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## MONEY POLITICS AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*Going by the events of the fourth republic politics in Nigeria from 1999 till date, it has become apparent that the process of seeking elective positions by politicians and their collaborators(sponsors)has reduced the practice of politicking to mere business investment venture solely for the purpose of profit maximization as epitomized by the Ngige/Uba and Ladoja/Adedibu fiasco, besides several other cases of massive corruption and money laundering that permeates the corridors of power at all levels. These situations speak volume of the kind of leadership the nation has had this past fourteen years as manifested by the increasing state of poverty, inequality and poor living conditions of Nigerians who are yet to savour the benefits of democratization. This paper argued that since the quest for material accumulation and consolidation has remained the bane for seeking political power, various shades of persons with questionable moral bankruptcy will continue to flood our politic landscape unhindered in order to manipulate the instrumentality of state power to further their ill-conceived motives of looting the nation's wealth rather than address the urgent societal problems of poverty, hunger, infrastructural decay, rising unemployment, insecurity, to mention but a few. The paper concludes by stating emphatically that there is urgent necessity to put in place a workable constitutional framework that is people oriented and empowers them with the ultimate sovereignty of choosing those to govern them, otherwise the 'demon' called money and its manipulative tendencies will continue to undermine the process of democratic governance in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *Politics, Corruption, Poverty, Governance*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Following the handing over of the reins of governance from the military to the civilian administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1999, Nigerians heaved a sigh of relief in returning the country to the practice of representative democracy after 16 years of the military sojourn in power following the ousting of the Shagari administration and the botched 3<sup>rd</sup> republic arising from the annulled June 12<sup>th</sup> presidential election. Since then the people of Nigeria had looked forward with great expectations for a better future believing that the return of democratic governance will help redress the ills of misgovernance and mismanagement of the nation's natural and material resources as was clearly manifested during the dark years of the Babangida and Abacha regimes which milked the nation's commonwealth through massive looting and squandermania disposition, thus leaving the nation's economy prostrate with a huge debt burden, infrastructural decay, hunger, diseases, poverty and misery etc which completely tainted the psyche of the generality of the masses who lost fervor in the Nigerian project.

With democracy in place, many citizens and political watchers alike believed that the democratic process would help achieve their desirability for good governance based on the values of accountability, transparency, trust, confidence, and credibility on the part of government to meet up with the social contract it had with the people through satisfying their yearnings for improved economic and social conditions of living. However, the events within the past 14 years of this civilian rule has shown that a lot is still fundamentally wrong with our process of democratic governance, given the failure of the operators (politicians) to practice and adhere to the basic democratic ideals of upholding the rule of law, the constitution, due process, separation of powers, respect for human rights etc among the various levels of governance. For instance, available data from the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed that more than 70% of Nigerians live below the poverty line of US\$ 1 dollar per day (specifically 112 million live in relative poverty); infant and child mortality rate is one of the highest in world (75 and 88 per 1,000 live birth); under five mortality is 157 per 1,000 live birth; maternal mortality is 545 deaths per 100,000 live births; electricity consumption is 50 percent; access to improved water is 56 percent; improved toilet facilities is 27 percent (NDHS, 2008; The Punch, 2012); the gap between the rich and the poor in terms of income inequality (increase from 0.429 in 2004 to 0.447 in 2010) continues to widen. It is also paradoxical to note that despite the fact that the Nigerian economy is growing at 7.7% due to its natural and material resources, the proportion of Nigerians living in poverty is increasing every year.

It is within this context that this paper seeks to examine the imperious position that 'money' has assumed in the nation's polity and the resulting influence and crisis it has engendered with respect to the form of governance and leadership it has thrown up since 1999 till date. This is borne out of the questions that development scholars and policy makers have raised as how democratic is the governance process in serving the interests of the greatest majority over the narrow and self-centred interest of the political elite and their political contractors? This derives from the fact that effective governance provides the avenue that promotes, guarantee and secure political freedoms, economic well-being, social opportunities, transparency and protective security which engender development (Sen, 1999:3,10). In the same vein, other scholars have argued that the real challenge of development in Nigeria is poor governance associated with bad leadership. For as Achebe (1984) argued in his book "The Problem with Nigeria", the root cause of Nigeria's predicament is:

... simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land, water, climate, air or anything else. The Nigeria problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to their responsibility, to the challenge of personal example, which is the hallmark of true leadership (p.1)

To achieve the objective of this study, the paper is thus divided into the following parts. Part two deals with the concept of democracy, governance and money politics. Part three addresses the emergence of democratic governance and electoral process in Nigeria. Part four provides us with the theoretical framework for understanding the influence of money in Nigeria's political governance. Part five examines the dilemma of good governance in Nigeria and Part 6 ends with the conclusion.

