealthy party members or their anointed political children with serious implications on leadership and political party development. Cost of election also influences political officer-holders and their clients in the bureaucracy to resort to abuse and outright misuse of public resources to meet the financial obligation of electioneering campaign. This indicates that cost of election is too high to sustain democracy. Thus, it encourages abuse of public trust and transform politics into exclusive preserve of the wealthy and business men.

Making politics exclusive preserves of the wealthy creates a groups of financiers that provide not only money for the purchase of nomination forms but also connive and demand from civil servants on lucrative appointments to contribute money to buy forms for their 'anointed sons

and daughters' in order to continue to enjoy patronage from the parties and their candidates after winning election. This development consequently contributes to patronage and clientelistic politics with serious implication on quality of democracy and governance. First, it did not only transforms public officials into clients acting as conduit pipes to siphon public funds, but also contributed to government dismal performance in service delivery with serious implications on national development. Impliedly, it has succeeded as argued somewhere in the paper of establishing a political empire combining wealthy politicians and their cohorts in the civil service who usually determine what policy government pursue and who gets contract or paid by the government. In such clientelistic arrangement, it is not citizens interest that matter but rather interest of the rich and powerful party members which in most cases have negative consequences on national development. In fact, misuse of public resources to finance political parties undermine the integrity of the political parties and by extension affect their institutionalization with serious implication on the growth and development of democracy. Also, it contributes to the decline of public trust enjoyed by political parties and politicians from the mass public with implication on the legitimacy of the government. In this regard, it is apt as Shehu (2015) maintains that political parties have unwittingly turned public/elective office into a commodity for sale and reduced politics to a venture that earns the highest return beneficial only to its investors.

Incidence and prevalence of the phenomenon of vote buying has further contributed to the high cost of election in the country. It is important to note that the practice of vote buying is a phenomenon that has gained acceptance among electorate in developing countries particularly in countries where patronage is an important social factor (Blechinger, 2002). It was observed that since the return of democracy in 1999, politicians provide between ₦300 to ₦3000 as monetary inducement in exchange for votes (INEC Election Report, 2012). A number of factors have contributed to the high incidence of vote buying during the election, some of which are high level of poverty, illiteracy and lack of awareness among the electorate in Nigeria. In a study report on 2011 elections, anticipation of monetary inducement was reported to have frequently been mentioned as influencing factor for voter turnout among particularly the women in most parts of Nigeria (INEC, 2012). This phenomenon became a defining feature of Nigeria's electoral process such that in each election political parties and their financiers among civil servants and business men contribute large sums of money to buy votes from the electorate. Widespread poverty and economic underdevelopment among majority of Nigerians could perhaps be linked to the rising phenomenon of vote buying in the country.

It is however important to add that vote buying as exchange relationship is conducted with high level of secrecy and only those involved are aware of it. The problem of vote buying has been linked to the rising incidence of political corruption as elected and appointed politicians defraud the state to fund their political parties. But even in states that are relatively peaceful, the effect of vote buying has also been felt where governors and local government chairmen in collaboration with the civil servants emptied public treasury to finance 2015 election in their areas. Perhaps, this explains why most state governors could not deliver or provide essential services to the citizens and in some cases left empty state treasury to the extent that their predecessors could not pay salaries. In view of the foregoing, it could be argued that the practice of vote buying encourages looting of public treasury as well as use of illicit funds in campaign and other political party activities with strong implications on security and national development of any country. For instance, the rising increase of domestic insurgency in Nigeria and its attendant socio-economic and political consequences could be connected to the alleged cases of political corruption associated with the procurement of arms for the Nigerian army. Even though, the accusations are yet to be established by the court, several lives were lost and properties damaged in the worst

affected areas of Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Benue and recently Zamfara states. Some of the consequences of political corruption include the rise in the level of insecurity in the country which has contributed to the near extinction of economic and trading routes from Kano through Maiduguri and Chad thereby creating unemployment among the people of the area. This has contributed to rise of poverty level and wants among affected communities. Also it has displaced many people thereby creating the problems of refugee, insecurity, food and hunger crises with serious psychological, health and security implications in Nigeria. This is evident in the series of report prepared by both the Nigerian government and international humanitarian agencies, such as the Red Cross and United Nations Organizations (UNO) that poverty and insecurity are rising with devastating consequences on national development in the country.

Closely connected to monetization of the voting pattern of the citizens is the use of political corruption to bribe staff and officials of INEC, civil society groups and the media including security agencies deployed to work during the election. It was observed that between ₦50,000 to ₦250,000 is appropriated for electoral officials deployed to each polling units in states like Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara (INEC, 2011 Report Election). This is apart from the involvement of some INEC staff in celebrated cases of political corruption during the 2015 presidential election. The involvement of electoral officials in corruption related to elections has undermined public trust on the electoral institution, the credibility of electoral process and the ability of Nigeria's democratization process to get consolidated.

Other factors which contributed to the rise of political corruption in funding party campaigns include poor enforcement of disclosure rules by INEC and institutional fragility of the EFCC and ICPC to prosecute reported cases of fraud involving political parties and as well expand their net of investigation down to the state and local government areas. It is important to note that the role of INEC, EFCC and ICPC is to among other things ensure transparency and prudent utilization of political party finances, including the source of such finances. These agencies are important institutions that could help reduce the problem of corruption among political parties. Regrettably, the agencies due to capacity problems and excessive politicization of their conduct could not perform their expected role of curbing corruption and ensuring transparency in the management of party finances. The implication of which creates suspicion in terms of their capacity to fight corruption and thus contributes to the growth of political clientelism and patronage in the management of political parties. It is important to note that political clientelism has total disregard to democratic values of transparency and accountability. For instance, even though, there exist 2010 Electoral Act and Political Finance Handbook and Finance Manual, such regulations were flagrantly violated by political parties during the 2015 election. Some powerful political parties organized fund raising dinners and received donation both within and outside the country as evident in over ₦21b donations provided by multinational corporations and Nigerians in diaspora to boost the PDP 2015 presidential campaign (Vanguard, 2014). Some of these donations were anonymous which is against the disclosure rules on party finances in Nigeria. Disregard to disclosure rules and political party finance regulations promote authoritarian tendencies of the PDP with implications on political party development and by extension on democratic governance in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This paper provided insights into the prevalence of corrupt practices during the 2015 general elections and its implications on national development in Nigeria. The study shows that one of the major challenges that have contributed to the rising increase of insecurity and underdevelopment in Nigeria has been frequent cases of fraud and diversion of public funds to

finance electioneering campaigns of political parties in the country. This development has negatively affected national security and national development in Nigeria. The paper concludes that vote buying, high cost of nomination forms, institutional fragility and corruption involving electoral officials were indeed the major explanatory factors responsible for the rise of political corruption in funding political parties in Nigeria. Given the implications of political corruption on Nigeria's national development, the paper recommends strict enforcement and compliance with disclosure rules and political party finance regulations as contained in Nigeria's electoral act in order to reduce the influence of money in the electoral process. Similarly, the study recommends intensive political awareness against corruption and stiffer punishments against political parties, civil servants and individuals who aid and/or abate corrupt practices in Nigeria. This will no doubt reduce the prevalence of political corruption, sanitize political campaigns as well as ensure judicious utilization of public funds for security and national development in the country.

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