

The Grassroots and Party Funding in Nigeria: Trajectories for Money Politics

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses grassroots indifference to party funding in Nigeria. It argues that all existing explanations on political apathy do not address the escalating tendency of the ordinary but educated and politically aware Nigerians to be averse to party funding. Drawing on political culture theory, the paper attributes the current trajectory of the phenomenon to a form of "inverse participant" culture by the grassroots, consequent upon their alienation that is driven by a convergence of three key variables: the cartel nature of party formation which is responsible for the disconnect in state-society relations, the appropriation and weaponisation of parties through funding, and decades of unfulfilled campaign promises. It further contends that grassroots indifference creates a funding vacuum which gives room for the monopoly of the party by the wealthy few and the moneybags. The paper concludes that, to arrest grassroots disinterest in party funding, it will require a reform of the Nigerian state to wean it of predatory and exclusionary character and arrest the prevailing cartelization of party formation and appropriation of political parties. It is also important to evolve a political culture that will create positive civic consciousness so as to shape voter-party-candidates relations in order to arrest the current negative voter attitudes that expect and demand for money from party candidates. This paper adopted the qualitative method of research, making use of extant literature on the subject matter and in addition used the interview method in seeking the opinions of a few individuals, some of them party card carrying members.

Keywords: Elections, grassroots indifference; party funding; political party

INTRODUCTION

Apart from campaign funding, perhaps no other aspect of political finance in Nigeria is as challenging as party funding, a term defined here as the sources and mechanisms through which political parties raise funds and bankroll their routine and statutory activities.

In a democracy, political parties are the major vehicle for getting to power and therefore funding is essential for their growth, viability and survival. Parties require funding for maintenance of party office and remuneration of party officials and to conduct internal elections and also perform such other functions like policy formulation, voter education and

mobilization, dissemination of party ideology and manifesto and, also for campaign. Thus, how effective parties can perform these essential functions depends on funding. However, in a weak democracy such as Nigeria where political parties are poorly institutionalized, party funding is a big challenge.

Elections in Nigeria are conducted periodically every four years since 1999, but it has been observed that most political parties, especially the smaller ones rarely remain active or even survive, between elections, due to the problem of funding. Accordingly, a recent Report by INEC on the 2019 General Elections identified funding as a key challenge to the growth and strengthening of the institutional capacity of political parties in Nigeria. The Report also identified lack of funding as being responsible for the inability of some political parties to maintain party offices. (INEC 2020a).

But the problem of party funding in Nigeria is not just about lack of adequate financing to strengthen the capacity of political parties or make them viable. Perhaps, a bigger challenge is that even those political parties that appear to be well funded, active and viable, whether they are in power or out of power, are mostly financed with diverted/embezzled public funds and/or donations from illicit sources by the political class (Page 2018; Olorunmola 2016; Walecki 2003). In addition, there is also the problem of monopoly of party funding by godfathers/moneybags who have ulterior motives.

Equally worrisome is the prevailing indifference to party funding by the grassroots, a phenomenon that has been intensified in recent years, yet received little attention in political apathy literature.

Since the dawn of the Fourth Republic following the return to civilian rule in 1999, there has been growing disinterest of the grassroots in party funding and the political parties have been increasingly unable to attract funding from the grassroots. For example, PDP as one of the major parties, spent 16 years (1999-2015) at the federal level and APC, now spending 6 years (2015-2021) as a ruling party, also at the federal level but, neither parties has committed and loyal grassroots members who can make substantial financial contributions to the parties. In other words, the parties' long stint in power is yet to translate into strong grassroots membership to create a substantial funding base. Rather than make contributions towards party funding, ordinary Nigerians, including card-carrying party members tend to expect and sometimes demand money and gifts from political parties and their candidates. The incidence of grassroots indifference to party funding means that there are no viable and legitimate alternative sources of party funding to counterbalance other corrupt sources that are prone to abuse.

This paper, therefore, seeks to explore the factor(s) that are responsible for grassroots indifference to party funding, as well as the implications for money politics. To this end, it rethinks the dominant explanations in extant literature for political apathy such as dearth of party ideology, abject poverty, illiteracy, lack of political awareness and parochial culture. The paper contends that although these explanations are important, they do not fully account for some cases of political apathy, particularly grassroots indifference to party funding. It attributes the current trajectory of the phenomenon to mass alienation, driven by the convergence of three key factors - the cartel nature of party formation (which separates the parties from the society thereby widening the disconnect in state-society relations); the

appropriation and weaponisation of political parties through funding; and several decades of unfulfilled election promises, all of which are the fallout of the predatory nature of politics.