## **THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE**

The pursuit of advancing the quality of life of people in a given society will require the existence of a responsive, transparent, representative and accountable government that can effectively tackle the challenges of poverty, inequality, unemployment; promote economic growth and human development. Development entails a condition in which people can meet their basic needs for existence and live an improved quality of life. Therefore, development in any society can be as good or bad in the light of normative values such as life assurance, esteem and freedom that are operative in it. To achieve this goal, there is the need to institutionalize a social system of governance that manages and channel resources effectively toward improving the well-being of a people. People are the agent, means and ends of development. Today, in most developing countries, there is an enormous focus on governance because underlying the 'litany of Africa's development problems is a crisis of governance. According to the World Bank (1989:60-61), the deteriorating quality of government, epitomized by bureaucratic obstruction, pervasive rent-seeking, weak judicial systems and arbitrary decision-making seriously hampers sociopolitical and economic development in the continent. This condition derive from the increasing incidence of massive corruption among government officials and 'moneybag' politicians, flagrant misuse of executive powers, lack of transparency, accountability, absence of openness in policy formulation, absence of people's participation in issues that directly impact on their well-being.

Thus, for effective and progressive development in all spheres of a nation to exist, it must evolve from a truly democratic political system that places value on protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, hence the linkage between democratic governance and development. The association of development with democracy is borne out of the argument by scholars that democracy ensures accountability of the ruler to the ruled with the result that rulers are motivated to allocate resources effectively and productively in order to be allowed to stay in power (Grossman and Noh, 1988). Also, the fact that the practice of dictatorship of authoritarian rule in Africa for more a half a century has been overwhelmingly catastrophic politically and economically had activated rigourous interest and enthusiasm for democracy and the process of democratization which many consensus views such as Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), governments and international agencies like the United Nations, African Union etc believed can deal with the crisis of African underdevelopment (see AU, 1990, World Bank, 1990, Ojo, 2005).

Democracy as a concept is inextricably linked to the demands of equality, 'one person one equal vote'. As we all know, democracy means in Ancient Greek 'rule by the people. Ideally, democracy means individual participation in the decisions that affects one's life. As such, popular participation has been valued as an opportunity for individual self development, and that citizen's participation in public affairs is based not upon the policy outcomes, but on the believe that that such involvement is essential to the full development of human capabilities (Dye, 1975:192, Fukuyama, 1992). Democracy at the very minimum denotes the rights of the people to choose their own government through institutionalized multiparty system and periodic secret ballots (Adedeji, 2006). Thus, underlying the value of democracy is individual dignity, equality of all people before the law and equality of opportunities in all aspects of life- social, educational, economic as well as political, and encompassing employment, housing, recreation etc. Presently, it is now universally accepted that democracy requires more than elections and majority rule to be sustainable. In addition to the exercise of basic political rights like rights to vote and the holding of free and fair elections, democracy involves respects for legal entitlements, right to freedom of expression (and on uncensored media), right to associate freely and hold public discussions, right to organize political movements of protests (Dreze and Sen, 2002:24).

Therefore, a democratic system or practice is judged according to the degree of its commitment to the ingredients of democracy. Thus, democracy thrives where people freely stand for elections and vote during election, where there are periodic elections based on universal suffrage, where freedom of speech, publication and association is allowed, where government and its agents adhere to the rule of law, where majority rule is maintained, where there is acceptance of opposing views, elections conducted are free, fair and credible, where succession process is smooth and not

problematic, where the individuals is allowed to freely make his or her choice and where the process of elections is competitive among political parties. In all, for democracy to be meaningful, it must be underlined by the principles of openness, representation, accountability, transparency and the defense, protection and preservation of individual and group rights (Adekola, 2010; Kaufmann *et al*, 2005).

Related to the concept of democracy is participation which has become central to contemporary development thinking. Accordingly, Blackburn (1998:2) defines participation as the commitment to help create conditions which can lead to a significant empowerment of those who at present have little control over forces that condition their lives. The World Bank (2001:3) defines participation as a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources that affect them. The World Bank's view on participation has essentially emphasized its instrumental role in poverty alleviation. Here, the ultimate goal of participation is increased accountability, transparency, and efficiency of those governance structures in promoting development and reducing poverty. It is within this context that governance comes to fore, which deals with the process through which group decision-making are made to address shared problems.

However, governance is not the same as government even though both concepts deals with intentional behaviour on the part of a group, organizations or institutions and its members to achieve certain goals. Governments have the formal authority to act; they also have the political power to enforce compliance with their activities, rules and policies (see Ekei, 2003; Carrington *et al*, 2008). All these elements are the instrument of effective governance in the sense that they provide the necessary anchor and legal/moral justification to the government. In contrast, governance describes the way in which a group, organization or an institution chooses to engage in certain activities backed by goals shared by its constituents. It refers to the exercise of power through a country's economic, social and political institutions in which institutions represent the organizational rules and routines, formal laws, and informal norms that together shape the incentives of public-makers, overseers, and providers of public services (UNDP, 2007). Hirst and Thomas (1996) define governance as "the control of an activity by some means such that a range of desired outcomes is attained". Thus, governance in a political sense is a more complex activity and also service oriented. Governance is better conceived from Lasswell traditional definition of politics of who get what, when and how and perhaps how much. Thus, governance has a lot to do with the allocation of values in the society, which to a large extent is political in nature. Although governance is related to politics, it is conceptually different. However, as a human phenomenon, governance is exercised within a given socio-cultural context. It refers to the process and mechanisms of allocating the values without jeopardizing the principles of equity, justice and fairness. Therefore, it is through the practical application of the authority and the processes of governance that the powers of the state acquire meaning and substance. In this regard the World Bank view governance as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development (Odunuga, 2003). The Bank further identified the following three key aspects of governance: the form of a political regime; the process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country's social and economic resources and the capacity of governance to design formulate and implement policies and discharge functions. The UNDP (1999) defines governance as a complex mechanisms, process, relationships and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. Hence, governance is largely about problem identification and solving. It is about social, economic and political progress or advancement.

