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UNRAVELING ELECTORAL CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: ANALYSIS OF
CORRUPT BEHAVIOR AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES

by

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DEDICATION

To my beloved nephews, Nosa Erhunmwunse and Chudi Okuoyibo. This thesis is dedicated to both of you with boundless love and admiration. Your innocent curiosity and zest for life remind me of the importance of never ceasing to explore, learn, and grow. Your infectious laughter and pure heartedness bring joy to my life. Your unyielding enthusiasm for discovery ignites a passion within me to delve deeper into the wonders of our universe.

As you both grow and embark on your own paths, know that I will always be here, cheering you on from afar. Your presence in my life has enriched it beyond measure, and I am forever grateful for the cherished memories we have created together.

May this thesis stand as a testament to the love and gratitude I hold for you both. It is my hope that one day you will find your own academic pursuits and passions, and in doing so, discover the limitless potential that lies within you.

With all my heart,

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AG - Action Group

APC - All Progressive Congress

EFCC - Economic and Financial Crimes Commission

EU - European Union

ICPC - Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offenses Commission

INEC - Independent National Electoral Commission

NCNC - National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons

NPC - Northern People's Congress

PDP - People's Democratic Party

SDP - Social Democratic Party

USD - United States Dollar

Unraveling Electoral Corruption in Nigeria: Analysis of Corrupt Behavior and its Implication for Democratic Processes

Thesis Abstract—Idaho State University (2023)

Corruption has long been a central concern in political and philosophical thought, impacting states' growth and stability. In recent years, its prevalence in developing countries has worsened, threatening the very foundations of democratic societies. Nigeria has been plagued by corruption, with its political parties playing a significant role in perpetuating this problem. This thesis critically analyzes the formation, organization, and mode of operation of contemporary political parties in Nigeria, focusing on the All-Progressive Congress (APC) between 2015 and 2023. It highlights how political parties discreetly contribute to the growth of corruption, leading to electoral malpractices and undermining good governance. The study examines corruption in its economic, political, and electoral dimensions, identifying factors driving corruption in Nigeria and proposing constitutional reforms and structural changes to curb corruptive inclinations in political parties and promote responsible party politics.

Keywords: corruption, electoral corruption, godfatherism, rigging, political parties, and bribery.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The ideas and issues surrounding corruption, its causes, patterns, and effects on states' growth have encircled political and philosophical thought for over a century. Scholars from the 16th century to the present have written extensively and, in their works, painfully bemoaned the certainty of corruption in a democratic state (Aristotle, 1958; Machiavelli, 1971; Polybius, 2010; Harrington 1992). The ineptitude and political delinquencies spurred by corruption have further plummeted in recent years, with several unfolding events pointing to the possible disintegration and collapse of the political societies and states besieged by this constantly ravaging political disease. The World Bank has distinguished corruption as one of the banes to sustainable development in developing countries and a significant force behind the gradual deterioration of world peace in recent times (World Bank; 2000). The most recent corruption perception reports of Transparency International, a non-governmental global civil society organization leading the international fight against corruption, manifest the extent to which corruption has eaten deep into human societies. The report summary shows that about two-thirds of the evaluated countries (out of 180) are battling corruption. Despite concerted efforts, 155 countries have yet to make progress in reducing corrupt practices and have declined since 2012 (Transparency International Report, 2022). Several African countries have consistently been mentioned as having a high risk of corruption in the political sphere. These include nations like Equatorial Guinea, South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and others. Factors contributing to this risk include lack of transparency, and insufficient accountability systems.

In Nigeria, the narrative is no different. Corruption is a national heritage and a stigma identifiable with Nigeria's democratic practices. The Transparency International annual report on

corruption ranked Nigeria 150 out of 180 corruption-free countries in the world in 2022 (Trading Economics, (2023) What does this entail? These figures and rankings obscure the range of practices and pervasiveness of corruption in Nigeria. Obvious maladies and malpractices in elections and irrefutable cases of irresponsible governance highlight Nigeria's democratic history since independence. Recent research shows that political parties are the fast vehicles through which corrupt practices spread to every sector of the country (Lewis, 1996; Obuah, 010). As a result, vigorous debates have arisen lately among concerned citizens regarding the possibility of a corruption-free Nigeria.

This paper seeks to justify through critical analysis that the formation, organization, and mode of operation of contemporary political parties in Nigeria before, after, and during the election portrays, aggravates, and infuses corruption into all other government sectors. It also maintained that unless their operations patterns are identified and curbed, corruption will continue to stretch its nefarious wings in every epoch of Nigerian democracy. To drive home this argument, the critical lens of my discussion will focus on the rise, formation, and political activities of the All-Progressive Congress Party (APC) in Nigeria between 2015 and 2023, emphasizing the general elections of 2015, 2019, and 2023. Therefore, I aim to convincingly show how this party has discreetly contributed to the growth of corruption in Nigeria within the time frame above.

My secondary objective, however, is to pertinently peruse the concept of corruption as it relatively relates to Nigeria's political challenges, identify its parasitic effects on Nigeria's political development, its waves and turns in Nigeria's democratic history, the identifiable patterns and factors that lend to its fast but pernicious growth and after that draw a plausible

conclusion by connecting the dots between purposive representation and responsible party politics.

What is Corruption?

A precise definition of corruption has been elusive, hence, scholars have always defined it in terms of its socio-political contexts (Plato, 2008; Aristotle, 1958; Polybius, 2010; Rousseau, 1964). Its elusiveness in definition forces one to construe it in the light of the actors involved, profiteers, initiators, and how and where it takes place. However, etymologically, corruption is coined from the Greek word "plethora," which means "destruction," "decay," and "passing away." (Camila, 2020). From Thales of Miletus to Anaxagoras, the concept explains the laws behind the coming into being and passing away of matters and forms (Lavine, 2011). Aristotle redefined the concept of corruption by engrafting it into his political philosophy. To avoid ambiguity, I will explain briefly other types of corruption attempt a deconstruction of the concept "corruption" as it relates to its types.

Economic Corruption.

Corruption and economics are closely related, it has always been seen as an attempt to gain economic rent through political means. Thus, an economic perception of corruption cannot be construed without its political undertone. One of the ways to deconstruct the meaning of economic corruption is to see it through the purview of systematic corruption. According to Wallis (2004, pp. 12), systematic corruption is a political behavior and idea whereby a politician grants exclusive economic privileges to a recipient who continues to pledge his loyalty to the politician. Politicians usually form a conspiracy, which grows into a faction and later, a party to control the government and maintain a continuous influence of government policies through economics. Systematic corruption affects and infects the government with unpatriotic inclinations, which become evident in citizens' lifestyles. More importantly, it limits social

welfare and economic growth and renders all government social-economic policies ineffective. Some scholars have suggested constitutional amendment and structural reform as an effective solution to the challenge of systematic corruption.

Political Corruption.

The idea of political corruption emanates from the philosophy of Plato. However, Aristotle was the philosopher who popularized the certainty of corruption in human society; Plato first incubated the main idea that corruption could arise in a democratic society. Having watched his master Socrates sentenced to his end by the judgment of the "unlearned and corrupt" jury empowered by the direct democratic system practiced in Athens, he believed that the best form of government could not place authority in the hands of many. Plato believed that corruption in democracy arises due to the equal distribution of liberty, which gives chances to the selfish pursuit of individual interest, eventually leading to gradual deterioration of value, decay of the state, and finally, tyranny (Lavine, 2011). Aristotle, in his political philosophy, did not completely disassociate his political thoughts from his master's; rather, he argued that corruption is an inevitable natural force, one which occurs in a state after it has realized its full potential (Aristotle; 1962). He considered a democracy that places constitutional rights in the hands of poor masses as corrupt and evil. He conceived the realization of equal access to political power and the people's right to equal share in the government, which forms the basic principle of democracy today as the beginning of state corruption and its decline.

Today, Aristotle's submission has been proved right by a large number of corruption incidents and perpetuations recorded in democratic states all around the world. There is no doubt that democracy faces devaluation and exploitation driven by saboteurs and individuals who see it as the perfect form of government to plunder the public and amass private wealth to the perils of the state. Therefore, it is pertinent to know that while corruption might stem from an individual's

lack of morals or loss of value, it will be illogical to use the old definition, which identified corruption with illegal act involving corrupts politicians or public officials. In contemporary times, corruption has gone far beyond the horizons of selfish interest, many scholars now define corruption in terms of the magnitude of its penetration into the state (Obuah, 2010; Akindele, 1995; Ofoeze, 2004; Enweremadu, 2012).

In contemporary times, the objective definition of corruption has shifted from its universal perception as an attempt to exploit the state to the betrayal of public interest economically (Dorbel, 1968). Cases of corruption have shown the possibility of perpetrators being an organized group of individuals who are not in governance. After all, certain peculiar attributes and charisma exercise subtle control over the political and economic activities of a sector or all government sectors. Their mode of operation is mostly outside the confines of the law but targeted towards subjecting the masses and government to their will and control. In developed countries, a powerful political figure leads such groups and continues to single-handedly influence democratic practices and government policies to the comfort of his/her group members.

Another contemporary approach to political corruption is defining it in terms of its threats to economic development. This definition of corruption entails using political power to gather financial strength. Most often, public officeholders and politicians use their positions to siphon public funds into their coffers by padding budgets, embarking on white elephant projects, or directly or indirectly receiving bribes. Researchers have identified two significant types of corruption that besets economic and political development in the world: systematic corruption and venal corruption (Wallis 2004; Camila 2020).

According to the World Bank, corruption is the abuse of public office for private gains. It accounts for about \$80 billion worldwide. (World Bank; 1997) Patterns by which public officials perpetuate corruptive acts include accepting, soliciting, or extorting bribes and private actors offering bribes to subvert or circumvent public policies for competitive advantage and profit. Political corruption occurs, according to the World Bank, when the actions of individuals, groups, or firms in both the public and private sectors influence the formation of laws, regulations, decrees, and other government policies to their advantage through the illicit and non-transparent provision of personal benefits to public officials. It could also occur when changing and altering the implementation of existing laws, rules, and regulations to provide advantages to either state or non-state actors due to unlawful and non-transparent provision of private gain to public officials (World Bank; 1997).

Similarly, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) defines corruption "as the misuse of public power, office, or authority for private benefit – through bribery, extortion, influence peddling, nepotism, fraud, speed money, or embezzlement".(UNDP; 2004, p29)

Transparency International defines corruption as the inappropriate or illegal behavior of the public sector official (politician or public officer) by misusing the entrusted power for the person's or related people's private gain. (UNDP; 2004) Patrick Dorbel (1979) contends that corruption is the incapacity of citizens to make disinterested commitments to the state's actions, symbols, and institutions. He defined political corruption as identifiable patterns of political conflicts and competition whose significant consequence led to the emergence of quasi-governmental factions and an increasingly polarized class system. Khan defines corruption as an act that deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of private - regarding - motives such as wealth, power, or status.

(Khan, 1996) Otite (2000) also agrees that corruption is the perversion of integrity or state of affairs through bribery, favor, or moral depravity. It occurs when two parties or more work to change the structure or processes of society to produce dishonest, unfaithful, or defiled situations.

Even if corrupt acts result from inequality, political corruption fundamentally thrives on inequality. Corrupt practices, when viewed on arrays of ranging characteristics from random individual acts through increasingly widespread corruption to the point where the citizenry, both in and out of government, engage in politics permeated by corruption, espouse specific patterns of inequality as the main generators of such increasing crime, as opposed to random individual acts. Thus, it will be safe to suggest that a cursory measure of political corruption must start with a solid political education to inculcate loyalty toward fellow citizens and create an initial willingness to sacrifice self-interest for the common welfare. However, I contend that this will not be complete without a review of electoral processes since democracy thrives on the elective power of the people. Therefore, we must examine electoral practices and identify ways corruption has perverted its essential element - the election.

Electoral Corruption

Ajie and Wokekoro define electoral corruption as "promises of special office favors, coercion, intimidation, and interference with freedom of election, buying of votes, disenfranchisement, snatching of ballot boxes, victimizing and maiming, mutilation of election results in favors of losers and votes turn up in areas where votes were not cast". (Ajie and Wokekoro, 2012, pp. 6) While this definition speaks volumes of the different vices that accompany elections in developing African countries, it does not mention the intricacies of corruption in-depth in electoral processes in both developed and developing countries. Moreover,

most developing countries no longer experience the mentioned election malpractices because of technological advancement and the citizens' and the electorates' high level of political education.

A working definition of electoral corruption must include the direct and indirect influence of political parties on voters and the consciousness of voters in securing a good bargain for what they perceive to be favorable for the party. Thus, electoral corruption is political parties' monetization and exploitation of electoral processes to win elections. Patterns of electoral corruption include indiscriminate cross carpeting, party collusions, diversion of public funds for election campaigns, godfatherism, clientelism, bribery of electoral commissions, seeking electoral redresses in tribunals, etc. These corruption trends have recently taken a new course, with political parties devising new strategies for holding power outside the boundaries of electoral laws and party constitution. I will expand the horizons of these subjects in subsequent chapters.