Political Party: Some Conceptual Notes

There is a considerable body of literature on political party as different scholars have tried to explain its meaning, types, functions, character, manifestations and challenges. Downs (1957, 25) defined a political party as "a team of men seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in a duly constituted election". For Huckshorn (1984) and Ranney & Kendall (1956, 85), political parties are "autonomous, organised groups that make nominations and contest elections in hope of eventually gaining and exercising control of the personnel and policies of the government". Of all political institutions, it is the political party that has the capturing of state power as its primary and ultimate aim, the aim that parties pursue interminably. Accordingly, Max Weber declared, "parties live in a house of power" (Gerth & Mills 1946, 194). This presupposes the preoccupation of political parties to gain or consolidate state power because, power is central to their essence and relevance. A political party seeks to attract the electoral support of the general public and to capture and maintain power, either alone or in coalition with others. In this way, it plays significant role in leadership recruitment (La Palombara & Weiner 1966, 29).

Beyond the competition to capture power, political parties "often develop as vehicles through which business; labour, religious, ethnic or other groups advance or defend their various interests.(Agbaje, 1999.) Thus articulation and aggregation of interests is one of the earliest, yet essential functions of a political party. Articulated and aggregated interests are usually expected to simultaneously fulfil the collective aspirations of party members and ultimately the national interest. In this regard, British political philosopher and politician, Edmund Burke viewed political party as "a body of men united for promoting, by their joint endeavors the national interest upon some particular principle in which they all agreed" (Burke 2002, 37).

The development of parties dates back to the evolution of liberal democracy, particularly the extension of popular suffrage and parliamentary powers (Duverger 1959). Liberal democracy as a form of representative government whereby people choose their representatives in competitive elections began in the 19 century. It arose from the contradictions of capitalism and was designed to protect the property class and preserve capitalist relations and ultimately the interests of the dominant class (Laxer 2010). Thus, in Europe and North America where liberal democracy first began, voting was by property and was limited to male adult citizens (Macpherson 1977). In Britain, franchise was not extended to the majority of male citizens until 1867 even when parliamentary government had been established way back in 1688. In the United States, franchise was extended, state by state beginning from 1820s to 1830s. France leaped to adult male suffrage in 1848, but it was not until 1871 that parliamentary government was established (Birch cited in Agbu 2016b, 3). The extension of voting rights to the non-property class resulted in the challenge of the old political platforms for power struggle. And the implication of that was the emergence of more and different types of political parties.

In his "pioneering" work on political party, Maurice Duverger classified parties based on membership and organisation, and distinguished two major types: the "cadre parties" and the "mass parties". The cadre parties also known as caucus parties draw their members from people with influence in the society. They are made up of a select few who seek to capture

power using their affluence and social status. In contrast, the mass parties draw members from broad sources, particularly the grassroots. What mass parties lack in quality they make up in quantity as evident by their large membership base which also gives them huge financial stream that enables them to adequately fund their routine activities and campaign. Unlike cadre parties that were a creation of limited franchise, mass parties emerged following the expansion of voting rights with the introduction of universal suffrage. There are other categories of political party such as caucus party and catch-all party which share similar features with and can be subsumed under the cadre party and mass party, respectively (Duverger 1954, 1959).

From the corpus of Max Weber (who wrote before Duverger) on politics, class, social status, political party and ideology, three types of political party can be identified: the class/status party, the patronage party, and the ideology party. While the class party exists for and acts on behalf of a particular class and in the interest of that, the patronage party is founded on patron-client relations and thus seeks positions of power and spoils of office for its patrons. The ideology party is driven by a particular worldview and theoretical abstraction or Utopia of a future different from the prevailing reality of the present which it seeks to alter (Gerth & Mills 1946). Weber further reasoned that parties seek to attain power through varied means, ranging from naked violence to canvassing for votes through subtle means such as money and social influence (Gerth & Mills 1946).

Since Duverger and Weber classifications of parties, different types of political parties have been described, although some similarities still exist between these later types and the earlier classifications. Today, parties can be classified and distinguished based on their ideology, goals or patronage-oriented character (Schlesinger 2019).