According to Madhav (2007) good governance has much to do with the ethical grounding of governance and must be evaluated with reference to specific norms and objectives as may be laid down. It looks at the functioning of the given segment of the society from the point of view of its acknowledged stakeholders, beneficiaries and customers. Thus, governance means the degree to which institutions (such as parliament) and processes (such as elections) are transparent i.e. not susceptible to corruption in international business transactions, and accountable to the people, allowing them to participate in decisions that affect their lives. In the same vein, The Human Development Report (2002) defines 'effective governance' as a 'set of principles and core values that allow poor people to gain power through participation while protecting them from arbitrary,

unaccountable actions in their lives by governments, multinationals and other forces. As such, governance means ensuring that institutions and power are structured and distributed in a way that gives real voice and space to poor people and creates mechanisms through which the powerful can be held accountable for their actions' (p. 6). The report highlights the following key institutions of democratic governance as:

- A system of representation with well functioning political parties and interest associations;
- An electoral system that guarantees free and fair elections as well as universal suffrage;
- A system of checks and balances based on the separation of powers, with independent judicial and legislative branches;
- A vibrant civil society, able to monitor government and private business- and provide alternative forms of political participation;
- A free, independent media;
- Effective civilian control over the military and other security forces.

Democratic governance, therefore, exists when the authority of the government is based on the will of the people and responsive to them. It is open when, democratic institutions allow full participation in public affairs and when human rights protections guarantees the right to speak, assemble and dissent; when government institutions are pro-poor and promoting sustainable development of all citizens. While many countries are becoming democratic today, the quality of governance is attracting more and more attention within and among countries, and as such, good governance has become an important criterion for determining a country's credibility in the practice of democracy. Thus, good governance promotes equity, participation, pluralism, transparency, accountability and the rule of law. And it is effective, efficient, and sustainable over the long run. Good governance must be rooted in these principles to move society toward greater human development through poverty eradication, environmental protection and regeneration, gender equality and sustainable livelihoods.

In practice, these principles translate into certain tangible things, such as; free, fair and frequent elections, a representative legislature that makes laws and provide oversight; and an independent judiciary that interprets laws. Besides, good governance also decentralizes authority and resources to local governments to give citizens a greater role in governance. Finally, good governance ensures that civil society plays an active role in setting priorities, making the needs of the most vulnerable people in society known. In sum, governance is good if it support a society in which people can expand their choices in the way they live; promotes freedom from poverty, deprivation, fear and violence, and sustain women advancement. Yet, even as good governance takes hold in most societies, challenges to it sustainability also emerge. The greatest threats to good governance today comes from corruption, violence and poverty, all of which undermine transparency, security, participation, accountability and fundamental freedoms.

Looking at the concept of money politics, it is imperative to note that every political process requires funding in order to operate; therefore, money is a necessary requirement for the success of any democratic system. However, the amount of money, the source of the money, and the specific purpose the money serves in the execution of a campaign or electoral activity are important issues for interrogation. At the outset, it is well acknowledged that money is needed and used in all electioneering activities all over the world. The challenge of money politics arises only when set limits, sources, and use are either violated or abused by politicians and other relevant actors. In a situation where prescribed limits or sources are ignored, the political space and the institutions governing the processes of elections and politicking become compromised. The narrow definition of money in politics or political finance tends to focus on campaign and party funding. In fact, many extra party actors are involved in political competition with the objective of shaping public agenda, influencing legislation or electoral debates and outcomes. According to a typology developed by Vilfredo Pareto (1935), there are three motives for providing political funds: 1) Idealistic or ideological, 2) social, aiming at social honour or access, and 3) Financial, striving for material benefits. The latter comes as no surprise, but it does have major political consequences. Problems of money politics or political finance are at the heart of the debate on political corruption.

In general, corrupt political finance involves behaviour on the part of a candidate or a party, in which they improperly or unlawfully conduct financial operations for the gain of a political party, interest group, or of an individual candidate. Illegal political finance refers to contributions or use of money that contravene existing laws on political financing. Indeed, the range and scope of illegal political financing depends on country-specific funding regulations, while irregular political finance emerges in the gap between a country's legal provisions and the reality of its corrupt political funding practices. Money politics undermines the democratic system. Together with other forms of political corruption, it leads to a compromising of democratic ideals, the growth of political apathy among voters and mistrust of the authorities, as well as the consolidation of authoritarian tendencies in the state. The public interpret irregularities in party and campaign financing in a broader context, leading to distrust of the institutions and processes of politics. A large number of voters think that parties respond primarily to organized, special interests and that politicians are not concerned about ordinary citizens. It is worth bearing in mind that even the best contemporary western political finance system are themselves far from ideal.

In many democratic regimes, new restrictions and substantial state subsidies have been introduced as a response to financial scandals and public pressure, to prevent corruption by limiting undesirable and disproportionate influence over parties and candidates. These measures includes ban on certain types of donation, contribution limits, public subsidies, indirect public funding and subsidies, in-kind (including regulations concerning political broadcasting, spending limits for political parties and presidential candidates, comprehensive disclosure and reporting regulations and severe penalties. It has been argued by some experts that political finance regulations have brought increased probity, transparency, and a degree of equity to the monetary aspects of politics in established democracies (Adetula, 2008).