This thesis, nonetheless, argues that the emergence of political parties is not outside constitutional provisions. Thus, constitutional amendments can curb the excesses of political parties and reduce the various means by which political parties perpetuate electoral malpractices. One of these amendments should be making political offices less attractive; the government can achieve this by lowering the several allowances and huge salaries attached to key political positions. Furthermore, the reformation of some political parties will lessen electoral corruption. For example, in cases where political parties' organization and formation show an ethnic relation, electoral bribery is prominent. I also believe that if godfathers becomes responsible party patrons who uses their influence to command loyalty among party members regarding primary elections, overthrowing intra-party corruption will be almost effortless and it will help parties to present the

most qualified candidate as flag bearers in elections. I will discuss these ideas more elaborately in the latter chapters of this thesis.

What Drives Corruption?

Different writers and researchers have written extensively on the causes of corruption. However, the definitive cause of corruption has been greed and the desire for the amassment of wealth. The argument, as regards the causes of corruption, stretches from an individual lack of morality and patriotism to the state's loss of will to the incapacity to control an individual's greed and teach the proper political education to citizens. I will aggregate the views of some researchers who have contributed to the discourse on the cause of corruption and highlight the primary cause of corruption in a democratic government.

According to Patrick Dorbel (1968), corruption is a subversion of individual moral choices, and the capacity to be corrupt depends on the human capacity for avarice and evil. The corruption of a state, to Dorbel, stems from citizens' reactions to systematic and enduring inequality in wealth, power, and status. He argued that human nature reacts in vengeance to inequality stressed over time. Hence, in cases where a citizen becomes more famous than others because of his exclusive access to wealth, power, and status, other citizens are inclined to covet such exclusive rights. This act continues to spread among random individuals to the point where the citizenry, in and out of government, engages in politics permitted by their conscience. Thus, for Dorbel, inequalities in power and status cause the state's corruption.

Ajie and Wokekoro (2012) believe that the socio-political economy system and society's culture could make the citizens more prone to corrupt activities. They argued further that the proportion of a country's population often strengthens corruption inclinations among its citizen. Moreover, for ethnic and religious diversified developing countries like Nigeria and India, political parties often exploit the masses' differences to create a politically hostile environment.

Aside from this, religious differences sometimes affect election results, and since democracy is a game of numbers, some disadvantaged political parties sought other corrupt means of winning elections.

Obuah (2010) traced the cause of corruption in developing countries to the low salary received by public officials and strong kinship ties. He argued that corruption breeds in public places and government institutions because the meager remunerations paid to the official cannot cater to their needs. While the state economy beats hard on these officials, they sought other means of living to public standard. As regards strong kinship ties, communalism as a guiding social ethic can be found throughout the African continent, each man is responsible for the other. The need to cater to the needs of their relatives and extended family sometimes drives public officials to receive bribes and cutbacks on projects. While the low salary argument may not be justifiable for a highly paid government official, the fact that humans are by nature selfish and greedy is enough point to drive home both views.

Furthermore, corruption arises when the state has no stand-out measures to hold public officials accountable for breaches of forms and regulations, leading to public officials' capacity to use a boundless authority in perverting justice, stretch the gaps of inequality, embark on financial crimes and wield absolute power. This submission summarizes the UNDP perspective theory behind institutional corruption. The pervasiveness of systemic corruption in developing countries is the absence or weakness of the appropriate institutional framework, which could have served as checks and balances on the excesses of public officials. The lack of social, judicial, and economic checks and balances separates the perception of corruption between developing and developed countries and widens the development pace (UNDP, 2004).

Lastly, De Dardan (1999) stresses that the absence of public property in traditional African society is responsible for the inability of African leaders to differentiate their public functions and property from their private ones; as credible as this might sound, it is bereft of logic. Many of those who assume political positions or take public offices are educated elites beneficiaries of impeccable western education, elites who are well-learned and understand what corruption entails; therefore, there is no such thing as ignorance in corrupt deeds. If we must take a cue from all the discussed, it is evident that corruption is more reflective in developing countries than in developed countries, especially in Africa.

Political Parties and Corruptive Inclinations

A political party is an organized group of individuals who share similar political beliefs, opinions, principles, aspirations, and interests to capture political power and exercise it through government formation. However, Foley and Edward gave a more democratic definition of political parties. According to them, a political party is

"a more or less permanent institution to aggregate interests, presenting candidates for elections to control governments and represent such interests in government. It is thus a major vehicle for enhancing participation in governance" (Foley and Edward, 1996, pp. 12).

What makes political parties important to democracy is the consecrated elements of participation and representation. While participation is the extent to which a qualified citizen of a democratic state takes part in activities in the state, representation refers to the processes by which a qualified citizen of a state acts in the interest of the members of the state or a sector of the state. (Agbaje, 2005) Political parties are the pedestals through which citizens participate directly or indirectly in governance and are the medium through which representation in governance. Without political parties, the idea of democracy will be a machete with blunt edges.

One of the reasons behind the formation of political parties is constitutional development. For many countries in British West Africa, political parties were first agitations groups whose members were elites and educated individuals who considered British colonial rule an imposition and saw it imperative as nationalist that they press the colonial masters for constitutional amendments and self-government. (Coleman; 1971) During their agitations, they became full-fledged political parties and later contested elections after independence.

There are different types of political parties, and their peculiarities are identifiable with their membership. A mass political party is a party for all. Its members consist of people from different sections of the political society. The elitist party members are people in the upper class of the society, religious affiliations dictate the religious party membership, the broker's party members are from both the upper and lower class of the society, and lastly, the charismatic parties are formed around persons with rare but enviable talents and its members are people of unique identity and class (Adejumobi; 2007).

However, in contemporary times, political parties are mostly elitist and charismatic, formed by individuals who are passionate and determined to contest, win elections and hold on to power for a long time. These tasks require consistency, financial capability, human resources, and resilience. They also must bridge the economic gap between their affluent members and the poor masses, who will vote them into power by defining their identity through ethnic affiliations. This technique is essential to reach the masses (supposed electorates) at the grass root level and to create a party with a national outlook. However, its success can only be guaranteed if there are strong connections and alliances with the charismatic and feared personality(s) in society who possess the technical abilities to secure the much-needed ethnic lines. Hence, the patronage of godfathers, principal agents, and machinery governments whose corruptive inclination

underlines political parties' political activities in the present dispensation. The sole responsibility of these political parties' agents is to use the resources and power at their disposal to help political parties win elections and retain power at the expense of good governance and proper representation. Using selected Nigeria federal elections as a case study, this paper maintains that godfathers, principal agents, and government machines obstruct objective democratic practices and sums up their activities as electoral corruption. It also contends that all other election vices and milieu subsets under godfathers, principal agents, and machinery government activities.

Why this Approach?

It is not an exaggeration to say that corruption is one of the archenemies of political and sustainable development in developing countries and, indeed, in the African continent. Similarly, it is no longer a subject of argument but a statement of fact that Nigeria is one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Chinua Achebe, a renowned Nigerian novelist, corroborated this when he quipped:

"Anyone who can say that corruption in Nigeria is not yet alarming is either a fool, a crook, or does not live in this country. Keeping an average Nigerian from being corrupt is like keeping an average Nigerian from being corrupt is more difficult than keeping a goat from eating yam" (Achebe, 1988, pp. 16).

Many research studies have corroborated Achebe's assertion by unanimously claiming that corruption is a household norm in Nigeria (Sachs, 2007; Tokunbo, 1992; Keeper, 2010; Enweremadu, 2012; Taylor, 2010).

The devastating effects of corruption on Nigeria's growth are obvious in her history. Several years after independence, Nigeria numbers among developing countries despite the vast number of her natural resources. Stephen Elis, an eminent historian, argued that Nigeria could not have escaped corruption because, at the time of her independence, the Nigerian political elites who won the mandate to rule the country had no independent financial base. Thus, they

had no option but to dip their hands into the state coffers to source funds. (Enweremadu, 2012)

Despite the government's tireless efforts to curb corruption, it has grown from bad to worse, year in and year out. A careful look at the Transparency International reports on Nigeria shows that corruption has become deadlier than in previous years. While it may be illogical to conclude that corruption is the sole cause of Nigeria's development challenges, one can reasonably infer that it plays a vital role in her encumbering political problems.

Nigerian democracy aims at ensuring political stability and promoting fundamental human rights. However, the election processes are compromised by saboteurs who ought to be the custodians of objective acceptable democratic practices. What specifically mars Nigerian elections are irregularities and corruption patterns, often spearheaded by political parties that go outside democratic standards to promote a seemingly oligarchic administration technique. The three stages of election administration: Pre-Election, Election Day, and Post - Elections periods require a credible and transparent party approach to ensure that the electorate's qualities are met in the party's chosen flag bearers. (Alao and Lanre, 2022, p. 29) Unfortunately, party candidates in Nigeria are not, most times, the people's choices; instead, people are coerced through several corruptive patterns during political parties' primary elections to agree to the unpopular choice of candidates.

Similarly, on election days, political parties influence electorates' decisions by creating a hostile election atmosphere which coerces electorates by all possible means to vote for candidates who may be most ineligible. Bribery, vote buying, violence, victimization, and intimidation of voters are highlights of a typical election day in Nigeria.

After elections, litigations and election tribunals overshadow the pursuance of manifestoes and fulfillment of election promises. The newly elected candidates jostle between

party loyalty and state loyalty. One example in Nigerian politics is when a party demands excessive and ridiculous amounts from state governors for campaign funds. Some governors who were sponsored by such corruptive acts have no option but to dip their hands inside the state's coffers to source such funds, even at the state's expense, to secure their political careers (Olarinmoye; 2008).

This paper approaches the subject of corruption and its effect on Nigeria's political development by focusing on the Pre-Election Day, Election Day, and Post-Election Day party activities of the All Progressive Party in Nigeria between 2015 and 2023. I chose the All-Progressive Party of Nigeria as a case study because of its victory over the People's Democratic Party in the federal elections of 2015, thereby ending the 16 years of political monopoly and extravagance of the People's Democratic Party. Also, the party has sustained the electoral mandate in the 2019 elections by winning more governorship and parliamentary seats in the Senate and House of Representatives. However, as we approach the 2023 elections, several crises have arisen within the party, reflecting the flaws and errors associated with its formation, organization, and operation. These flaws expose the corrupt underground activities the party has promoted during its eight years of administration.

My aim however, is to show beyond doubt how parties in Nigeria employ specific corruption patterns to win elections and sustain power outside objective democratic practices using the All Progressive Congress of Nigeria. The importance of this analysis cannot be overemphasized, first, it will retain through its investigative and research precincts the peculiarities of political science as the study of human and his society two, it will play the important role of creating the needed political awareness and education necessary for the re-orientation of the Nigerian masses, Africa and the world at large, lastly, It will bring to limelight

the practical problems associated with democratic processes in a multicultural state and possible ways of allaying them.

CHAPTER 2

Political Parties, Faction and Corruption Trends in Nigeria

The idea that state and democratic institutions play vital roles in the evolution of corruption in contemporary politics has been approached by many contextual works of literature (Olaolu and Agbana 2015; Kadima; Gerber and Moton 1998; Blechinger 2022). Scholars contributed plausibly to this idea identified the malevolent role of political parties in furthering electoral corruption in developing countries. Moreover, the operations of these political parties inertly and overtly hamper sustainable development and significantly account for the democratic stagnancy experienced by these countries even after years of independence. The argument, thus, borders around the connection between political parties and electoral corruption and how their operation obstructs free and fair elections. These leading game players orchestrate and pivot the schemes, the motive behind political parties' involvement in electoral corruption, and its adverse effect on the state's political and democratic development.

Using selected markers that best explain contemporary political party corruption challenges, this chapter critically appraises nascent democracies by making a comparative analysis of their party operations and systems to identify obvious cases of electoral corruption championed by political parties. The markers employed are party organization, party bureaucratization, party primaries, defection and cross-carpeting, party coalition, and party collusion. The Nigerian current party system and political parties' operation were particularly subjected to critical analysis because of the multiculturalist nature of the country, its place as the most prominent political entity in Africa, and its prominent position among corrupt countries of the world. The chapter concludes by maintaining that the people's voice in every democratic

government can only be heard through free and fair elections and maintaining a corrupt-free electoral process where the umpires are political parties.

Party Organization and Party System Institutionalization.