Political parties attract membership with a variety of motives. While some are interested in public policy, others join parties because they are ambitious for political office or the rewards that come from association with public officials (Schlesinger 2019). It is against this background that Schattschneider (1942, I) declared that "modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties".

Before now, in established democracies in Europe and North America, political parties had for long funded their activities through direct membership dues and donations by affiliated or ideologically close institutions, such as trade unions, professional and business federations, or Church-related establishments (Mendilow 2018), "the blurring of traditional social, religious and regional cleavages has culminated in the declining commitments to the ideological issues that shaped politics of the previous era". In addition, "the exponential growth in mass communication media and the increasing sophistication of advertising and polling technique, political parties now face competitive pressures to extend their appeal and reach out to growing numbers of potential supporters" who may not be motivated by ideological boundaries or class orientation alone. (Mendilow/ 2018, 2).

Political Parties , Party Funding and Grassroots indifference in Nigeria

Party funding in Nigeria predates independence. It began with the pioneer party - the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) founded in 1923 by the Nigeria's frontline nationalist, Herbert Macaulay. The birth of the 1922 Clifford Constitution and the subsequent introduction of Elective Principle in 1923, opened the door for electoral politics and triggering the evolution

of political parties (Sklar 1963). And the advent of political parties brought with it the corresponding need for party funding.

Since 1923, party funding in Nigeria has oscillated between three major trajectories: grassroots funding, big-donor/patronage-induced funding, and state/public funding. Grassroots funding of parties was experienced in the period before independence, even though the volume was not much.

The culture of grassroots funding of political party may be attributed to the nature of party formation and to the existence of positive social values that characterised party politics in Nigeria. Party formation and the activities of the early nationalist parties were propelled and enlivened by strong nationalistic ideals while agitating for self-determination. They were also strengthened by the support of a cluster of civil groups which comprised some groups of workers such as trade unions; women groups such as the Federation of Nigerian Women Societies, as well as students and youth groups. Civil societies not only served as "the necessary training ground for Nigeria's first generation of political leaders...but were actually the springboards for early nationalist parties in Nigeria", leading to an intersection that contributed to positive political orientation (Adeyi 2008, 30; Ayoade 2008) as evident in popular support that was enjoyed by the political parties even in terms of funding.

In the First Republic, such parties like NNDP, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon (NCNC), the Action Group (AG) and Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) sourced part of their funding from the ordinary people, especially from the proceeds of the sales of party emblems, customised party T-shirts and caps. And, aside from the above sales, there were also membership dues and contributions from those party members who were elected into public offices, (Dudley 1968; Coleman 1963; Sklar, 1963). In addition, corporate organisations and rich individuals made contributions towards funding the parties of their choice. But these contributions were patronage-induced, thus laden with vested interests. However, the implication of allowing private funding of parties was that the electoral process became slightly monetised, and the use of money to corrupt party politics and election campaign also began.

At the dawn of the Fourth Republic in 1999 following the return to civilian rule after several decades of military dictatorship, public funding of parties was first practiced but along with private funding. However, the dual party funding regime was marred by many abuses by both the incumbents and the out-of-power elites. While the former used it to favour their parties, the latter saw state grants for parties as a means of accumulating wealth, hence the proliferation of political parties. This largely explains the explosion in the number of political parties in recent times particularly in the fourth republic when the number of registered parties in the country ballooned from 3 before the 1999 General Elections to 30 during the 2003 General Elections, and then to 63 prior to the 2011 General Elections. By 2019 General Elections, the number of parties had increased further to 91 (INEC 2020b, 63-64). Majority of the parties that emerged seemed to be more interested in receiving state grants than in winning elections or in serving as alternative platforms for power struggle, thus they did not campaign to win and as such, could not win any seats even at the state level. Many of the parties would receive state grants and then disappear only to re-appear in the next general elections with the hope of receiving more grants from the government (Interview 1: 2019). Public (state) funding of political parties was discontinued in Nigeria in 2010, such that even though there are legal provisions, no funds

are provided for parties again. (Ohman 2014). Perhaps, the abuse was why it was discontinued. Thus, as argued by (Kukah, 2018), the corrupting role of money in politics in Nigeria makes politics toxic and therefore unattractive to people of honour. This is not surprising because electoral struggle in Nigeria is not intended to gain "power to formulate meaningful policy program (for the common good) but rather to acquire rents through the exercise of power at the national, state, or local level" (Diamond 2013).