## **DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND ELECTORAL PROCESS IN NIGERIA**

The emergence of democratic governance in Nigeria fully began in 1960 after the attainment of independence. However, the process was preceded by the introduction of the elective principle in 1922 following the enactment of the Clifford constitution. This event stimulated the formation of political organizations, political parties and political awakening in the country. Be that as it may, it is essential to note that democracy is a consensual system which thrives on the core elements of freedom of choice, empowerment, capacity building and respect for rule of law, defense of human rights and accountability of leadership to followership. Its legitimacy comes from an acceptance of the fairness and transparency of its procedures for election to state offices and policy making. The sustainability of democracy therefore depends on the maintenance of public confidence as well as the confidence of political groups in the fairness of these procedures. Thus elections therefore represent the most striking manifestation of the sovereignty of the people.

From independence, democratic governance in Nigeria has been striving toward liberal democracy which provides a procedural system that involves open competition, with multi-party system, civil and political rights guaranteed by law and accountability operating through an electoral relationship between citizens and their representatives. This relationship presupposes that those elected to public offices are required to serve at the pleasure of the electorate, and that the electorate should be able to hold those elected officers accountable, if only to ensure that the electoral mandate that the elected officials have secured is not compromised. Following the history of electoral politics in Nigeria, it is disheartening to note that there has been an obvious disconnect between the elected representatives and the electorate, such that the political responsibility of the public office holders, their accountability to the electorates and respect for the electoral process has been missing.

The question dealing with governance as it relate to democracy is culture specific and system bound. It depends to a large extent on the historical experience of a nation, its cultural mores, aspiration of the people and the stated political and economic objectives of the state, including individual and group preferences, current issues, the expectations of the governed, the nature and type of the political system, the ideological and religious predisposition of the state and a host of others. For instance, the fundamental objective principle entrenched in the Nigerian constitution provide the

basis for measuring good governance. Section 14 (1) states that, “the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice”. This is furthered strengthened in Section 16 (1 and 2) of the 1999 Nigerian constitution. Section 16 (1) a, b, c, and d says that, “The state shall, within the context of the ideals and objectives for which provisions are made in this constitution- harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity and an efficient, dynamic and self-reliant economy; control the national economy in such manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity; without prejudice to its right to operate or participate in areas of the economy within the major sector of the economy, protect the right of every citizen to engage in any economic activities outside the major sectors of the economy Section 16 (2) states that, “the state shall direct its policy towards-the promotion of a planned and balanced economic development; that the material resources of the nation are harnessed and distributed as best as possible to serve the common good; that the economic system is not operated in such a manner as to permit the concentration of wealth or the means or the means of production and exchange in the hands of few individuals or of a group; and that suitable and adequate shelter, suitable and adequate food, reasonable national minimum living wage, old age care and pensions, and unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the disabled are provided for all citizens.

Fundamentally therefore, to describe governance as a good one and to determine whether it is a bad one requires the understanding of the essence of the state which are not only embedded in the constitution but also a function of the religious ideals and the nature of current problems confronting the state. Thus, the democratic process in Nigeria right from the first republic (1960-66), the second republic government of Shehu Shagari (1979-83), to the present dispensation have been characterized by several problems both at the administrative and political level. Among the obvious dilemmas associated with the state are issues such as corruption, electoral fraud including rigging, ballot snatching, doctoring of results by election officials, adoption of the “the winners take all” syndrome and the excessive monetization of political process through sponsoring candidates for elective offices by political god-fathers, funding political party campaigns by corporate institutions, money bags and individual who profit from the state through rent-seeking, among others. This brought to the fore the culture of acquiring power by all means including killing of opponents and brigandage which undermine the democratic process through compromising the popular will of the people.

Today in Nigeria, money politics, vote buying, god-fatherism and “share the money” are regular household phrases and slogans portraying moral decadence of the political elite. This usage adequately describes the rent-seeking behaviour of politicians, political parties and voters alike. This has implications for good governance processes including political participation. Money politics is quickly shrinking the political space, becoming a key variable in determining who participate in electoral politics and how. For instance, nomination fees for party members seeking elective positions have become so high that only the rich and daring “political entrepreneurs” can participate in party primaries. Besides, money drowns votes and voices in Nigeria as ‘godfathers’ openly confess about shading deals, funding or sponsoring elections for ‘godsons’ and purchase electoral victory. Businessmen and women, corporate organizations are not left out in this illegitimate and illicit use of money for political influence. For instance, in Obasanjo’s first term election, General T.Y. Danjuma admitted to helping to raise \$7 million from his business associates to finance his election (Adetula, *op cit*). There are many such as the aforementioned in the political apocrypha of Nigeria and on the conscience of many political merchants.