Foley and Edwards (1996) define a political party as a permanent institution to aggregate interests, presenting candidates for elections to control governments and represent such government interests. The Philippines omnibus election code also defines a political party as a group pursuing the same ideology, political ideas, or government platform (Qimpo, 2007). The organization of political parties in a state is essential to the democratic health of the state. A well-organized political party must possess a well-institutionalized and competitive political framework that will enable it to function effectively as a link between the citizenry and the government, select and train candidates for political offices, formulate political agendas and policies, aggregate voters' goals and interest during elections, serves as watchdog through reasonable legislative practices and influence general workings of the government by monitoring government activities to protect citizens democratic right.

In contemporary political theories, the mass political party type is the most embraced because of its unique characteristics of being the melting point between the rich and the poor. However, many political parties in developing countries are not mass political parties but Elitist. For example, Nathan Qimpo (2007), in his breakdown of political party's corrupt activities in the Philippines, argued that the country suffers from an ill-developed political party system because a majority of its political parties are dominated by the country's socio-politico-economic elites whose political ambitions supersede the party ideology. Olarinmoye (2008) also maintained the same stance against contemporary Nigerian political parties when he stated:

"...A key distinguishing Political parties in Nigeria are elite groupings. Their elite nature has meant a reduced mobilization capacity as they are poorly entrenched in Nigerian civil society, with a gap between them and the masses forming the

electorate. To bridge the gap, parties adopted some strategies. The first is the mobilization of ethnic identity through ethnic movements and use of ethnic leadership at the grass root level" (Olarinmoye; 2008. Pp. 3).

The disparity between the party's ideology and the leader's ambition in contemporary political party organizations often results in a steady decrease in membership and the relegation of members' roles to financiers. (Crouch; 2020) The gradual loss of membership forces party leaders into seeking patronage and mergers with political clientele, principal agents, and Godfathers. Hence, it is safe to affirm that the negation of party ideologies often leads to a lack of active membership, adversely affecting funding and forcing political entrepreneurs to seek the help of party saboteurs and political class who force their will on the party and oil the wheel of electoral corruption.

The intra-party conflict that engulfed the All-Progressive Congress (APC) of Nigeria in 2023 shows the errors inherent in the party's organization. As an opposition of the People Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2015 elections, APC is the product of the merger of the defunct Action Congress of Nigeria, Congress for Progressive Change, All Nigerian People's Party, and a section of the All Progressives Grand Alliance. A notable political figure from the Action Congress and a former governor of the most populous state in the country, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, assumed the position of a godfather and, because of his charismatic, political, and financial influence, guarded the party into winning the presidential seat in 2015 and 2018 general elections, assisted the party in winning the gubernatorial election in 2022 states of the federation between 2015 and 2022 and took the majority seat in both federal legislative houses (Omofoye and Agbor; 2023).

However, before the party's primary election in 2022, he announced his intention to contest for the presidency and imposed himself on the party leveraging on the fact that the political feats of the party in the last eight years are to his credit; thus, he deserves no competitor

at the primaries. Therefore, it was no surprise that most of those who had purchased nomination forms for the President's office stepped down for him so he could emerge as the party flagbearer. One of the presidential nominees who refused to step down, Chief Rotimi Amaechi, lamented the electoral corruption that permeates the party's primary election, by saying "God should save the ordinary Nigerian because there is a problem. Those who voted for the APC primary, who are they? The ordinary Nigeria. The small money they got solved their immediate problem" (Majeed, 2022).

After the 2023 elections, the APC lost the majority seats in the legislative houses, losing some seats to opposition parties. The Daily Trust, a leading newspaper in Nigeria, in one of its columns written by Eugene Enahoro, sums up the corporate loopholes that contributed to the failure of the APC as a political party and its failure to build a better Nigeria. He writes:

"The outgoing APC administration had brought the nation to its knees, and the party's internal contradictions are now causing implosion and public ridicule. From the onset, the APC was not conceptualized as a political party based upon overriding ideology; it was formed solely as a vehicle for a sidelined politician to grab power. Consequently, from inception, the party was plagued with internal squabble, which after the election rendered The APC's organizational ineptitude. (Enahoro, 2023).

The pillar of a party that strengthens its organization is its members and adherence to its ideologies. The delineation from foundational ideology leads to the loss of loyal party members and the public parade of electoral corruption by parties.

Political Party Bureaucratization.

The role of bureaucracy in nation-building and solidifying the political process must be balanced. It is, in fact, the dominant institution in the political process. Ojo (2018) contend that the state could only function with the bureaucrats because of their vital role in facilitating quick decisions of the political class, including law and order enforcement in the state. In some developing countries, post-colonialism experience forced emerging politicians to lay

administrative burdens on trained bureaucrats to ensure the smooth running of the government. This power concentrated in the hands of civil servants later became a weapon for the influence of government policies and forging symbiotic relationships with political parties.

Porta (2006) maintained that political parties control bureaucrats in modern political settings. According to him, political elites who hold critical positions in the government use their capacity to control key government offices and build a robust political organization to support the foundations of their political parties in raising funds, rallying support, and enlisting party clientele. For these politicians, controlling key government roles is essential for party-building and the emergence of political control over the policy-making process. Thus, elites who form a political party often, at first, consolidate power within the government before inviting voters to give the party a mass party outlook; after that, they assume the positions of godfathers who make important decisions regarding party operations.

Amundsen (1999) also validated the relationship between bureaucracy and political corruption when he defined bureaucratic corruption as the participation of appointed or elected representatives in diverting public funds for private utilization. He explained that political officeholders sometimes use their political status, office, and influence to siphon public funds into the party's purse. Lodge (1998) also stresses that bureaucratic corruption goes beyond the use of public funds for the party or personal use but includes details of electoral corruption where the ruling party use its influence in government to establish the illicit practice of exchanging material benefits for electoral support.

For instance, in Nigeria, during the regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo (1999–2007), the leadership of the ruling party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), diverted public funds into an offshore account. A special public account named the Petroleum Technology

Development Fund (PTDF), which was to be used to facilitate technological development in Nigeria through training and research was cornered by the leadership of the PDP and used as 'slush' funds by the party to finance the 2003 presidential elections (IDEA, 2007).

Similarly, the arms scandal perpetrated during the reign of the PDP party of Nigeria as the ruling party in 2015 is another instance of party-perpetuated electoral corruption. According to the EFCC investigation report, a total sum of 2.1 billion dollars appropriated for the fight against the Boko Haram insurgency was diverted by the office of the National Security Officer, headed by Colonel Dansuki Sambo for the party presidential campaign in 2015 (EFCC, 2017). The investigations revealed that among the beneficiaries of the arms dealers who receive the proceeds of the loot are former Nigerian leaders, traditional leaders, religious leaders, former heads of state, and, indeed, serving and retired officers, contractors, and very prominent Nigerians.

In other parts of Africa, institutional corruption spearheaded by political elites and civil servants cripples infrastructural development and directly affects the equal distribution of the state's wealth. For example, Transparency International (2015) reports that some Zimbabwean local councilors agreed with housing officials to buy government houses and sell them at exorbitant prices for the citizens. Similarly, in Congo, a World Bank survey in 2010 shows that sixty-five percent of the companies interviewed once paid government officials bribes to secure contracts. Some other 75% attested to giving informal gifts to civil servants in charge of contracts (Transparency International, 2013).

The intra-party bureaucratization, however, works differently. Political parties create secondary portfolios to enhance easy corruptive operations within the party. These portfolios are secret channels through which bribes and cutbacks are tickled back into political parties'

accounts. Elite party members in strategic positions in public institutions also create job vacancies that are monopolized for the party members, which could develop to be valuable illegal connections necessary to pursue the party's primary objectives: winning elections and sustaining political power. Elis (2006) validated these premises when he sighted that the political regime of President Mwai Kibaki of Kenya, who was accused of contract inflation by the anticorruption agency led by John Githongo and the government that ruled up till 2005 in Liberia, accused of stealing about \$100 million annually.

In other cases, the political godfather provides funding for campaigns and elections for the party through illegal private businesses. When his clients succeed at the polls, he receives contract validations and government political portfolios. Should the client refuse to honor the deal, he faces a possible political extinction. Panorama (1992) gave a detailed analysis of corrupt party practices in his examination of Italian party politics; he stated that:

"Each party has referents responsible for controlling the allocation of contracts, maintaining the contacts with the different companies and collecting bribes, or having them collected. They also try to place trusted politicians on the boards of the various bodies, who then negotiate directly with businessmen [thus] veiling what are pre-arranged deals on bribery with formal legal agreements and legitimization". (Panorama, 1992. Pp. 27).

It is pertinent to know that party bureaucratization is one of the characteristics of a state besieged by systematic corruption. However, change in the party's ideology and democratic transition accompanied by a fair electoral process is the applicable measures to curb party leaders' and patrons' excesses.

Party Coalition.

A significant feature of African politics in recent times is pre-electoral alliances and post-election coalitions of political parties. African political scholars have examined this recent trend and written a vast amount of literature regarding factors that trigger its tenability, effects on

national cohesion, and development of the party system. For example, Kadima (2014), in his research on contemporary African party alliances and coalitions, stressed that:

"A study of the number of African countries with pre-electoral alliances and coalition governments (as opposed to single-party governments) in the period up to October 2013 is quite revealing. When one excludes countries in which multiparty parliamentary elections have not been held for a variety of reasons (Eritrea, Sahrawi, Somalia, and Switzerland), pre-election party alliances were formed in the most recent legislative elections in 51% of African states, and 54.9% had some form of the coalition government. Similarly, pre-election alliances were formed for presidential elections in the same period in 22 of 43 countries (51.2%)" (Kadima, 2014. pp.2).

The history of political alliances and coalitions in Africa dates back to the Berlin conference of 1885. The sheer colonialism and post-colonialism experience, the ethnic diversity of the countries, and political disagreement that caused incessant breaks in civilian rule made the post-colonial African leaders choose alliances and coalitions as a plausible solution to socio-political challenges bordering their polities (Oyugi, 2006; Kadima, 2014).

Kadima (2014) highlighted the nature of the political regime, the type of electoral system, the legal framework governing political parties, alliances, and coalitions, the nature of political parties and the party system, ethnolinguistic and regional factors, financial motivation, ideologies, domination of founding leaders over parties, the structural, organizational strength and weakness of political parties as factors that motivate contemporary alliances and the coalition of political parties. However, some intra-party conflicts have shown that some party alliances and government coalitions result in junior parties' extinction or "swallowing" by the bigger parties. For instance, Kadima recounts the Alliance between the NNP party of South Africa and the DP in 1999 to form the Democratic Alliance (DA) ended in the disappearance of the NNP. When the NNP attempted to dissolve the coalition, its members stuck with the governing Democratic Alliance.

In some other countries, party alliances failed after the objective of the alliances had been achieved. The challenge often erupts from the incumbent political position holders' attempt to tighten their grips on the contestable positions by making a second term bid or seeking multiple tickets for seats in the parliaments, thereby preventing flagbearers from other parties that make up the Alliance from fulfilling their political ambitions. Although junior parties would protest and threaten to withdraw their coalition, when they eventually did, their members would have "been swallowed" by the biggest party in the Alliance.

However, this thesis is more concerned with the perpetuation of electoral corruption by allied political parties. I contend that the bigger the parties in the alliance, the more the possibility of corruption. Most African alliances are made to overcome a much more corrupt party; thus, to match the political strength of the opposition party, corrupt patronages, enlistment of clientele, bribery, and illegal financing cannot but be a highlight of elections. For example, the Alliance that formed the APC party of Nigeria was made by elites more interested in overthrowing the ruling party than creating a better government. Sule et al (2017) reported that the APC political party, which won the presidential and majority seats in the parliament, spent about 6,334,115.44 American dollars on elections. For a political party that made alliances with minority parties, the amount spent seems too significant to come from members' levies and donations.

Party Primaries and Challenges of Democratic Consolidation.

Primary or direct primary elections are a voting process by which voters choose their preferred party's candidate for an upcoming general election, local election, or by-election. Smith (2011) noted that party primaries originate from the United States as an idea of the progressive movement, which aims to make people's choices necessary in the nomination of party candidates and to reduce the imposition of candidates on the people. In contemporary Democratic Party

politics, primary elections are held for the political position with a fixed office time, such as the President, Governors, and legislative seats. The open and closed primaries are the two main types of primary elections. A primary is considered open if participants do not need to declare party affiliation as a prerequisite to participating in a primary election. It is closed if participation is limited to voters who declare their affiliation to the party a specified period before the election (Gerber and Morton, 1998).

In most democratic countries, political parties embrace the closed primary election because of its simplicity and the opportunity it affords voters to enjoy the luxury of decisiveness before making their preferred choices. Nonetheless, researchers have shown that the results of primary elections in developing countries do not sometimes show the voters' clear choices. Dimeji (2018) argued that godfathers and the imposition of an unpopular candidate in political parties pose severe challenges to party politics and primary elections.