Olorunmola (2016) and Jinadu (2010) lamented that the cost of politics in Nigeria, particularly party nomination process is prohibitive as the fees that political parties charge for nomination forms is only affordable by the rich contestants. On the surface, it would seem that the high cost of party nomination fees is triggered by the quest of political parties to generate income to fund their activities including meeting the costs of campaign, because of insufficient financial support from other legitimate sources such as the grassroots contributions. The implication however, is that the process obviously excludes and alienates the poor.

Although, scholars have argued that poverty negatively affects political participation because economic hardship can compel people to withdraw from politics and focus on meeting their basic needs. Drawing attention to how this manifests differently in developing and developed democracies, Solijonov (2016, 35J-36) contended that political apathy is high in the least developed countries where people who are suffering from poverty do not even have access to basic education that would enable them to understand their civic duties such as voting and how their vote is expected to affect the direction of government policies, but in developed countries, there is economic prosperity and the citizens are more educated and informed, thus engage in political processes more. The 2008 Uwais Electoral Reform Report has similar view, hence submitted that poverty affects political participation in Nigeria negatively because when people are so poor that they are:

Pre-occupied with daily struggle to meet their basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing and health, they scarcely have the time for politics or to defend their votes. This explains the electorate's visual apathy and lack of courage to defend democracy when threatened (e.gi the threat posed by monopoly of party funding and; electoral politics by money bags)...democracy cannot take firm roots and flourish in an environment of linger, poor health, inadequate shelter, social injustice and physical insecurity (Uwais Electoral Reform Committee Report 2008, 87).

The central argument of the poverty narrative is that most Nigerians are poor, and this not only renders many incapable of making financial contributions towards funding of political parties and election campaign of candidates, but also preoccupies them with the quest to meet their basic needs. In addition, indifference to political participation in Nigeria has also been attributed to illiteracy among the grassroots which causes lack of political awareness that induces different forms of indifference to political participation, and funding in particular.

Consequently, grassroots indifference has become a major challenge that is facing party funding in Nigeria today, though the phenomenon has received little attention by researchers despite the burgeoning body of scholarship on political apathy. Much of the scholarship on political apathy focused more on other aspects of the problem, particularly apathy to voting (International IDEA 2020; Akinyemi 2019; Centre for Democracy! and Development - CDD

2014; Jega 2011; 1NEC & FES 2011). Yet, grassroots disinterest in party funding is among the most visible and manifest forms of political apathy in Nigeria, especially in the last two decades. Consequently, it can be argued that the current trajectory of grassroots indifference to party funding is caused by alienation of popular participation driven by the convergence of three key factors: the cartel nature of party formation, the appropriation and weaponisation of parties, and decades of unfulfilled campaign promises.

Party formation in Nigeria, especially in the last two decades has assumed a cartel dimension where few individuals or groups driven mainly by self-interest established and run political parties (Kufcah 2012). Most of the extant political parties were established without consultation with the grassroots. This furthers the disconnect in state-society relations since the parties are increasingly isolated from the people. Thus, aside from money induced participation in party rallies; the grassroots do not make any significant input to party activities. Consequently, parties that emerged during the current Fourth Republic were established by the members of the political class either to regain power or to consolidate it. This largely explains why the parties they formed are alienated from the grassroots.

The cartelisation of political parties, not only alienates the parties from the grassroots, but also makes the parties the properties of the groups of cartels. Because there is no class cohesion among the dominant class in Nigeria, intra-class conflict and factionalisation become inevitable and recurring features of politics (Fadakinle ; 2015, 2002; Diamond 1988). For example, all the different factions that came together to form the big parties , like APC, PDP, ZLP,APGA, cannot be described as democrats because the predatory character displayed by some of them who were fortunate to gain political power at different levels of government after the military handed over power till date, attests to this. Consequently, with no ideologies or moral principles of leadership to guide political behavior, mediate and moderate inter- and intra-party relations (Kukah 2018), the competing factions within each party resort to money, which then becomes the ultimate determinant of who gets what and when in the party.

According to a presidential candidate during the 2019 elections, APC emerged from a merger which was given birth to by intense intra-party factionalisation and the quest for presidential power by disgruntled and ambitious factions of the political class who were no longer satisfied with their sphere of power and influence at the state and or the level of their ethnic groups, thus were, desperate to elevate their positions to the center or the presidency (Interview, 2019).