In Nigeria, money-bags own political parties and deploy them at will. They donate party secretariats and huge funds and in return dominate the party decision-making process. As such the independence and supremacy of the party is compromised. The absence of a strict and clear-cut regulation of the amount of private funding that political party can receive made all forms of political mercantilism attractive and possible in Nigeria in spite of the various provisions in the nation’s constitution since independence for financing political parties. In today’s Nigeria politics, details of subventions to political parties are not readily available. There are no record on the exact amount of money spent by candidates and political parties in Nigeria. However, there indications of heavy reliance on private funding in all the elections held in Nigeria since 1999, more so that virtually all

parties lack organizational capacity to generate their own income through legitimate means. Although the country has held four national elections since 1999, Nigeria's democratic institutions remain largely weak and undeveloped. Looking at the events of the past fourteen years, one can reasonably argue that the democratic system is still in transition, and there are forces at work that could undermine the foundations of the new found democracy. One challenge is ensuring transparency in the electoral process. The electoral system of a country is the critical institution which shapes and influences the rules of political competition for state power because it determines what parties look like, who is represented in the legislature, how accountable these representatives are to the electorate and above all who governs. The weakness of the legal framework in controlling the use of money in politics, the long indifference of Nigerians to the problem of party finance, and the rent-seeking behaviour of political elites and their parties constitute major challenges to the Nigerian electoral system.

### **MILITARY AND POLITICS IN NIGERIA**

Following the 1966 coup that brought an end to the first republic, the incursion of military dictatorship into our political landscape has lasted for more than 30 years. While the various military regimes have justified their involvement in the political terrain as a means to restore law and order and good governance and redress issue of corruption that have plagued the polity. However the happenings during the years of the military in power have turned out to show that they were worse than the civilians. Thus, paradoxically, the military's claim to be a force for the restoration of democracy through the several initiation of transition to civil rule programmes for returning power to democratically elected government have left the nation worse off than when they met it. Be that as it may, its incessant intervention in the polity and long stay in government had undermined the growth and entrenchment of democratic values and ideals to take root in the polity. In its place the society has been characterized by lack of accountability, transparency, human rights abuses, absence of political freedoms and erosion of democratic institutions.

Given the long years of military rule, they have overtime entrenched in the polity the culture of political authoritarianism, arbitrariness in governance, non-accountability to the people, intimidation of the civic society, non-adherence to the rule of law, massive corruption in government establishment and institutions. For instance, the massive corruption that attended the Babangida and Abacha regimes in Nigeria institutionalized into the body polity the culture of the insatiable lust for power, the get rich quick syndrome where both the military and their civilian apologists now see access to power as a quick avenue to become rich.

These events did not only replaced the democratic culture of accountability and transparency in governance, but it also killed the growth and development of democratic political culture which guarantees equality before the law as well as providing opportunities for all citizens to have equal access to the material and human resources that guarantee their basic livelihood. Today, what we see in country's polity is perpetration of the culture of arbitrariness, total absence of debate and due process, massive corruption at all levels of government, absolute disregard for the rule of law, intimidation of the civil society and human rights abuse and flagrant disregard for court judgment and orders, which were a major feature of military dictatorship creeping most dangerously into our present democratic process (IDEA, 2001:31).

This trend has brought to the fore an intolerant political environment where the language of politics is very much militaristic in nature, leading to obvious abuse of the core democratic ethos of the principles of rule of law and constitutionalism. This is reminiscence of the spate of abuses of impeachment clauses that has been brazenly applied without due process by the legislators in the houses of assembly in Oyo, Bayelsa, Anambra, Ekiti and Plateau states which resulted in the impeachment of their state governor on grounds of official misconduct, abuse of office, corruption and money laundering etc. Coupled with these events is the brazen corruption that attended the military hegemony in which the leadership along with their civilian cronies looted the nation's wealth as glaringly manifested during the dark days of Babangida and Abacha regimes. Since then the culture of corruption has become institutionalized as a way of life in our polity where elected officials at all levels of government have become enmeshed in the crisis of money laundering, stealing of state



resources and abuse of office as represented by the Alamieyeseigha, Dariye and Ibori's corruption and money laundering saga in Bayelsa, Plateau and Delta states.

By implication therefore the antecedent of today's civilian ruling class is essentially an army of occupation made up of the less enlightened and the less prestigious members of society. Little wonder that the ruling classes today like their military counterpart before them continues to radiate a bankruptcy of ideas and an insatiable lust for power, use of force and display of various forms of corruptive tendencies. In essence, the political elite who succeeded the military juntas operate a warped form of democracy that can never guarantee good governance.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework for analyzing the influence of money politics on governance and the crisis it has engendered in the Nigeria nation involves the adoption of the power elite theory and the Marxist political economy model. The power-elite model analysis of politics sees power as being monopolized by a small minority who exert considerable political influence on policy decisions and outcomes. Since people are unequal in terms of access to the resources of society, some would always have more ability than others, and would therefore occupy the elite positions in society. According to Mills (1956) only a small number of people effectively control the political system in most nations. He argued that the power elite stand atop the major key positions in society and hold 'command posts' in sectors of the economy, government, and the military. Thus, the power elite move from one sector to another, consolidating their power as they go. For power elite theorists, the concentration of the wealth and power in the hands of the few in any political democracy is too great for the voice of the average person to be heard. In the same vein, Mosca (1939) asserts that "The power of the minority is irresistible as against each of the single individual in the majority." Major decisions that affect society are taken by the elite. Even in so called democratic societies, key policy decisions will usually reflect the concerns of the elite rather than the wishes of the people. Thus the mass of the population are manipulated and controlled by the elite, passively accepting the propaganda which substantiate elite rule. For him democracy may be of the people, for the people, but definitely could never be government by the people.