In the case of the Nigerian PDP party's loss of the presidential seat to APC in 2015, many observers were confident that the imposition of Yar'adua and Jonathan in the 2007 and 2015 primaries against the wishes of the party members led to its loss in 2015 elections. However, within four years, the next ruling party took the baton of electoral corruption in primaries, with several cases of delegates voted being bought by aspiring candidates. APC, like the PDP, held parallel primaries in the Ogun state on October 1st, 2018. The APC state Chairman of the party conducted a governorship primary where the candidate of the incumbent Governor, Amosun, was declared the winner. Meanwhile, the Muhammed Ndabawa-led electoral committee sent to Ogun State by the National Working Committee (NWC) of the All Progressives Congress (APC) declared Prince Dapo Abiodun winner of the direct governorship primary of Ogun APC for the 2019 election (Alao and Lanre, 2022. Pp. 32).

Today, Nigeria's political culture is embellished with electoral corruption. Its influence on Nigeria's democracy is inherent in its inability to conduct a free and fair election. The alarming numbers of election petitions after elections in Nigeria shows clearly the incapability and incredibility of the country's electoral umpires. The country's first lady lamented the electoral corruption level in the APC primaries of 2018. She avers thus:

"It is disheartening to note that some aspirants used their hard-earned money to purchase nomination forms, got screened, cleared, and campaigned vigorously, yet found their names omitted on Election Day. These forms were bought at exorbitant prices, All Progressives Congress being a party whose cardinal principle is change and headed by a comrade/activist whose primary concern is for the commoner, yet, such impunity could take place under his watch. Given this development, one will not hesitate to DISSOCIATE from such unfairness, be neutral and speak for the voiceless. It is essential for the populace to rise against impunity and for voters to demand that aspirants be committed to providing basic amenities (Chikezie, 2019).

However, electoral corruption in the primary election can be ameliorated if parties adopt a resemblance or electoral practices identifiable with other developed democracies worldwide. Adopting electronic voting for primaries and engaging external umpires as electoral officials may be a good step toward halting the electoral corruption in primaries.

Cross-Carpeting and Party Defections.

According to Opadare and Agbana (2015), political defection or party switching occurs when elected party representatives within a legislature, or the executive arm embrace a different political or policy perspective incompatible with the party he/she/she/she represents. Cross-carpeting, like defection, is the crossing over from one party to another of a politician of whatever designation (ODLD; 2000). In many instances, the politician defects because of perceived injustice or discontent about a party policy, power tussle, personality clash, divergent views on the operations of a political party philosophy, crisis or division within a given party, disagreement on a party position on an issue, a realization of one's political ambition, and party's

leaders reneging on agreed issues of the political party. Nonetheless, defection is a common phenomenon in both developed and undeveloped countries, and it may be used to measure the solidity of a state's democratic practice as well as the ideological stance of a political party.

However, in developing countries, a constitutional provision states specific conditions that can necessitate defections and the guidelines it should follow. For instance, Section 68(1) (g) of the Nigerian constitution states:

"A member of the Senate or the House of Representatives shall vacate his seat in the House of which he is a member if he is a person whose election to the House was sponsored by a political party. He becomes a member of another political party before the expiration of the period for which that House was elected:

Provided that his membership of the latter political party is not a result of a division in the political party of which he was previously a member or of a merger of two or more political parties or factions by one of which he was previously sponsored" (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; 1999).

In the 2015 general elections, most PDP lawmakers cross-carpeted into APC after its mergers with ACN, ANPP, APGA, and CPC. These lawmakers were able to retain their seats in the legislative houses and helped the APC win the presidential and gubernatorial elections in some states. The recent trend in which a politician defects between several political parties in a bid to emerge as the party's presidential candidate is politically condemnable.

In 2020, about seven lawmakers defected from different opposition parties upon which they were elected to the ruling APC, alleging their parties of leadership crisis and fractionalization. The minority leader of the House urged the speaker of the House of Representatives to declare their seats vacant according to the provisions of the constitution. As members of the APC, the speakers of the Senate and House of Representatives waved their claims aside and retained their seats in the houses. By 2021, the number of legislators in APC has increased tremendously in both the upper and the lower legislative houses, having added 14 more lawmakers defecting from the PDP. However, in 2022, thirteen members of the APC

senators defected to various opposition parties alleging their state governors of cheating them of their return tickets during primaries (Okowe, February 1st, 2022).

In the just concluded 2023 elections in Nigeria, the Labor Party (LP) presidential candidate was a former serving governor of the People Democratic Party. He decamped amidst ethnic grievances that the presidency was zoned to the northern part of the country when it was the east's turn to take the presidential seat. Within a few months of joining the labor party, he negotiated his way to winning the presidential ticket and became the party's presidential candidate. The presidential candidate of the PDP, Mr. Atiku Abubakar, has an infamous reputation for defecting between parties for tickets. He has contested as the presidential candidate in four (4) different general elections shuttling between ACN and PDP (Opadare and Agbana, 2015).

Nonetheless, the analysis above established two reasons behind defections in Nigeria. First, the fear and anxiety of losing a current political position force politicians to defect when the general election looms to be able to participate in party primaries. Secondly, the injustice associated with the party's primaries and the determination to prove their worth and charisma to their former party makes politicians defects. Indiscriminate defections, however, strengthen electoral corruption by increasing the numbers of party godfathers and party clientele. In addition, party leaders see a defecting politician as a valuable tool for illegal campaign funding. Thus, party leaders take advantage of the political insecurity and desperation of the decamping politician forcing him into engaging in various corruption vices such as vote buying, bribery of party leaders, voters, and delegates, as well as unfavorable negotiations with clientele and godfathers to emerge as winners in party primaries.

The unscrupulous defection phenomenon in Nigeria contrasts with established democratic principles obtainable in developed countries. For example, in the United States of America, it is considered a democratic apostasy for a parliamentarian to switch alternatively between the Republican and the Democratic parties. Thus, if Nigeria must experience political and democratic development, her politician and political parties must be ideologically consistent. Frequent change in party ideologies forces politicians to change parties at will and indirectly affects voters' decision on the choice of candidates as they are forced to make a long-term decision within a short while. Also, voters follow the examples of their leaders. Therefore, a defecting politician might lose his voters to other candidates if he defects between too many parties within a short time.

Party Collusion: Politics of Merger of Political Parties

In a multiparty democratic state, political parties are expected to emerge as credible oppositions to enhance democratic accountability and sustain political development. However, this expectation may only be achieved if political parties collude rather than compete, thereby eradicating healthy rivalry between parties. Gotlieb (2015) argued that although the most commonly considered threat to the opposition is when a party enjoys a monopoly on a single power, an imbalance of competition may occur even in a multiparty state. Such elite collusions ensure that political parties and elites keep their incumbent positions by sharing power and goods within the political elites and political parties.

The fact that competition is periodic in a democratic system of government allows party collusion to thrive in the legislative and the executive arm of government. Thus, the possibility of collusion is more likely when all political parties each win a seat(s) in the legislative houses. However, in a case where some of the political parties do not win a seat, the tendency of

collusion is less likely, especially when the losing party plays the role of a watchdog and threatens to expose corrupt advances.

Gotlieb (2015) highlights three democratic settings where party collusion thrives; first, in a state where all available political parties can be electively represented in an election. Secondly, in a state where government policies are targeted towards fighting corruption and sustaining equitable developments, and lastly, in a state where voters need to be more politically educated and, as such, do not actively participate in periodic elections. African nascent democracy perfectly fits into the last two conditions. Thus, it is unsurprising that party collusion has crept into its politics.

Political party collusion as a form of electoral corruption can be ameliorated in an atmosphere where voters are organized, and a credible electoral commission is in place. Unfortunately, in most developing African countries, such qualities take time to come by. For instance, in the just concluded Nigerian 2023 elections, the Nigerian President and the Central Bank President introduced stringent monetary policies to reduce vote buying and to help the people make independent choices without being externally coerced. These policies include the redesign of naira notes and the placing of heavy limitations on electronic money transfers. However, weeks after the regulations had been passed, the Nigerian legislative houses summoned the President of the Central Bank, questioned his actions, and demanded immediate withdrawal of the financial regulations. When he refused their demand, the APC Governors marched to the President, alleging him of being insensitive and disloyal to his party's cause. Throughout the brouhaha between the Presidency, CBN, Governors, and Lawmakers, both legislative houses unanimously unite against the financial regulations despite the differences between the parties the lawmakers represent. Finally, after weeks of constitutional breaches, the

Supreme Court was coerced to make a judgment that overrides the Nigerian President's veto orders, thereby returning once again the status quo of bribery and malpractices into the Nigerian 2023 General elections.

A similar political imbalance was recorded in the democratic history of Mali between 2002 and 2007. The popularly elected President of Mali in the wake of her second republic, Amadou Toumani Toure, won as an independent candidate, having run without a party. The strategy employed to ensure his emergency is what Baudaise and Chauzal described as the "reciprocation of elites." (Kadima, 2014, p. 250) Thus, his regime had no credible opposition; instead, oppositions are integrated by the President and his party alliances into a collusive government whereby all parties have access to state resources and can maintain their corrupt patronages.

Finally, from the previous analysis and the Nigeria and Mali illustration depicted in previous paragraphs, it is logical to infer that party collusion stands in the way of good governance and accountability. Therefore, the way forward will be equipping and institutionalizing an independent electoral commission that will equip voters with the political sensitization necessary to develop electoral democracy in developing democratic countries.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, the principles of democracy are woven around the people and their active participation in government. Thus, in a democratic political setting, the function of the political party is to serve as the political cum social link between the government and the people. To build, ensure and sustain democratic transitions, anticorruption measures, and strategies must be targeted toward the institution of corruption-free electoral practices. Such a strategy should include campaign finance regulation, measures against corruption in election campaigns, checking party activities in parliament, maintaining a consistent party ideology, and controlling

public assets and institutions. When elections are free of corrupt inclinations, the people's government, as defined by democratic tenets, can be consolidated and established.

CHAPTER 3

The All-Progressive Congress: Behavioral Patterns in South-western and South-southern Nigeria politics.

The emergence of the All Progressive Congress (APC) in Nigeria politics ten years ago was necessitated by the dire need for a reliable, participatory, and less corrupt government in Nigeria. As explicated in the previous chapters of this study, The APC of Nigeria is a coalition of four political parties formed to overthrow, through an election, the political "oligarchy" of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Before the alliances that formed the APC, the PDP ruled Nigeria for three consecutive terms, totaling 14 years (1999 – 2015). The corruption perception index, taken by Transparency International, shows the trajectory and extent of corruption during the PDP regime. For instance, in 2001, 2002, and 2003, Transparency International's corruption perception index ranked Nigeria the second most corrupt country in the world. In 2006, Nigeria ranked 21st; in 2009, it emerged 121st and 130th position out of 180 countries surveyed. By 2011 and 2012, corruption in Nigeria has worsened. Nigeria ranked 135th out of 178th surveyed countries, scoring 27% out of a possible 100 (Akor, 2014).

However, recent happenings and data have shown that the APC government has not fared better. According to the Transparency International reports released in 2021, Nigeria dropped five places in the corruption perception index, scoring 24 out of 100 and ranked 154 among 180 countries surveyed. This report came after a certain Pandora paper listed prominent Nigerian politicians and leaders among corrupt leaders of the world who stashed huge wealth abroad in cash and foreign investments (T.I, 2021).

Thus, this chapter will critically examine the APC party and how its government has ridiculed Nigerian democracy by perpetuating a high level of corruption, perhaps more democratically implicating than the stigmatized PDP. This paper focuses on APC because of its

significant political presence, including holding the presidential seat and seats in the Senate and House of Representatives. This level of political power and influence makes it particularly relevant to examine how corruption within the APC party could impact Nigerian democracy. As a ruling party, the actions and behaviors of the APC can have far-reaching consequences for governance, public trust, and the overall democratic process in Nigeria. To make this analysis more intriguing, peculiar events that show corruptive intentions will be examined, and our research's tentacles will only spread across four Geopolitical zones in Nigeria. This paper will examine, specifically, among others, corruptive inclinations that illustrate vote buying, godfatherism, clientelism, rigging, and bribery in these political zones and their implications on Nigerian elections. Although facts and figures are drawn from peculiar events in previous general elections, the research relied solely on a secondary data collection and analysis source, including newspaper columns, political journals, and relevant texts.

Practices and Perils of Money Politics and Vote Buying

The discourse on money politics and the challenge it poses to nascent democracy is unavoidable in discussions that surround the electoral process in that periodic election defines democracy and also underlines the expensive demands of its practice. However, when money becomes more valuable than the will of the people, the essence of democracy is threatened. Politicians and political parties find it necessary to spend a considerable amount of human and financial capital on campaigns and other expenditures to captivate the people's trust and win their votes in elections. In developing countries with large land masses and diverse populations like Nigeria, it is challenging for a political party to contest and win an election without cash and human influence. While these influences may be legal or illegal, electoral victories seem important to the parties and politicians, even if it requires breaking the bank to achieve their goals.