For example, The Zenith Labour Party (ZLP) was formed and financed by an individual - Olusegun Mimiko, then governor of Ondo State, in pursuit of his presidential ambition (Interview).

Political parties in Nigeria are "structured around regional strongmen (usually party financiers) that use the parties to pursue personal interests". In this way, "political parties contribute to making elections in Nigeria disconnected from the majority of the citizens" (Angerbrandt 2020, 415).

The grassroots in Nigeria see political parties as private investments; hence they are not inclined to party funding (Interview).

Again, when a respondent was asked why ordinary Nigerians are indifferent to party funding, he says:

I know that in most communities in Nigeria, the king-makers or the ruling families or both as is the case in some places, which are the crude equivalent of political parties and INEC today, do not ask the people to contribute money for the: selection or coronation of their king if the reigning king journeys to his ancestors and consequently there is the need to install a new king. Look, this issue of forming political parties and funding them, will not work. It is like the taxing of women during colonial rule. People are averse to party funding because it is alien to our culture - the colonialists forced it on us (Interview).

One grassroots voter puts this in another perspective:

I can make small contribution to fund my party. I can contribute 100 naira or even more. But what influence will it give me in the party when the 'Ogas' (rich party chieftains) control the party by donating millions or billions of naira? (Interview).

Another grassroots voter re-echoed the impact of heavy donors on party capture which leads to grassroots indifference to party funding:

I have been a member of this party for the past 15 years. So when 3 years ago there was an opening for the position of State Secretary of the party, I indicated interest and purchased the form. But few weeks to the election, the State Chairman of the party • told me in confidence to step down and indirectly forced me to do so because according to him, the position was reserved for another contestant who had contributed over 10 million naira to the party. That contestant joined the party less than 8 months to the time of the election. This is why many of the grassroots party members like me are not willing to make small contributions to the party. Those with big money have hijacked the party (Interview).

What the grassroots seem to be unaware of is that their indifference does more harm than good since it further reinforces the grip of the moneybags on the parties.

The current attempts by members of the political class, especially in the Fourth Republic to appropriate parties through funding also serve similar purpose of alienating the grassroots from participating in party funding.

In this regard, an APC chieftain and Lagos State politician, Senator submitted:

Funding of parties is a major leverage for the political elites in Nigeria. It is true that allowing the grassroots to fund political parties may deepen democratisation of parties. But such will equally reduce the elites' influence and control over the parties. The elites will not allow that to happen because it can obliterate their political relevance. So, what happens is that the elites, monopolise party funding as a tactics geared towards retaining control of the parties, but invite the grassroots only when they are needed - mainly during campaign rallies and voting (Interview).

A PDP chieftain in Ebonyi State shares similar sentiment:

Big donor funding and grassroots funding are not mutually exclusive. But it appears big donors use funding to increase their influence and control of the party structures. This tends to discourage the grassroots from making small contributions to fund the parties (Interview).

The identities of those interviewed for this work were deliberately not disclosed because of the sensitivity of their opinions

From the foregoing analysis, it is clear that what big-donors or moneybags do is first, to fund a party and then appropriate and weaponise it. In this way, they are able to influence and control the party. The prevailing neglect of grassroots membership recruitment by parties and the lack efforts to boost funding of parties with financial contributions from the grassroots seem to be a deliberate attempt to reinforce party control by moneybags.

Party Funding, Moneybags and Party Autonomy

As political institutions with a role to play during and between elections, political parties need to generate income to finance not just their electoral campaigns but also their routine costs (Fogg 2003). Parties require financial resources in order to effectively carry out their functions like acquiring expertise, developing programmes and distributing them, maintaining a stable organisational structure, cultivating smooth communication with members and conducting electoral campaigns, all in the spirit of fostering a viable democratic society. (Hofmeister & Grabow 2011). How efficient parties will perform such other important functions as voter education and mobilisation, candidates' recruitment, and formulation of policy proposals, coupled with interest articulation and aggregation is also dependent on funding. All these functions directly or indirectly serve as a justification for grassroots funding of parties to complement other sources of funding