Similarly, Mills argued that business and government 'cannot now be seen as two distinct worlds.' He refers to political leaders as 'lieutenants' of the economic elite and claims that the decisions made by the ruling class in power are tailored systematically to favour the interests of the giant corporations and individual entrepreneurs. It is the elite that dominate the economic and political life of the society because of their wealth. For instance, the Anambra debacle where Chris Ngige was sponsored for the governorship seat by Chris Uba was based on the agreement that the state should be run by Uba who was to have the final say in making key decisions regarding the running of the state, succinctly picture the rule of the over the masses which is flagrant rape of democracy governance and the social contract between the state and society.

Mills further states that all societies are dominated by power elite with 'unprecedented power and unaccountability'. They take decision with little or no reference to the people. Despite the fact that such decisions affect all members of society, the 'power elite' is not accountable for their actions either directly to the public or to anybody which represents the public interest. The rise of the power elite has led to 'the declining of politics as a genuine and public debate of alternative decisions.' History, therefore, is a never ending circulation of elites. Nothing ever really changes and history is, and will be, 'a graveyard of aristocracies.'

Consequently, Robert Michels in propounding his theory of 'Iron law of Oligarchy' asserts that party organization is controlled by a group of leaders who cannot be checked or held accountable by those who elect them. This applies to all organizational factors such as funding and access to media which are controlled by the very few with excess power. According to Michels, whatever form of government is adopted in such society, in practice, is inevitably reduced to oligarchy or the rule of the chosen few (see Mahajan, 2005).

In line with this school of thought, many scholars have argued that the Nigerian democratic experience as it is today is essentially a pact among the elite, with the first pact occurring between the British colonialists and the Nigerian nationalists which led to the independence in 1960, while the

other pact has been oscillating between the civilian and military class. This is particularly manifested when we examine the distributive nature of the economic management within the military, where the military and their civilian aides collaborated in the exploitation of office for personal aggrandizement which fostered the growth and spread of 'commercial capitalism', enabling the military hierarchy and their civilian aides to emerge as the new dominant property-owning "class" in society (Dudley, 1982:7). It is no wonder today that the polity is presently populated by ex-military and civilian persons who have served this nation in one capacity or another both in the civilian and military dispensation since independence where they have employed crooked means to accumulate so much wealth which they are now using to wield their political might in the democratic process through the exclusion of the people from engaging in real popular participation.

Furthermore, the growing profligacy of money politics in the Nigerian polity is therefore attributable to the precarious material base of our ruling classes, who sees the state as serving the instrumentalist function as a means of production for the consolidation of their material bases through the sharing of the national cake rather than the production of the national cake (Ake, 1996). Since the control of state power is synonymous with wealth and security, politics has become a zero-sum game with high possibilities of violence and political instability which has further deepened the process of political exclusion, marginalization and deprivation in the political class quest to attain power at all cost. This circumstance has thus resulted in the series of political motivated killings such as the murder of Pa Alfred Rewanu, Bola Ige, Marshall Harry, Chief Dikubo, Ayo Daramola and others in the land.

Furthermore, the Marxist political economy model sees power in terms of a society's economic system. For Marxist political economic theorists, the power elite in any political system are the creation of the economic system, which is capitalism itself, which ultimately shapes how the political system operates. According to Marx and Engels (1959b) power is concentrated in the hands of those who have economic control within the society. From this perspective, ruling class power extends beyond economic relationships. In all societies the superstructure is largely shaped by the infrastructure. In particular, the relations of production are reflected and reproduced in various institutions, values and beliefs that make up the superstructure. Thus the relationships of domination and subordination found in the infrastructure will also be found on other social institutions. The dominant social group or ruling class, that is the group which owns and controls the means of production, will largely monopolize political power, and its power is supported by the laws which are framed to protect and further its interests. Similarly, Liazos (1982:13) asserts that "The basic tenets of capitalist society shape everyone's life: the inequalities of social classes and the importance of profits over people." As long as the basic institutions of society are organized to meet the needs of the few rather than the majority, the public character of politics become eroded and the political process is not only monetized but also effectively privatized.

Furthermore, when all power is in the hands of a small group of people, a ruling elite, abuse of power is inevitable. For as Lord Arton puts it: "power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely." No matter how "good" their original intentions, power holders find that exercising authority becomes an end in itself, rather than a means to an end. Accordingly, Leys (1975) opines that the control of the state by the ruling elite is exercised not by an independent and assertive domestic class of capitalists, but by a 'comprador' bourgeoisie, which uses its control of the state to feather its own nest with the help of access to public funds. Furthermore, Nigerian leaders places more value on capturing power for themselves and grow increasingly fearful about what seemed to them to be the grave consequences of losing to their rivals in the competition for the control of state power.