Sule and Tal (2018) argue that the causes of money politics in Nigeria's democracy are:

- the desperation of aspiring politicians to win an election at all costs,
- unhealthy competition between elites,
- the ambition of godfathers to secure victory for wealth accumulation,
- low level of political education and the Nigerian political culture that prefers money over competence.

Its impact on Nigeria's democracy is evident through vote buying and godfatherism, which are regular features of Nigeria's periodic elections. The key players are politicians, political parties, voters, and electoral officials whose collective efforts undermine the conduct of a credible electoral process in Nigeria. Nonetheless, this section will only discuss vote buying extensively, its pervasiveness in Nigeria, and All Progressive Party's roles in widening its influence in Nigeria politics.

The numbers of literature written on vote buying and its effect on contemporary democracy justifies its growing presence in developing countries. Scholars have attempted to define vote buying in the context of the parties involved, how it works, and its effects on the electoral process. Bryant (2005, p.32-35) defined vote – buying as exchanging private materials for political support or using money and direct benefit to influence voters. Magaji and Musa (2022, p.94) also defined vote – buying as any form of financial, material, or promissory inducement or reward by a candidate, political party, agent, or supporter to influence a voter to cast his or her vote or even abstain from doing so in order to enhance the chances of a particular contestant to win an election. Fox (1994) construed vote buying as an exchange between material benefit and political support. Nwagwu et al. (2022, p.2) described vote buying as the

transactional process through which voters offer their votes for sale and political parties, public office aspirants or their agents bargain to buy the votes from the voters. Deductively, vote - buying involves two willing parties, the giver and the recipients, who seek to benefit from each other mutually. Nonetheless, Schaffer (2005, Pp. 23) stressed that the giver seems to accrue more benefit from the transaction than the recipient because of the long-term profit the buyer gains from the business. Nevertheless, the sole objective of vote buying is to influence voters' voting behavior, achieved either by coercion or persuasion.

Some scholars have also presented arguments to justify the reasons for the prevalence of vote buying in nascent democracies. Vote buying prevails mostly in states where party ideologies need to be adhered to, and government policies need to be more people-oriented, and public officeholders need to fulfill campaign promises. Onapajo et al. (2015) presented three arguments that justify the prevalence of vote buying in elections. First is the socio-economic factor; poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy influence voters' decision to create a thriving market for vote buying. Second, voting methods used in some states encourage vote buying, and lastly, party ideologies, competition among political parties, and party organizations favor vote buying. However, in the Nigerian state, vote buying is encouraged by the conglomeration of the three arguments posited above and, more particularly, by the sheer belief of the political elites that winning the election is a do-or-die affair. Onwudiwe and Berwind-Dart corroborated this when they contend that:

"While Africa's largest democracy prepares for the polls, serious questions remain about Nigeria's capacity and political will to conduct free, fair, and peaceful elections. Although, since independence in 1960, violence and myriad irregularities have persistently marred the process of electing the country's leaders, Nigerian politicians have become habituated to fraud, corruption, intimidation, and violence, as if they consider these the necessary weapons of political winners". (Onwudiwe and Berwind; 2010, Pp. 1).

However, it is not only in Nigeria that vote buying as election malpractice obstructs the course of democracy and encourages terrible governance; it is a global political plague that is presently ravaging many democratic countries. Canare et al. (2018) carried out empirical research on vote buying. He discovered that the Philippines voters see the election period as an opportunity to enrich their pockets. Money, free medical care, scholarships, and food, among many other material goods, are offered to voters by aspirants to secure their votes. Likewise, in India, the votes of the constituency in the southern state of Tamil Nadu were declared invalid in the general election of 2019 because about 100 rupees meant for vote buying was discovered and seized by the state police. (Ovwasa, 2013; Baidoo et al., 2018; Onuoha & Ojo, 2018; Romero & Regalado, 2019). In Africa, the prevalence of vote buying is conspicuous by the frequent political instability accompanying its election. Kramon (2009) stressed that vote – buying in Kenya is almost as evident as in other democratic countries. He described it as a commonplace practice in Kenya's political campaign.

Vote buying crept into Nigeria's electoral process at her last transition from military rule to civilian government in 1999. Since then, it has characterized her party primaries and election, hindering fair democratic transition and acceptable democratic practice. It has evolved into one of the most popularly perpetuated electoral malpractices used to lure voters into voting for unpopular candidates. The rapid spread of vote buying in Nigeria can be attributed to several reasons. First is the inability and incapacity of the Independent National Electoral Commission (as a regulatory agency) to sanction offenders who broke the electoral regulations. Section 124 of the Electoral Act (2010) slammed a fine of about \$715.00 (USD) or 12 months imprisonment on conviction for anyone caught paying money to any other person for bribery at an election, receiving money or gift for voting, or persuading them to refrain from voting at any election.

Despite this electoral law, the electoral commission has consistently overlooked the culpable activities of the elite political class who have legalized vote – buying in the country. On the eve of the 2023 Presidential and National Assembly election, The EFCC intercepted a Nigerian politician armed with around \$71,000.00 (USD) allegedly stashed to be used for vote buying in Lagos.

Olaniyan and Babalola (2017) assert that the yearning of voters for free and fair elections in Nigeria has to remain unachieved because of the vulnerable voters who see the election period as a time of "harvest" instead of a period to measure the stewardship of political office holders through rational political decision at the polls. Hence, it is easy to present an incompetent aspirant to an overwhelming population of vulnerable voters (pensioners, jobless aged persons, or physically challenged individuals). The vulnerability of voters is expressed in the possibility of the poverty-stricken voters to find cash or gifts more appealing than their votes. Desposato (2007) stressed this when he quipped, "Unless a voter has an alternative source of income and simply did not need the incentive, it is unlikely that poor voters will, therefore, be able to resist vote buying incentives". (Pp.4)

The major strategies for vote buying in Nigeria, as highlighted by Magaji and Musa (2022; Pp. 96) include offering monetary payment in exchange for cash for votes, "Buy turnout," that is, to offer cash payments to persuade supporters to cast their votes or encourage opposition voters to stay home. In addition to cash, parties and aspirants to political offices distribute a wide range of other goods, such as food, clothing, and services, on Election Day. All these strategies were experimented with and used by the All Progressive Party of Nigeria during the 2019 general elections. Even though the 2015 general election was perceived widely as a stand-out election in Nigeria's democratic history for many reasons, it was not without its fraught. For the

first time in Nigeria's history, a winner emerged from the opposition party and the ruling party accepted the outcome of the election. Owete (2014) asserts however, that vote buying was glaringly evident during the intra-political parties' candidates' nomination process in the conventions, and specifically more evident during the 3-day presidential primary of the APC in Lagos before 2015 general elections. According to Owete, the total number of attendees at the convention was 7,214 delegates, and it was alleged that each participant received about US \$5,000 from the two main contestants. The delegates got \$2,000 each from the Atiku Abubakar group and another \$3,000 each from the Muhammadu Buhari group. Therefore, about \$36,070,000 was spent solely on vote-buying, excluding secondary expenses. The highest bidder emerged as the winner.

In the 2019 general elections, vote buying was more sophisticated and massive. Outright cases of election fraud, misconduct, violence, and counter-accusations of riggings marred the election. Candidates were believed to have rallied votes on ethnic and religious considerations, party affiliations rather than competence, and the overall performance of the ruling party. Sanni (2019) studied the prevalence of vote – buying and the perception that voters sold their votes in Nigeria during the 2019 general elections. The research showed that vote – buying is more prevalent in South-South Nigeria than in other geopolitical zones. According to the study, South-South has a 24% vote buying prevalence and 76% perception of vote buying, North-Central 21% prevalence and 64% vote buying, South-East 17% Prevalence and 73% vote buying, Southwest 19% vote buying prevalence and 71% vote buying, North East 18% vote buying prevalence and 52% vote buying and Northwest 23% vote buying prevalence and 53% vote buying respectively. Vote buying occurs at multiple stages of the electoral timeline; voters' registration, candidates' nomination period, intraparty primaries, state parties' conventions, and parties' national

conventions; national assembly elections of key functionaries of the two chambers; and vote buying is predominantly displayed openly at polling units and collation centers during general elections at the local, state, and national stages. Thus, it is not astonishing that the election ended in chaos and outright ridiculously at the expense of the international reputation of the largest political society in Africa.

The APC-led government also championed the money politics encapsulating the 2019 general election. All over the six geopolitical zones, APC party agents were involved in massive vote transactions, which accounts for the party's flawless victory in the election. Therefore, one could affirm that the voters in 2019 had no option but to succumb to the will of the fair-election saboteurs. Moreover, before the election, the APC governors prioritized infrastructural development over servicing the state labor force. Thus, artificial scarcity of money, untold hardship, and a high poverty rate prepared the grounds for vote-buying. For example, in most states governed by the APC (excluding Lagos and Oyo states), workers are owed several months' salaries. The European Union Election Observation Mission in Nigeria also reported that the 2019 election registered the lowest voter turnout (34.8%) and the highest vote buying incidence in the history of elections in Nigeria. The report stressed that the unfavorable economic policies of the government, minimal inflow of foreign investments, and extinction of domestic manufacturing industries impoverish poor citizens and encourage vote-buying.

Indeed, vote-buying prevailed predominantly before and during the 2019 election because of the prevailing hardship. For example, in Lagos, southwest Nigeria, on February 22, 2019, two bullion vans were driven into the residence of The National Leader of APC, Bola Tinubu; it was from this location that money was being recklessly given to party agents for vote trading. The picture of the bullion vans and crowd of prospective vote-sellers went viral on social

media. However, neither the security agents, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices, and other related offenses Commission (ICPC) nor the INEC (the regulatory agency) has investigated the matter to date.

Nonetheless, the menace of vote buying in Nigeria can be overcome if relevant stakeholders (National Orientation Agency, INEC, Civil Society Organizations, the media, and social organizations) rise to the responsibility of sensitizing voters on the importance of their votes to the nation's development and the possible consequences of voting in an incompetent leader. It will equip voters with the mindset needed to wade off voting commercialists and make unbiased voting decisions (Baidoo et al., 2018; Sarkariyau et al., 2015). Also, INEC must review its electoral regulations to protect the secret ballot system, as its importance in sustaining a free and fair electoral process must be balanced. Furthermore, situations whereby party agents and voters communicate while a voter is in the voting cubicle, should be discouraged.

In conclusion, respect for the rule of law will ensure that elections regulations are enforced and binding on all citizens of Nigeria. Hence, civil society organizations must wake up to the clarion call of the public by genuinely demanding transparency and accountability from the elections umpire to ensure that every civil offender is punished according to the law and that elections reflects the actual choice of the people.

Rigging and Bribery

Election rigging is a form of election malpractice where undue authority uses specialized procedures to control and manipulate election results in an undefined way to protect their specific interest against others (Gadau et.al 2022; p. 101). Agbu (2016) construed election rigging as an aspect of election malpractices involving planned criminal activities such as writing and falsifying results, snatching ballot boxes (with arms), voter suppression, and intimidation. On the other hand, Nwabueze et.al (2003) defined "election rigging" as electoral malpractices

which are palpable illegalities committed with a corrupt, fraudulent, or sinister intention to influence an election in favor of a candidate(s) by means such as illegal voting, bribery, treating and undue influence, intimidation and other acts of coercion exerted on voters, falsifications of results, a fraudulent announcement of a losing candidate as the winner.

In Nigeria, electoral rigging constitutes one of the most serious challenges facing democratic consolidation. In almost all Nigerian elections since independence, different rigging tactics have been pervasively used. Judging from its consistent appearance in Nigerian elections, particularly in the fourth republic, it has become a legitimate way of winning elections. Political parties and the electoral umpire, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) many a time cooperate to silence the voice of the electorates, which are audibly thumb printed on the ballot papers through the falsification of results, illegal voting, exchange of ballot boxes, presentation of pre-thumbed ballot papers to mention a few out of many methods through which both institutions deny the public of their rights. (Nwabueze; 2003)

Rigging and bribery are mutually unexclusive electoral vices. It is impossible to conceive electoral rigging without bribery. Adigun described bribery as an offshoot of rigging. In his analysis, he differentiated between two popular dimensions of election rigging in Nigeria; violent and non-violent rigging. He describes bribery as a dimension of non-violent rigging capable of altering the smooth democratic process in Nigeria. Vote buying is the most prevalent form of bribery identifiable with the contemporary Nigerian democratic process. What particularly underlines its peculiarity is the harmless nature through which it is perpetuated. While other forms of bribery are perpetuated pre and post-election, vote – buying is part and parcel of the voting exercise, a business between the voters and political parties that can be transacted right before the eye of the law.