In multi-party democracies, party funding is broadly categorised into two: state funding and private funding (Gupta 2018; Nassmacher 2009; Bryan & Baer 2005; INEC 2005; Horhung 1996). While state funding of parties entails government giving grants and subventions to political parties to finance their activities (Hofnung 1996), private funding allows individuals (party members and non-members) to make contributions towards funding of parties (Nassmacher 2009; Bryan & Baer 2005). This broad categorisation however, does not bring out clearly the various shades of party funding. Scarrow (2013) offered a more elaborate taxonomy. He simplified the sources of funding for modern political parties into four models: public funding, officeholders funding, big donors and plutocratic funding and small donors and grassroots funding. While in public (state) funding model, government gives grants and subventions to parties to fund their activities (such grants may range from relatively small campaign subsidies to substantial annual payments for parties' routine activities), officeholders funding model requires party members in public office to contribute a fraction of their salaries as financial support to their respective political parties in order to facilitate party activities, including remuneration of administrative staff, and for research. Officeholders funding is also known as party tax and in some cases formalised and mandatory for party members holding political office.

However, in socialist parties, state funding of parties is used as a tool for redistributing wealth in order to ensure that party's public officials who are paid officers do not earn much more

than those they represent (Scarrows 2013). In this way it preempts accumulation of wealth through political office. Officeholders funding of parties is sometimes classified as a form of public funding. But it is debatable whether state funding of activities of political party or related aid organisations could equally be regarded as public funding. (Ohman, 2009).

Big donor and plutocratic funding is a party funding arrangement whereby parties are funded by corporate organisations and rich individuals through huge contributions. This contrasts with grassroots funding where ordinary people (party members and non-members) make small contributions towards funding the political parties of their choice (Scarrows 2013). Nonetheless, both big donor and grassroots funding are forms of private funding of party.

Each of these models of party funding has its own weaknesses. Public funding of parties reduces the impact and influence of the grassroots on the parties. On the positive side national governments use public funding of parties as a tool for promoting internal democracy of the parties, by preventing political parties from being vulnerable to the undue influence and control of private financiers who may be driven by special interests (Sandri, Seddone & Venturino, 2015). Government grants and subsidies to parties are generally justified as tools that help in maintaining a healthy democracy by bridging financial disparities between parties and creating an informed electorate as well as the providing linkages between government and civil society (Cross & Katz, 2013, 1). In some cases, however, public funding, in terms of subventions and grants that are given to parties are often tied to prior performance of the parties in terms of electoral success or the number of seats a party is able to win in the parliament. However, the danger in this type of funding is that it favours existing political parties that are already in power which may use their control over the allocation of state resources to promote their interests while deterring new political parties from emerging (Katz & Mair 1995) or becoming strong and viable.

Big donor funding gives the wealthy class undue influence and control over party affairs and policies, and this tends to undermine internal party democracy and make parties "pay more attention to their financial supporters rather than the voters - even when these financial supporters are associations or corporations without voting rights" (Scarrows 2013, 163-166). Similarly, Hazan and Rahat (2010, 162) postulated that the financing of political parties can lead to political corruption as the selected party officials become beholden to the financiers rather than the party and its ideology. Elaborating further, Mendilow (2018, 3) submitted that soliciting large funds from economic corporations and rich donors may compel parties to cater to the interests of the few who had the ability to inject large sums into their coffers. Even, where donors claim to be motivated by visions of the public good, but because of their huge donations to the parties, they are favoured, with economic policies, in most cases, if the party wins an election and is in government.

In grassroots funding, the challenge is how to cultivate members as funders and expand the party base. It is the model of party funding that is most in harmony with internal party democracy (Scarrows 2013, 163-166).

It is debatable whether having state funding and private funding existing concurrently can be effective in addressing the challenges associated with party funding. Walecki (2004) did argue that such provides a sort of diversification of funding resources for parties and thus reduces the

possibilities of party capture. However, such dual party funding arrangement also has its weaknesses. At the 2016 International IDEA Policy Dialogue on "Money in Electoral Processes" Kabele Matlosa, the then Director of the Department of Political Affairs at the African Union Commission (AUC) stated that in many African states, "the fusion of ruling parties and the state has invariably led to the abuse of state resources" when it comes to party funding. Similarly, opposition parties also run the risk of being captured by corporate interests. Private donors to political parties, especially those that want to remain anonymous may have vested interests (Matlosa cited in International IDEA 2017, 12).

Grassroots indifference to party funding has implications for money politics in Nigeria. First is that it creates a funding vacuum which makes political parties vulnerable to illicit finance. Funding from infamous sources such as organised crime, terrorist groups or even foreign governments is one of the major problems facing party funding, especially in weak democracies (Walecki 2004, 19-20). Proceeds of criminal acts such as advance fee fraud, drug trafficking, and oil bunkering are increasingly finding their way into Nigerian politics (Onouha 2014).