As such, their actions and behaviour when they assume positions of leadership becomes inconsistent with the democratic due process that brought them to power. This ruling class therefore see governance as an investment to which they ploy in their resources with the expectation of making returns in form of profits. In such context, the leadership does not see democracy as a sacred tenet to be defended and protected at all costs. To them, it is simply a vehicle of convenience for the promotion of their interest for primitive accumulation. Thus at the various levels of government since 1960, Nigeria's post- independence leaders have utilized control of state power to strengthen their material base through statist policies of nationalism, privatization, imposition of coercion in the labour

process and political control of the nation's natural resources. Political power, therefore, became synonymous with access to wealth and reproduction of the hegemonic fractionalization of the political elite.

From the foregoing, it is not difficult to recognize that there is a thin line between money politics and political corruption. Investment in electoral politics, for instance can present a safe haven for corrupt persons in dire need of protection. Such individuals may invest their spoils in order to make profits of power and of the purse; for protection, to dispense influence and to steal more. For instance former or serving members of the armed forces, public servants, government contractors and businessmen and women who possibly are treasury looters; drug barons and fraudsters who are looking for means of laundering their stolen and ill-gotten wealth decide to go into active partisan politics. Ndubisi Obiorah's comment on the problem of political corruption in Nigeria and its link with electoral politics is apt here:

“Retiring military officers and their civilian business cronies deployed the massive wealth generated from the proceeds of grand corruption to creating and financing the political networks. That formed the nuclei of several of the political groups that sought and obtained registration as political parties. Deploying their massive financial resources, they were able to install ex-military officers and their civilian business cronies in control of the two largest political parties and high federal and state public offices. Most politicians in Nigeria's Fourth Republic receive financial ‘sponsorship’ from local and regional political entrepreneurs to finance their bids for public office. The ‘sponsorship’ is effectively a business transaction in which the ‘patron’ recovers the ‘investment’ in the forms of pre-bendal benefits awarded by their ‘client’ politician, on assuming public office, to the ‘patron’. In certain notorious cases where ‘patron’ and ‘client’ failed to define with sufficient precision, the dimensions of the return on the investment or the ‘client’ balks at delivering per the agreed terms upon assuming office, the fallout has led to mass violence and regime destabilization”(2005).

Such persons as described above are more likely to violate laws and regulations on party finance. Essentially, violations of the political finance regime comes in various forms including exceeding expenditure limits, accepting money from prohibited donors, using campaign funds for illegal purposes and abuse of state and administrative resources for the benefit of incumbent parties and public office holders (Eze,2006). Consequently, the lack of transparency and accountability that pervades activities of almost all political parties in Nigeria has its share in perpetuating money politics and political corruption. Many of the crises rocking political parties in the country are traceable to poor internal democracy, mismanagement of party funds, lack of accountability and transparency. All these make money politics to thrive well.

Political corruption, especially within parties, created monsters now known as godfathers and godmothers. Their emergence into the Nigeria political landscape did not only make them have tremendous influence on the process and outcomes of elections at all levels in the country, it has also made party financing one of the best investment in Nigeria. Thus, monetizing politics has a lot of negative effects on the polity, leading to state capture, hijack of policy making and implementation organs which will ultimately work against the interests of the poor and the marginalized. With so many resources been deployed to capture elective offices, it is not difficult to see the correlation between politics and the potential for high level corruption in Nigeria. Thus the greatest losers from this monumental fraud are the ordinary people, those voters whose faith and investment in the system are hijacked and subverted because money, not their will, is the determining factor in elections.

#### **THE DILEMMA OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA**

The failure of Nigeria to establish the essential foundations for effective democratic governance and credible electoral process lies at the feet of successive military and civilian governments alike. Successive governments are acquiesced to anti- democratic forces which they harness for their selfish objectives. The political elite, in general, are insensitive to the fundamental

tenets of democracy. For them, democracy is nothing but a means to an end aimed at satisfying their self centred interest of enhancing their economic position rather than to offer service to the masses through improvement of their living conditions. As such, they see elections as a do or die battle in which they are ready to employ any form of electoral manipulation such as rigging, thuggery, bribing of election officials including members of the security agencies especially police and in most cases engage in the dastardly act of killing their political opponents in order to justify their end.

For instance, the brutal murder of PDP governorship aspirants like Funso Williams and Ayo Daramola in Lagos and Ekiti states as well as the flagrant desecration of the principles of constitutionalism and due process that has played out itself in the impeachment of five sitting governors of Bayelsa, Oyo, Ekiti, Anambra and Plateau as applied by the legislators of the aforementioned state houses of assembly are nothing but a clear travesty of the ideals of democracy and the rule of law which is aimed at satisfying their personal aggrandizement and destabilizing the polity. In the same vein, it is also significant to note that with the exception of the first republic, the other forms of transition to democratic governance in Nigeria have been midwived by the military who themselves are fraught with illegality given their ascension to governance through the barrel of the gun. No wonder, therefore that the democratic and electoral framework they have fashioned for the nation fails to reflect true democratic value system with respect for the rule of law, constitutionalism, adherence to the principle of true separation of power, independent electoral body and the independence of the judiciary.

Furthermore, the nation's electoral body such as the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) which is saddled with the statutory responsibility of organizing and conducting elections is only independent in name and not in practice; as it has been variously hijacked by the ruling government and run in line with their whims and caprices of the government in power at the centre. Severally, the electoral body has been starved of logistics especially funds to deliver a credible, free and fair elections, such that its capacity to function and safeguard the sanctity of the electoral process has been compromised over time.