Democracy thrives where there is healthy competition between political parties and candidates. Unfortunately, the Nigerian democratic experience has been clouded by situations whereby the ruling party exerts tremendous influence over the electoral body. Thus, the capacity of the ruling party's candidate to win is motivated by the employment of state mechanisms to assert coercive influence over the electoral body to compromise healthy competition. An electoral contest in which election results are not determined by the vote lawfully cast by contestants but determined by fraudulent manipulations is a mockery of contemporary democracy.

One of the threats electoral rigging and bribery pose to Nigeria's electoral system delays the hope of democratic consolidation. Majekodunmi and Adejuwon (2012) argued that people lose confidence in participating in elections when malpractice becomes a norm. One event that justifies this is the sharp difference between the number of registered voters and voter who turned out on the Election Day. Ojetunde (2019) noted that the 2019 election recorded only a 35% voter turnout, the lowest ever recorded in Nigeria's history as of 2019. In the just concluded 2023 elections, voter turnout was lower than in 2019's, with a percentage of 26.71%. Public disenfranchisement and mistrust in the electoral process caused a sharp decline in the number of voters who voted during presidential and gubernatorial elections. While both election dates were scheduled to hold on different dates with two weeks inter, the presidential election came first, and the state election was later postponed by two weeks due to the technical incompetency of the electoral body. The voters faced many challenges grossly relating to the incapability of INEC to conduct free and fair elections. Electoral rigging and bribery undermine the principle of democracy, which empowers the people to weigh through elections the ability of a government to promote and secure the welfare of its people. Accountability and responsibility qualify a

government for re-election and successive governance. However, if, through rigging and bribery, a government remains in power even while it loots the nation's wealth and cripples its economy, the relevance of the election then becomes questionable. It is crucial in a democratic state that the governed define the purpose of a government and not vice versa; otherwise, the government will be insensitive to the people's burdens.

The APC government has mainly been incited for electoral malpractices and democratic inadequacies in Nigeria elections. The party's undemocratic policy that frowns at healthy political rivalry and promotes imposition of candidates has been made evident by the numbers of electoral fraud and violence perpetuated during its reign. For instance, in Imo state, South East Nigeria, the state presiding officer in the 2019 general elections confessed on a live broadcast that he was reeling the election result under duress. Similarly, in the same 2019 General Elections, in Kogi, Kogi APC thugs murdered an SDP youth leader, and his mother was brutally assaulted for reporting the case to the Police. In the off-cycle elections conducted in Osun state and Ekiti State in 2018, the APC government was accused of "see and buy" vote buying, which implies that the voters showed party agents their ballot papers to confirm they voted for the party before they were paid. In other cases, the ballot paper was snapped using smartphones to prove voters' loyalty to the bargain. (This day Newspaper; 2019 April 2) Again, several election abnormalities were recorded in the just concluded 2023 general elections, of which many of the misdemeanors were traced to the ruling parties' political thugs. Lagos, the commercial capital of Nigeria and the home of the ruling party's presidential candidate, witnessed several cases of ballot box snatching, post-election violence, cases of vote-buying, voter intimidation, unpunctual electoral officers, and cases of electoral fraud, mostly to the credit of the ruling All Progressive Congress. Also, its connivance with the electoral body to rig elections is evident by the number

of schematic manipulations made to impose its presidential candidate on the masses (Vanguard Newspaper; 2023 April 2, ; Premium Times; March 11; 2023). Despite convincing evidence presented by the opposition parties to show that the 2023 elections in some states are not credible, the electoral body arrogantly insists that electoral malpractice cases should be contested in court after the winner has been declared. This brings us to Nigeria's new sophisticated dimension of electoral fraud: manipulating the judicial process to produce false winners.

According to Onapajo and Uzodike (2014), the structures and nature of the Judicial System in Nigeria promote electoral fraud. Elections that are not legitimately won at the polls may be won in the courts with the help of some manipulations of the judicial process. Candidates bribe judges of the election tribunals, and the candidate with the higher amount of bargain often emerges as the tribunal's winner. Justice Kayode Eso, one of the respected legal luminaries in Nigeria, affirmed the corruptive cooperation between the election tribunal and candidates. He lamented that Nigeria is now experiencing the emergence of "billionaire election tribunal judges" (The Punch September 2012). To corroborate this, Adekanbi (2012) asserts that:

“In Nigeria (electoral) politics now, the wisdom is, Save your time campaigning. Do not waste your money printing billboards, handbills, or posters. Don't waste your time throwing away money for mobilization. Just keep your money in the bank and call a very good lawyer and let him tell you the loopholes in the Constitution or the Electoral Act. Memorize the loopholes and give all the money you have saved to a judge. Tell him: I have gotten all the loopholes, they (the opponents) have flouted it and you shall win at the end of the day” (Adekanbi 2014; pp. 137).

The outrageous number of mandates stolen and retrieved in favor of the APC between 2015 and 2023 at the election tribunals and the number of election petitions awaiting hearing justifies the existence of secret bribery connivance between the ruling APC party and the election tribunals. For instance, in the off-cycle 2022 governorship election of Osun State, the opposition party candidate, PDP, was declared the election winner, defeating the incumbent candidate of the

APC, Governor Gboyega Oyetola, by a margin of about 18,000 votes. However, after Senator Isiaka Adeleke had been sworn in, Governor Oyetola of the APC petitioned the election tribunal to withdraw the mandate of Senator Isiaka Adeleke, alleging that the election was marred with over-voting mainly in respect of the PDP and, at such the election should be re-run. Delivering the majority judgment, Justice Tetsea Kume nullified the Independent National Electoral Commission verdict that declared Senator Isiaka Adeleke as the winner of the Osun State 2022 elections and the candidate of the APC, Governor Oyetola as the winner of the Governorship election.

Finally, the stricter and swifter the punishment for the perpetrator of rigging and bribery in elections, the better the chances of rescuing Nigeria from the clutch of electoral corruption. Introducing capital punishment into electoral regulations will discourage young Nigerians from participating in acts that steer electoral violence and encourage more participation in the voting exercise. Similarly, Political parties that violate the electoral process should be deregistered and their leaders suspended from politics for a fixed time; however, the duration for the suspension may be subject to the severity of the electoral malpractice perpetuated. If these measures are taken, Nigerian electorates may begin to dream in no distant time of a free and fair electoral process where the majority's will is respected and established in government.

Party Clientelism

The word "clientelism" originates from the Latin word "cluere," which means "to listen" or "to obey." (Muno; 2010, 16). The "clientele" in Ancient Rome were persons or groups of persons who hired a lawyer called the "patronous" whom they trusted and entrusted to speak for them in public. It is necessary that the patronous be a member of the aristocratic class and have influence among the elites. In return, the clienteles pledge their support to the patronous by serving him in diverse ways. (Weber 2005; p. 1023). This description of the relationship between

the clienteles and patronous in ancient Rome is almost identical to the practice of clientelism in contemporary politics.

Scholars have agreed that there is no objective definition of clientelism because of the variation of its practice in democratic countries. Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2002; p.3) argued that clientelism shares definitive similarities and political practices with terms such as patronage, patrimonialism, and neopatrimonialism. In Mexico, it is known as caciques; in Latin America, it is called caudillismo; in the Philippines, it is synonymous with bossism. Hicken (2011) and Brinkerhoff et al. (2002) claimed that clientelistic political relationships are always personal, enduring, reciprocal, voluntary, dyadic, contingent, and hierarchical. According to James Scott, clientelism is when an individual of higher socio-economic status, called a "patron" uses his influence and resources to provide protection or benefits (or both) for a person of lower status, called a "client," who in return offers general support and assistance including personal services to the patron (Scott, 1972, p. 92). Stokes, however, defined political clientelism differently. He construed it as "the proffering of material goods in return for electoral support where the criterion of distribution that the patron uses is simply: Did you (will you) support me? (Stokes; 2013, p. 605).

The peculiarity of Stoke's definition (stated above) is inherent in the specification of one of the main characteristics of clientelism; hierarchy. The patron is often more politically experienced, influential, and wealthy than the client. Although Hicken (2011) maintained that it is best described as "instrumental friendship," and Benschit and Aspinall (2020) maintained that it is just a practice of exchange of material benefit and favor such as money, jobs, public services, government contracts for electoral supports such as votes, campaign funding and other forms of campaign support (pp.4). Nonetheless, critical research has shown that the clients have

much more to lose should the relationship become sour. Hilgers (2011) noted this when he avers that "clientelistic political relationships are always between two people of unequal status who have relatively regular personal interactions."

In Nigeria Politics, clientelism is closely associated with godfatherism. Both terms are almost inseparable. The patron-client relationship works precisely like the godfather (patron), who finances the political aspirations of his godson (client) in exchange for political support and rights. Tignor (1993) believes that Nigerian political history paved the way for patronage in its democracy. Clientelistic politics in Nigeria is managed and constructed by political entrepreneurs who are ex-military Head of state, former military officers, and civilian comprador business class who sponsors aspiring politicians for government positions to widen their political influence, their business and enrich their pockets. These political godfathers are party financiers and "cartels" who decide the direction of Nigeria's political and economic affairs. Tignor (1993) described their role as "electoral machines" that install politicians into high public and state public offices by subverting the electorate's election choices.

The reality of clientelism in Nigeria's political and economic development is evident in Nigeria's electoral processes. Disempowerment of the legal instruments, discouragement of meritocracy in public service, preference of money politics over good governance, poor infrastructural development, unequal distribution of public goods, insecurity, political instability, favoritism, and Nepotism pertinent to know that clientelism in Nigeria politics is orchestrated through political parties. Without the concept of party politics and godfatherism, the concept and practice of clientelism in Nigerian politics will be difficult to construct. The next section of this chapter harmonizes the intricacies of the three terms.

Godfatherism and Party Financing.

The word "godfather" exhumes different folktales and relates different meanings to different people. In Catholicism, A godfather is a model, an example to young converts just finding their foot in Christianity. In France, a "godfather" is someone who makes an important decision as regards the economy. It can also be an individual who fights for social justice, especially for people experiencing poverty. In Italy, a godfather uses his influence and charisma to defend his adopted sons, protecting them when they breach the law or commit crimes (Newsweek, December 23, 2004; pp. 56). However, the political Godfather is the most revered and referenced in contemporary political thought. Political godfatherism manifests in both developed and developing countries. It took its root in American political science literature, where it is referred to as a "Party Machine." (Ibrahim, J; 2003). However, our interest in this section is political godfatherism in democratic government.

Dele et al. (2022; p. 3) described political godfatherism as a practice that involves the sustenance of social and public relations in which the inferior looks unto the superior for the dissemination and self-actualization of firm roles, desires and connections, which unites both together or which both have equal poll but with the more significant influence of what the inferior gets in the process. Similarly, Chimaroke Nnamani, a former Governor of Enugu State, Eastern Nigeria, defined the person of a Godfather from his personal experience:

"... an impervious guardian figure who provided the lifeline and direction to the godson, perceived to live a life of total submission, subservience and protection of the oracular personality located in the large, material frame of opulence, affluence, and decisiveness, that is, If not ruthless ... strictly, the godfather is simply a self-seeking individual out there to use the government for his purposes." (Jibrim, 2003; p. 25).

Adeoye (2009, p72) described a godfather as an individual with many followers (voters) who commands respect in his community and possesses an envious political ideology with which

he draws general acceptance from the electorate to secure a political position for any preferred candidate of his choice. Deductively, the main qualities of a political godfather are not just opulence but the ability to decide and regulate through any means possible who contest an election and who wins the election.

Unlike in Western political studies, where godfatherism is alien to its cultural system, godfatherism has a deep root in Nigerian culture. In the pre-colonial history of Nigerian culture, a godfather has a specific role and portfolio that befits his status. For instance, A godfather among the Yoruba is known as "Baba-Isale," which means "The Big-man behind." It is a term commonly used among the Ibadan people of southwestern Nigeria. Historically, they are military chief or patrons who receive migrants and allow them to settle in their hamlets after he has received rent fee from them. In modern times, the "Baba Isale" has become an honorary portfolio given to an organization's rich and charismatic member in respect of his contribution to society. Dickson Dibia (2003) maintained that godfatherism is grounded in the Igbo traditional sociological system. He argued that the relationship between the "Nnam-Ukwu" (my master) and "Odibo" (the servant) is similar to the relationship between the modern political Godfather and the godson; this is because the "Nnam Ukwu" is expected to set up a business for his "Odibo" after he is satisfied with his business training. The Hausa of Northern Nigeria sees the position of a godfather in the "maigida" (landlord or the head of a household). The maigida is the middleman between two traders who exchanges their goods under his supervision. As their host, he will determine the terms of the exchange and host both traders. In exchange, the maigida receives compensation for his services and keeps both traders as his clients.