Attempts to use legal framework to prevent or curb illicit political financing in Nigeria have not been effective. Section 93 [1] of the Electoral Act 2010 provides that no political party shall accept or keep in its possession, an anonymous monetary or other contributions, gifts, properties etc. from any source whatsoever. Section 93 [3] of same Act provides that no political party shall accept any monetary or other contribution exceeding N100, 000 (One Hundred Thousand Naira) unless it can identify the source of the money or other contribution to INEC. Although section 91 sub-section 9 of the 2010 Electoral Act (as amended) limits the maximum donation an individual or other entity can make to candidate to 1,000,000 naira, the Act did not set any cap on the amount of money that can be donated to a political party. Section 93 [2] [b] of the Electoral Act requires a political party to keep records of the name and address of any person or entity whose contribution to the party exceeds N1million. However, party revenues and expenditures are shrouded in secrecy, and political finance laws are hardly obeyed (INEC 2011). This challenge is not peculiar to Nigeria. Elsewhere in Africa, it is difficult to obtain precise information on money spent by political parties. For example, in Kenya, out of the 44 registered political parties in 2010, 30 were not able to produce a financial report (Falguera et al. 2014).

Citizens' participation in political parties and the entire electoral process is marginalised when rich individuals are able to influence the political process and purchase power through large political donations. This furthers alienation of the grassroots from politics (Annan 2014, III-IV), particularly party politics where in the case of Nigeria, for an example the grassroots are increasingly playing lesser role when it comes to party primaries and nomination of candidates (INEC 2020a).

The funding vacuum arising from grassroots indifference to party funding is readily filled by the wealthy few, which exposes political parties to capture by big financiers and moneybags those that see party funding as investment and thus expect returns. The decline or non-existent of grassroots funding largely accounts for why political parties in Nigeria are increasingly relying on donations from the wealthy class to fund both their routine and statutory activities, including primary elections (Adetula 2009, 2015; Ayoade 2008). It is perhaps instructive to note that there is nothing wrong in rich individuals funding political parties. In fact, big donor

funding is an important feature of political finance in a liberal democracy (Currinder 2009). However, given the predatory character of the Nigerian state and its managers, there is lack of corrupt-free, patriotic and autonomous economic class ready to fund parties.

Thus, what obtains in Nigeria, with regards to party funding is gloomy because the underdevelopment of the productive forces, first by colonialism (Ake 1981) and later by post-independence leadership failure (Achebe 1984) made the country's economic development to be undermined, such that most Nigerians are poor and thus may not be able to contribute hugely towards party funding. Consequently, party funding is left in the hands of the political class (Olorunmola 2016). Unfortunately again, members of the Nigerian political class is predatory and survives on politics, or on businesses that are sustained by political cronyism and patronage (Ake 1996). Hence, when such predatory groups of individuals fund a political party, they tend to become bigger than the party and they rarely abide by the party procedures, principles and even party constitution. The implication is that such individuals abuse party due process in the election of party officials and seldom accept popular results, except those that favour them. Consequently, the Nigerian political class has appropriated and monopolized the "responsibility" of funding political parties and they now use money to bastardise party politics and consequently corrupt the electoral process, the practice that has now become a recurring feature of Nigerian elections (Adetula 2009, 2015; Davies 2012; Iwu 2009; Walecki 2008).

Beyond lack of funding, there are other funding-related challenges that are confronting the political parties in Nigeria. One is the monopoly of party funding by political elites and moneybags and the consequent use of money to manipulate party politics, especially as it relates to the control of party structures, election of party executives and officials and nomination of candidates for elections. (Adetula 2015; Walecki. 2004). "No single act brings out the general character of a party than its procedure for the nominations of candidates" (Dudley 1968, 145). Candidates' nomination points to the nature and locus of influence within a party in that "...he who has the power to make nomination owns the party" (Schattschneider 1942, 100). In Nigeria, such power ultimately lies in the hands of party financiers. Even though, on the surface, ordinary party members may seem to exercise such prerogative since they could nominate party candidates directly as is in the case of direct primary elections, or through party delegates which prevails in indirect primaries, party financiers often use money to influence the behaviour of key party officials and consequently dictate decision-making in the party. This is so because party financiers in Nigeria regard politics as business by other means and political parties as appropriate investments. Thus, their donations either make them feel that they own the parties or they feel like king-makers in the parties they heavily bought into. (Saffu 2003, 23). Again, donations, corrupt kickbacks and embezzled public funds are the main sources of income for African political parties (including those in Nigeria). Party income from legitimate sources such as party businesses, trade unions and party membership, is usually meagre or in some cases non-existent (Saffu 2003).