Also, the political parties are also guilty of exacerbating the growing influence of money in our democratic experiment particularly in the area of party financing, campaigns and general disposition in the electoral process. From the second republic till date, party politics in the nation is still the exclusive preserve of the rich and the powerful in society to the extent that oligarchical rule rather than the rule of the majority has become the rule of the game. In this context, the selection of candidate for elective positions which is supposed to be the prerogative of the members of the political party in choosing those who they want to represent them has been high-jacked by the leadership of the party at all levels of government and manipulated to suit the whims and caprices of their political god-fathers or sold to the highest bidder (money bags) who have the economic weight to influence the political process by fielding their surrogates and stooges who they can maneuver to do their billings once they get elected to office. In this context, the case of Ngige and Uba in Anambra state; Ladoja and Adedibu in Oyo and Dr Saraki in Kwara states readily call for mention to show the level to which god-fatherism has infiltrated our polity making a mockery of the democratic process.

In similar vein, the 'Africanization' of politics on the continent has encouraged a personification of power relations, where we have moved away from the notion of the state as an instrument of technical rationality to the institutionalization of the leadership as the state other than as its agent or representative. Jackson and Rosberg (1982) opined that the African state lacks the qualitative properties that Weber associated with the state, especially the presence of a system of authority based on instrumentalist authority. In Nigeria, it is not who you are or what you know, and not even your ideological disposition that determines your political ascendancy. For as long as there are some self-appointed political kingmakers and money bags like the Tony Anenih, Lamidi Adedibu, Chris Uba and others who can manipulate the electoral process through rigging and subversion of the people's will in choosing those who will govern them, Nigeria's democracy will continue to drift like a ruddership bereft of capable leadership and good governance that will steer the nation on the path to national development.

Moreover, the escalating prevalence of the growing role of money in our polity is further worsened by the state of economic pauperization and poverty that characterize the living condition of

the masses in the nation. This is fundamentally so, because in the game of politics, money talks and it is a defining factor in shaping the direction of the political terrain. As such, in a society where economic inequality persist and is highly stratified, the rich will always have more political clout than the poor (Etzioni-Halevy, 1985). Sadly and ironically, Nigeria is regarded as a nation flowing with milk and honey, yet the majority of the citizens live in abject poverty. Despite the nation's position as the sixth largest producer of crude oil from which it has made over US400 billion dollars in the last 32 years, more than 70% of its estimated population live below the poverty line of \$1 per day (Africa South of the Sahara, 2003). As such, the masses have become easy prey in the hands of unscrupulous politicians who cash in on their social condition to trade in their votes for a paltry sum. This condition corroborates the assertion that corruption has a direct linkage to general poverty which is an enemy to democracy and good governance.

In all, the political class that we have running the democratic institutions and apparatus of governance are known to have a history of broken promises, where they never keep to the fulfillment of their electoral mandate of working for the improvement of the welfare of the people. To them, politics is a great investment with expected great returns. As such, our political space is filled with politicians of all shades and types with questionable character and values and void of any professed political ideology, whose vision and purpose in government is how to satisfy their belly as ably demonstrated in the national assembly members' demand for allocation of furniture allowances to themselves in 1999, the huge salaries they earn, and the granting of severance allowances that runs into billions of naira while the civil servants earn a paltry 18, 000 naira as minimum wage. Besides, the party system and parties that characterizes the political process lack cohesiveness, discipline and purpose driven goals of 'what and why' they are seeking power. All that we have witnessed in last fourteen years is the existence of soulless political parties torn apart by bickering, brigandage and shameless intrigues of decamping to mention but a few by the political actors all for the primary reason of satisfying their selfish and personal aggrandizement for primitive accumulation, which speak volume of the kind of leadership and governance that these parties can provide for the nation.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the foregoing, it is evident that the challenges associated with the crisis of good governance are multi faceted with the issue of corruption being the principal factor. Therefore, the way out of this quandary of reckless governance that has pervaded our nation rest on the need to address the issues of economic poverty and social deprivation of the masses in accessing the basic necessities of life. This will go a long way to create the platform for the entrenchment of good governance and capacity building for social justice and empowerment for the masses to exercise their civil rights appropriately.

In similar vein, we must all collectively arise from our slumber to seize our sovereignty from the political class who have misused it to the detriment of the masses. This can be achieved by employing the tool of total reorientation and awakening of the nationalistic consciousness in us to ensure the installation of a proper democratic system with the right values and civil culture where the will of the greatest majority would be the final arbiter in deciding the form of governance we need and those that will govern the nation. In addition, the people of Nigeria must insist on the formulation of a constitution that is people oriented and accented to by a referendum and not the kind of constitution that we are operating now which is a military contraption characterized with all forms of inconsistencies that has failed to address the pertinent national question of true federalism, resource derivation, true citizenship, indigenization and settler dilemma, and fiscal federalism to mention but a few.

Finally, we need a new template for genuine service leadership that is transformational in all ramifications, and ready to embrace a developmental state model characterized by the accountability of the leadership to the followership, decentralization of power and authority, orderly and transparent succession etc as against the current attitude of governance for primitive accumulation and seat-tightism to power as reminiscence of the third term saga. In all, as long as our democratic experiments are planned and executed by the ex-military overlord and their civilian collaborators, proper democracy and good governance will continue to elude us.

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