In the three cultures explicated above, the role of a godfather is to support a person of lower status either socially or economically and, after that, get something in return. The structure

and terms of this relationship are not different from the modern notion of godfatherism in Nigeria. However, it is the practice and objective that separates them. Godfatherism in modern Nigeria has a far-reaching negative effect on her electoral process and threatens the survival of democracy in the country. Dele et al. (2022, p.1) stressed that godfatherism's politics negatively impede Nigeria's socio-economic and political development because it retains power in the hands of the few elites at the expense of the masses (electorates). As a result, it has stagnated the socio-economic and political development of the nation and, by extension, led to inter-party and intra-party defections, decamping, and conflicts among the party members.

According to Albert (2005), Political godfatherism began in Nigeria with the nationalist activities of the 1950s. The elites who later became founding fathers of Nigerian party politics were educated personalities driven by a true passion for the country's emancipation from the shackles of colonialism. As a result, of their bravery in confronting the referred colonialists, they earned the people's respect. Thus, when party formation began, people interested in politics joined their parties because they believed their good reputation and charisma were worth emulating. The political godfathers of that era include Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who led the AG, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of the NCNC, and Sir Ahmadu Bello, who led the NPC. These godfathers, until their death, decide all that is to be politically in their geopolitical zones. All these godfathers supported and nurtured their godsons, ensuring that they imitated the like passion they had for the development of Nigeria.

However, when their godsons became notorious godfathers who would rather linen their pockets with the state's largesse than commit their political strength to the country's development, Albert (2005) identified five different types of political godfathers present in contemporary Nigeria Politics. He called the first type "geopolitical" or "ethnic" organizations.

These categories of godfathers are associations that represent ethnic interests. They include the Arewa Consultative Council, representing Northern Nigeria, the Yoruba socio-cultural organization Afenifere, and the pan-Igbo cultural group, The Ohaneze. These groups represent the interest of the ethnic group and have "anointed" candidates for political offices. The second type of political Godfathers in Nigeria is what Albert named "geopolitical" or "ethnic father figures." These influential individuals have contributed immensely to Nigeria's national growth and occupied public positions in the past. They are well known and have the support of grass-root people. This list includes all past military heads of state, elected presidents, senators on their third or fourth terms, and state governors. The third type of political godfathers in Nigeria is the wealthy Nigerians who see politics as a high-yielding investment and, as such, sponsor political aspirants to enjoy a high-profit flow when he wins the election. These types are at the helm of party affairs and would do anything to ensure their candidate succeeds in an election. However, their clients are willing to win an election but need more support, charisma, and financial capability to organize a campaign. Senator Ahmed Tinubu is a renowned political godfather in southwestern Nigeria, having nominated and ensured that the Governor of Ondo State, Rotimi Akeredolu, the Governor of Ogun State, Dapo Abiodun, and the former Governor of Osun state, Rauf Aregbesola emerged as Governors in their states. The fourth type of Godfather is those who deal with only wealthy clients. Albert (2005) tagged them "political entrepreneurs." They do not invest their money in a candidate but use their experienced and tactical strategy to influence the election outcomes. In exchange, they are either given a position in the political party or offered a ministerial appointment. Senator Adams Oshiomole of South-southern Nigeria possessed this quality and was the godfather of Governor Godwin Obaseki in the 2015 elections. Through his tactical approach to elections, he secured the governorship seat of Edo state for Governor

Godwin Obaseki. He played significant roles in the re-election of President Muhammed Buhari in 2019. He later became the Party Chairman of the All Progressive Party of Nigeria for two years. Lastly, the fifth type of godfather in Nigerian politics is the wealthy patron who provides all his poor or rich client needs to win elections. He foots the campaign and swings his weight behind him to ensure he does not lose in the election. This category of godfather do not care if their candidate wins or loses the election as much as he is ready to do their bidding when he assumes the position. Nevertheless, Nigeria's present crop of godfathers is the clientele who sponsor political aspirants for upward social and economic mobility.

The myriads of challenges facing Nigeria's electoral process and the pathetic state of her democratic development are implications of the corruptive activities of Nigerian political godfathers. Several cases of fall out between godfathers and godsons, imposition of candidates on the party, misuse of power by godfathers, the influence of party decision, and political office holder insistence on incumbency have created a serious problem between the candidates, party, and the electorates, and adversely affected the political cum socio-economic development of the nation. According to Popoola (2014,1-2), political godfather and godson fights are rooted in a clash of interests, needs, values, and capitals involving political officeholders in the highest government ladder. For instance, the godfatherism factor in determining who fits a role is more prevalent in the APC than in any other party in Nigeria. Most intra-party crises that rocked the All Progressive Congress of Nigeria between 2019 and 2022 resulted from the fracas between godfathers and godsons.

In the politics of godfatherism, it is expected that the godson must streamline his activities to accommodate his godfather's interest such that he warrants that he gives the godfather direct access to his administration's administrative and financial power at various

levels. Godsons have sometimes attributed their political failure to the unsolicited intrusion of their godfather in their administrative affairs. To recount the most recent, after the 2022 election in Osun state, the candidate of the APC, Mr. Gboyega Oyetola, could not return as the state's governor because of the feud between him and the immediate former governor and his godfather Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola. Governor Oyetola served as the Chief of Staff in the Aregbesola administration before Senator Ahmed Tinubu, a godfather to Aregbesola, insisted that his cousin, Governor Oyetola, would be the next governor of the state; however, it was agreed that he would not run for a second term and that members of his cabinets (the commissioners and heads of government parastatals) will be appointed by the party, specifically by Governor Aregbesola. After Governor Gboyega Oyetola was sworn into office in 2018, he refused to honor the dictates of the agreement. He appointed his cabinet members, appointed new party leaders, and favored only those not supporters of the former governor, Aregbesola. To make things worse, he ran for a second term in office in 2022. The primaries were not democratic as some candidates pulled out of the race for the governorship ticket at the last minute, and the new party leaders corruptively dealt with other aspirants. The state's political godfather, Senator Ahmed Tinubu refused to caution his cousin; instead, he maintained his silence. Aregbesola and his camp decided to deal with Governor Oyetola by conniving with the PDP, the state's main opposition party. They created an atmosphere of conflict and tension within the party and divided it into two factions; one faction stood for the former Governor, whom they thought was disrespected and betrayed by Governor Oyetola, and the other faction maintained that Governor Aegbesola should stay away from the state's politics after all, he has been appointed as a federal minister. Governor Oyetola, who could not concentrate on the state's administration because of the rift among members of the party, lost his grip on the party structure and, consequently, lost the election to the opposition

party. The fracas between the two former governors broke the godfather and godson relationship between Senator Ahmed Tinubu and Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola and continues to threaten the political relevance of the APC in Osun state to date (Premium Times News; February 20, 2022). The PDP continue its flawless victory in the 2023 election by winning all the federal legislative and thirty-five out of thirty-six legislative seats in the state.

Similarly, the political godfather's interest in his godson is steered by corruptive tendencies driven by the pursuit of accruable economic benefit. They achieve this by creating difficulties in party politics, government and using their influence and capital to place their desired candidate in positions of power. By this, the godfather reserves the power to decide and appoint political leaders at the expense of the majority (Oviasuyi, 2009, 73). Despite Former Governor Akinwunmi Ambode's impeccable performance in sustaining the administrative excellence of his predecessor and the several accolades he received from private organizations, state, and national assembly for building a better Lagos, Senator Ahmed Tinubu refused his godson the second-term ticket accusing him of not taking care of the party leadership and members of his administration. Weeks after Governor Ambode had accepted his ill fate, he was nearly impeached by the state house of assembly in a face-off relating to budget readjustment.

From the preceding, it is evident that godfatherism can endanger good governance. A competent candidate remains vulnerable to political extinction as much as his legitimacy is "owned" and continuously kept in check by his Godfather. Ohio and Ojo (2016) admitted this when they emphasized that political godfatherism is based on political substitution relating to financial and moral aid where the Godfather is the main donor, the godson the primary receiver, and the ordinary people the victims who are denied the dividends of democracy.

Many believe that the recent trend of intra-party conflicts and inter-party defections in Nigeria shows the disinterestedness of Nigerian politicians in the expression of concern about the current security challenges and provision of social amenities in their constituency, local, state, and the federation and that politicians are more interested in securing electoral victory and remaining political relevant to be able to exercise control over public resources (Ali and Isah, 2018). However, it is also true that some politician defects between parties because they want to be free from the tight clutches of the party machines. Such was the case between Governor Godwin Obaseki of Edo State, South Southern Nigeria, and his Godfather, Comrade Adams Oshiomole, both of the APC. Earlier in 2016, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole led the campaign of his Godson, Godwin Obaseki, and ensured that he emerged as the Governor of Edo state. The fight between them began shortly before the 2019 primary elections. The Godfather attempted to control the party structure to utilize it to check on his godson should he become belligerent. Governor Godwin Obaseki became vindictive of his Godfather and started a counter-coup by raising a soldier of allies in the State House of Assembly. He inaugurated the new house members without involving party leaders and ensured that his ally emerged as the house speaker. Together, they ousted Comrade Adams Oshiomhole from the orbit of power in Edo state. Months after, Governor Obaseki defected to the opposition party PDP. In 2020, he contested for a second – term in office and was a flawed candidate for the APC, emerging as the Governor of the state under a new party. (Premium Times; 2020, June 25)

Another challenge Godfatherism posed to the electoral process is the introduction of money politics into Nigerian Elections. Elections in Nigeria are usually over-valued, and only the wealthy elite can afford to run for a political position. The amount spent on campaigns, purchase of nomination forms, and other related expenses speak volumes of the elitist intent to

cycle power among themselves. As a result, it has become almost impossible for an individual to hold political power either by election or appointment without patronizing a political godfather because of their power and influence in the democratic process. (Joe, 2010:1-2). First, if he must, he must have a spotless reputation that can command the people's respect and trust regardless of the severity of the opposition's political propaganda. Secondly, he must be financially strong to bare the burdens of post- elections tribunal petitions. Thus, Godfathers have strategically placed themselves as the last hope of the ordinary person who desires to contest a political position in Nigeria and the electorates who await the dividends of democracy.

Meanwhile, the extent of a Nigerian godfather's influence and political power is measured by his ability to turn unfavorable election results into favorable ones by conjuring unimaginable rigging and bribery "miracles." Yahaya and Abba (2021; pp. 7) stressed that:

"the politics of godfathers in the Nigerian states are not simple political culture because the sponsors of political campaigns; are the people wealthy, influential and can organize violence and corruption to manipulate central, state or local political schemes to support the candidates they champion."

Therefore, it is unsurprising that Nigeria elections are overshadowed by extreme electoral frauds such as intimidation of voters, vote buying, snatching of ballot boxes, bribes, and rigging. Such mishaps result from the desperations of godfathers to increase their clientele and rank in the political society. It also explains why political power in Nigeria cycles only among the wealthy elites who possess the financial well-withal to finance a party and strike a good bargain with godfathers.

The country's legal sector is in no way immune to the onslaught of Godfather's corruptive influence. In fact, the electoral tribunals are slaughter grounds for opposition parties. Whenever the ruling party loses an election, a higher level of rigging and electoral violence is triggered to devalue and destabilize elections in such constituencies, and the candidate of the ruling party or

the candidate with the more influential Godfather is declared the winner at the expense of the people's choice. Should the opposition decides to contest the outcome in election tribunals, the corrupt judges whom the Godfather has already bribed dismiss his plea and upholds the electoral commission's declared winner.

The victims of electoral malpractices, Godfatherism, and money politics in Nigeria are the electorate, who have become valuable tools for political gladiators. Usually, politicians level their passion and excesses to perpetrate electoral violence. Gadau et al. (2022) aver that the current stocks of Nigerian youths are the promoter of electoral violence used by godfathers to win or disrupt the election process where and when necessary. Altercations between the youths turned political thugs and citizens often end in life loss. For instance, in the 2019 elections in Akwa Ibom and Lagos states, alleged box-snatchers were killed (Onimisi and Leah, 2023). Similarly, angry voters in the Okota community during the 2023 general elections in Lagos state rushed a bus snatcher and beat him to death (The247Ureports; March 18, 2023). It took the effort of the police force to rescue him from burning to death. The fact that Nigerian youths are actively involved in electoral malpractices questions the future and continuity of democratic governance in Nigeria.

The elective process is only fair and credible when the will of the majority counts. Democracy thrives on the will of the majority; hence a situation whereby the will of the minority overrides the majority negates democratic principles. It is, therefore, important that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) rise to its responsibility by prosecuting election saboteurs regardless of their position and status in society. Also, Nigeria's election needs to be de-monetized to enable capable average Nigerians to contest and win an election without necessarily depending on the influences of a godfather. Furthermore, the mass media and

civil societies should organize symposiums and sponsor radio jingles to sensitize Nigerian citizens, protect their votes, and shun electoral violence. When enforced, these recommendations will limit the influence of godfathers on the Nigerian electoral process and rebuild the broken walls of trust between Nigerians and the electoral process, thereby increasing good numbers of Nigerians who participate in elections. It will also usher in a new season of purposive government for the Nigerian state driven by the majority's will and oiled by the true patriotism of the genuinely elected leaders.