While political parties that are funded by the rich donors and moneybags are able to stay afloat, they nonetheless lose their autonomy to those who fund them. In this way, party financiers in Nigeria are able to dominate the political parties and also the electoral process. This is reminiscent of Robert Michels' "Iron Law of Oligarchy". which mirrors the tendency of a few leaders and oligarchs of any organisation, including political party, to elevate their private ambition for positions over the common interest of ordinary members (Michels, 1978).

Grassroots indifference to party funding may also create the need for state funding of parties. Yet, state funding of parties has its own weaknesses as earlier explained, it tends to increase alienation of the governed from the political leaders (Gupta 2018), and also create room for abuse of state resources. For example, during the Third Republic in Nigeria, government funding of political parties undermined the popular appeal of the competing parties as the electorate began to regard the two parties, NRC and SDP that were created and funded by the military government as appendages of the military elites. What emerged was prohibitive politics, leading to party capture by government anointed candidates or by the wealthy few, those who could afford the high cost of party politics and election campaign (Ajayi 2007; Ajayi & Ihonvbere 1994). This was a sort of paradox in that government funding of parties is expected to provide a level playing field for all candidates regardless of their wealth or social status.

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored grassroots indifference to party funding in Nigeria and the implication for money politics. It found out that the convergence of three key variables: the cartel nature of party formation and the appropriation and weaponisation of political parties through funding, coupled with many years of unfulfilled electoral promises, have created mass alienation. This largely explains the indifference of the ordinary but educated and politically aware Nigerians to make small contributions towards funding political parties, thus displaying a sort of "inverse" political participation in which they demand or receive money (inducement) from political parties and their candidates. Another finding by the paper is that, the grassroots indifference to party funding has consequences for money politics, it creates a vacuum, which encourages the use of illicit and diverted and embezzled state resources to fund parties, leading to the monopoly of party funding by godfathers and moneybags whose vested interests undermine internal democracy and lead to party capture and by extension state capture.

To mitigate grassroots apathy to party funding and its negative effects on money politics, this paper recommends that there is a need to reform the state in order to expunge its predatory and exclusionary character. There should be a thorough examination of the current party system which is characterised and undermined by multiple frontiers of intra-class antagonism, which is why moneybags go from party to party, flaunting their wealth, through huge financial donations to the party.

Also important is the need to evolve a political culture that revolves around positive civic consciousness to shape voter-party-candidates relations in order to arrest the current negative voter consciousness that expects and demands money from parties and their candidates as a precondition for political support.

To mitigate the abuse of state resources in funding political parties and also neutralize the prevailing monopoly of party funding by the privileged classes, the grassroots must take ownership of the political parties by funding them. This can be done by democratising party funding such that ordinary party members and the electorates can, through small donations, constitute major source of funding for party activities as opposed to the current norm in which the elites with hidden agenda dominate such important exercise, improving the material condition of the grassroots to enable them meet their basic-needs while still able to give small financial support to political parties is also imperative. But even more imperative is to encourage the grassroots to elevate their sense of political participation beyond attending

campaign rallies and voting, to funding of political parties and getting involved in the decision making organs of the parties they fund, especially with respect to candidate nomination and formulation of party policies and programmes.

The reform must be accompanied with deliberate campaign to boost grassroots funding of political parties. Although grassroots funding may not be the biggest source of party funding even in established democracies, it makes significant impact nonetheless. It also forestalls elite monopoly of party funding and in that way, prevents party capture and by extension, state capture by private interests/big donors. For a young democracy, such as Nigeria, where political parties are already under the capture of the predatory political class and where, the ruling faction of the political class increasingly deploys state resources to fund the ruling party and turn it to an instrument of wealth accumulation in order to consolidate power, the need for grassroots funding of parties becomes even more imperative and urgent. Once there is grassroots funding of parties, political officeholders would have less motivation to siphon or misuse state resources for party funding and for campaign purposes. The inflow of illicit money into the electoral process may also be marginal since current funding vacuum will be greatly reduced.

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