CHAPTER 4

Conclusion and Recommendations

The previous chapters of this paper have established by historical facts, secondary evidence, and careful analysis that Nigerian political parties contribute significantly to the advancement of political corruption in the country. The corruption patterns examined showed the close relationship between party politics, governance and corruption. It is evident that Nigerian democracy is in dire need of a reformative redemption which I contend can only be achieved by onboarding a number of electoral and political reforms which must be specific to curbing corruption within political parties. One substantive argument that may justify the need for such political reforms in Nigeria is the recent incessant call for a political restructuring by educated and exemplary citizen of the country (The Nigerian Tribune; April 8, 2002). The 1999 constitution has been incapable of accommodating the dynamism of Nigeria politics in that some of its provisions excessively places power in the hands of political officeholders, and such powers have been abused in a way that continues to sabotage all efforts to deliver Nigeria from the gruesome grip of political parties orchestrated corruptions.

Nonetheless, I contend that some socio-cultural values peculiar to Nigerian cultures and worldviews and consistent with the dictates of democracy may be adopted and implemented as electoral and political policies. Western democracy has been a noble idea in its time, its ideals have promoted liberality and fairness which are the missing puzzles in the former systems of government. However, the peculiarity of Nigerian politics attuned in its religious and cultural diversity have often questioned the suitability and sustainability of democracy and indeed, the federal system of government in Nigeria. Hence, an attempt to recommend a solution to party

orchestrated corruption in Nigeria must extend beyond constitutional review and call for referendum.

Therefore, my recommendations are combinations of widely recognized principles of democracy and culturally relative values carefully selected to arrest the menace of party corruption in Nigerian politics. Having laid this foundation, I will discuss the recommendations as they relate to each of the espoused corruption inclinations discussed in chapter two of this paper.

Firstly, in combatting vote-buying, it is important that the Independence National Electoral Commission (INEC) become more committed to conducting fair elections. If the existing electoral policies are strictly adhered to, there will be fewer numbers of vote buyers. One of the early vote buying strategies political parties adopted was registering children and adolescents as prospective voters. In some cases the electoral commission officials, having connived with political parties, issues voters cards to these underage voters who are being influenced by party agents to acquire them. When such corruptive offers by political parties are turned down, and voters' cards are issued to only eligible Nigerian citizens of 18 years of age and above as stipulated by the electoral acts of 1999, the number of vote-buyers and sellers will considerably reduce. Meanwhile, Nigerians will recall that some weeks into the 2023 presidential elections, about one hundred and six voter cards were seized by Nigerian Immigration services from foreigners from Niger, Ghana, and the Benin Republic. To curb this, INEC can work closely with National Identity Management Commission to verify the identity of prospective voters before registering them as eligible voters. It will discourage political parties from enlisting voters from neighboring countries to vote in Nigerian elections.

The belief that the introduction of robust legislation and commensurate sanctions against culpable elements and deploying non-governmental organizations as election monitoring teams will prevent vote buying at the polling stations has been proven inadequate in combating the vote buying menace by recent Nigerian elections. It is not the fact that the subsisting law is inadequate to checkmate defaulters and address the menace, but a lack of enforcement has largely incapacitated it. The supposed enforcers are more interested in sustaining their grip on political power than ensuring that free and fair elections take place. Hence, I suggest that civil society organizations, National Orientation Agency, INEC, the media, social organizations (e.g., churches, mosques, and community-based associations), and all internal and external stakeholders in Nigeria organize consecutive sensitization campaigns which will focus on educating the electorates on the dangers of accepting gratifications, selling their voting rights and ensure through close observations on election day that the voter's freedom of choice is protected.

Also, ameliorating poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy among Nigerian Youth will discourage vote buying. The "carrot and stick" business between the vote buyers and vote sellers thrives because most electorates are poor, unemployed youths who would not blink an eye when offered peanuts in exchange for their votes. It is a known fact that literacy and employment contribute immensely to an individual's productivity and, generally, to the country's development. Hence, creating gainful employment opportunities for literate youth and engaging the illiterate youths in productive sectors will improve their financial status and contribute significantly to reducing vote buying.

Electoral reform stipulating stringent and clear methods as regards party coalitions and alliances should be enforced. This reform must state conditions under which party coalitions and alliances can occur, the source of campaign funds, the condition for appointing key-party leaders,

the durations of the alliance, and agreements that bind the alliance. In addition, parties interested in alliances must have been formed at least four years before the proposed alliance, contested in at least a general election and must have at least three representatives in both federal legislative houses. Also, political office holders among the members of the parties in alliances cannot decamp or cross-carpet into another party or a party within the alliance during the alliance and for a term after the alliance. However, should there be a need to, the politician(s) must be relieved of his office and will not contest in any bye-election until the next general elections; neither can he be given a key position in another political party. Enforcing this will reduce intra-party conflicts within coalition parties and serve as a checkmate on politicians who unsuspectingly decamps between winning parties. Similarly, smaller parties in alliances with bigger parties will be able to make clear decisions regarding joining an alliance and withdrawing from the alliance without losing their party members. The details of this prospective coalition and alliances would be presented to INEC for validation and be made public to all party members and the masses.

Furthermore, political reforms must follow successively. As argued above, some principles of democracy have inversely affected the growth of Nigerian politics, especially in the appointment of key government positions. One of the justifiable reasons for Nigeria's failure in organizing free and fair elections is the reservation of the power to recommend and appoint necessary legal and electoral officers by the Presidency. According to section 154 (1) of the 1999 constitution, the president reserves the right to appoint the Independent Nigeria electoral commission chairman after consulting the Council of State. Such appointment shall be subject to confirmation by the Senate. (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999)

However, under this circumstance, some Nigerian elections have appeared somewhat of a pre-agreement between the incumbent president, INEC's chairman, and the ruling party. This conclusion rests on two premises.. First, the Council of States members are former heads of state and presidents who are former allies and contemporaries of the president. Hence, may not be able to separate personal interest from the call to patriotism. Secondly, two-thirds of the senators are members of the ruling party willing to return as members of the parliament in the forthcoming election. Under the administration of President Mohammadu Buhari's appointed INEC chairs, some states were dubiously won for the APC even while electoral regulations were completely ignored.

Similarly, in the legal sector, the president reserves the power to appoint the Chief Justice of the federation in as much as he/she was recommended to him and approved by the Senate. The implication is that it will be difficult for an opposition party to win at the election tribunal, where the Chief Justice might have sworn his allegiance to the president and his political party. Thus, there is a dubious connection between the legal sector and ruling political parties on strategies to compromise election results with zero consideration of the people's will. Accordingly, many have recommended, like the committee headed by Mohammed Uwais, former chief justice of Nigeria, that the appointment process of the chairman, as well as the electoral commission's other top officials, be overseen by the National Judicial Council which will subsequently recommend a qualified candidate to the president" (Chinedu, 2019).

Nonetheless, I will recommend a more rigorous approach - both the offices of the Chief Justice of the Federation and INEC's Chairman be subjected to nominations and elections, respectively. The INEC's Chairman may be nominated by Nigeria Civil societies such as the Labor Union, the National Association of Nigerian Students, the National Association of

Nigerians in Diaspora, the Nigerian Bar Association, and the Nigerian Associations of Engineers. The individuals nominated must be renowned professionals in any educational and administrative field who have once held a sensitive public position either in the country or outside the country and possess a good knowledge of Nigerian election behavior. After these candidates have been nominated and screened by both federal legislative houses, the chairman of each political party will be elected among those who passed the screening, the individual who will emerge as INEC's Chairman. While this might be considered rigorous, it will help political parties feel more involved in selecting the election umpire and reduce several after-election litigation and allegations pertaining to INEC being partial in exercising its duties. However, the same procedure may be adopted to appoint the Chief Justice of Nigeria, with a slight change in the procedure. I recommend that the political parties are not involved in the selection process but that the Nigerian Bar Association should be made to nominate experienced legal luminaries who will be screened by a panel consisting of experienced lawyers representing the six geo-political zones of the federation. The emerging candidate can then be presented to the legislative houses and then to the president for appointment.

Godfatherism is one of the catalysts of political corruption in modern-day Nigerian politics. Its pernicious growth in Nigerian politics can be blamed on the nonchalant attitude of the Nigeria electoral umpire towards curbing it and the intentional permissibility of the political parties. For the political parties, extolling godfather's operation above the party's ideology creates alternative funding for campaigns and improves the chances of being successful during elections. However, in its previous chapters, this paper argued that godfatherism creates a large web of corruption across government institutions, the state, and society. It is pertinent to know that all the discussed corruption patterns can be accommodated within the scope of the operations of the

godfathers and the political parties. Within the political party, godfatherism impedes the popular participation of party members in party politics and promotes patron-clientele relationships. More so, it cripples political development and stunts national development; the relationship between party politics and national development in a democratic society cannot be overemphasized. As enunciated, there cannot be cognizant political or national development if political parties are corrupt.

Nonetheless, I recommend that INEC regulates primary elections and mandates political parties to embrace direct elections for conducting primary elections. With this, all party members will participate in the election of the party flag bearers for the general elections. Equally, it will limit the powers of godfathers since different geo-political zones will have different preferences for candidacy. Furthermore, the election officials responsible for the primaries' conduct should be nominated from each local government and transferred out of their state to remove all taints of partiality and unforeseen corruptive arrangements between prospective candidates and election officials.

Similarly, de-monetizing Nigeria's political system will establish more transparent, participatory, and credible party politics. Often, young, responsible, and qualified Nigerians are unable to pick nomination forms because they cannot meet the financial requirement. Those with the financial capability find godfathers' remittances and outrageous demands a stumbling block to their dreams. If electoral and political changes must begin, Nigerian youths will have to be involved in the administration of the state, even from the grassroots level. More so, in the previous chapters, I have identified a healthy connection with people at the grassroots as a foremost attribute of a godfather. Hence, removing the godfather constraint in politics will enable educated and promising Nigerian youth to vie for political positions without the fear of

being smoked out by political godfathers. One way to achieve this is to reduce considerably the cost of running for a political position. INEC, in its capacity as the electoral umpire, can limit the amount used in purchasing nomination forms and the amount spent on election campaigns. I believe healthy cooperation with anti-corruption agencies will facilitate the quick arrest and subsequent disqualification of political parties who spent more than the stipulated amount on campaigns. If this electoral policy is enforced, aspiring politicians will find it easier to win elections without becoming clientele to patrons.

Also, there should be a review of the allowances and salaries political officeholders earn in Nigeria. Nigerian political parties and politicians seem more interested in the financial benefit attached to the office than the primus responsibility of serving the people. Nigerian Political parties like her politicians calculate the "returns and profit" a political office will yield in terms of financial dividends when their candidate assumes the office hence, the desperation that ushers in violence and different corruption patterns during and after the election. Members of the legislative houses should only be allowed to run for two terms of eight years and not more. Many long-serving legislative house members who have secured corrupt connections with government institutions and amassed wealth often become despotic godfathers. Hence, enforcing two terms in office will reduce the number of prospective godfathers and give room for other aspiring qualified party members to run for political offices.

In addition, cases at the election tribunals should be decided before the next purported winner of the election assumes office. Unfortunately, it has become a strategy of the ruling party and the practice of the Nigeria election tribunals to unnecessarily elongate a case in a way that makes it favors the sitting candidate and wearies the opposition both financially and physically. Some tribunal cases in Nigeria stretch to a year and more before they are decided. Cutting out on

time spent on tribunal cases will reduce the number of off-cycle elections and ensure consecutive governance without breaks.

In conclusion, in a meeting with the Romania civil society in Bucharest sometime in May 2014, Joe Biden, the United States president, quipped, "Corruption is cancer: cancer that eats away at a citizen's faith in democracy, diminishes the instinct for innovation and creativity." (Transparency International, 2018). In the Nigerian case, it is evident that the people have lost faith in democracy because of the onslaught of corruption identifiable with almost every successive democratic transition in the country. This paper held Nigerian political parties (using the APC government) accountable for the duplications of political corruption in Nigeria's political system by identifying some corruption patterns devised by the political parties to sabotage free and fair elections. Nonetheless, I believe the enforcement of recommended political and electoral reforms discussed in this chapter will lay a solid foundation for a corruption-free democracy, safe, free, and fair electioneering process, and development—conscious party politics in Nigeria. Indeed, the proper enforcement of these political and electoral reforms lies in the hands of the people: their political consciousness, integrity, and their determination to fight corruption. Until the Nigerian masses imbibe the necessary anti-corruption values and promote a corruption-free government at the grassroots, corruption in the country will remain a political epidemic without a cure.

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