

¹ Electoral Democracy and Political Entrepreneurship in Nigeria: ² Exploring the Social Media Option

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8 Abstract

9 The conduct of regular elections by authoritarian populist regimes has engendered the advent
10 of elections without democracies and democracies without rights and peoples' participation.
11 The unwillingness of the elites and the powerful, who have taken hold of the political system,
12 to cede to the views of the people is increasingly making the government unresponsive. The
13 political system is fast turning into a playground for billionaires with very high propensity to
14 exclude the people from the scheme of affairs. Political parties are getting frozen by populist
15 leaders who are using their positions to destroy free media, undermine independent
16 institutions, and muzzle the opposition. Individual and minority rights as well as popular will
17 are no longer guaranteed. Citizens are thus disillusioned with politics; have grown restless,
18 angry, disdainful and hostile to the resultant democrazy. This paper therefore analyzed the
19 collapsing party prowess in membership and candidate recruitments that have pushed
20 politicians on self-worth electioneering, political merchandising and entrepreneurship in their
21 search for relevance. It further examines the vertical linkages between political parties and
22 electorates as complemented by horizontal connection between parties and private
23 contributors.

Index terms— political networks, authoritarian populism, machine politics, self-worth electioneering, membership and candidate recruitment.

²⁷ 1 Electoral Democracy and Political Entrepreneurship in Nigeria: Exploring the Social Media Option

29 Abstract-The conduct of regular elections by authoritarian populist regimes has engendered the advent of elections
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39 relevance. It further examines the vertical linkages between political parties and electorates as complemented
40 by horizontal connection between parties and private contributors. The paper thus observed that Political
41 entrepreneurship has become both an art and craft for evolving vents and clichés for endearing and repositioning

3 II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL EXPOSITION A) ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY

42 relevance in elections and electioneering in Nigeria. The paper uses secondary sources of data knitted in in-depth
43 review of related literature to polemically analyze through the spectrum of the theory of political clientelism
44 built around reciprocity of machine politics where exchanges rely significantly on clients' feelings of obligation
45 to return favours to their patrons to explain the evolving trend of political entrepreneurship in Nigeria where
46 perspective minds are using technologically driven platforms to close latent gaps created by freezing political
47 parties in mobilization, membership and candidate recruitment.

48 2 Introduction

49 final change in information communications technologies (ICTs) has conquered the whole wide world in the span
50 of a few short decades (Mounk, 2018). Until recently, the costs associated with running traditional media houses
51 (printing newspapers, running radio stations, or operating television networks) were prohibitive for most citizens.
52 Mass communication was the exclusive preserve of political and financial elites, thus marginalizing extreme
53 views and making politics comparatively consensual. Interestingly, contemporary advancements in information
54 communication technologies (ICTs) generating unmitigated access to the internet and availability of multiple
55 information technology (IT) devices, particularly of overarching social media, have rapidly shifted the power
56 balance between "political insiders and political outsiders" (Mounk, 2018). Today, the costs of organizing political
57 events/rallies have plummeted with greatly permissive and relatively affordable virtual resources. In Nigeria, the
58 hitherto suppressed citizens have gained undue and hard to limit space for expression of extreme and marginalized
59 views. The government is apprehensive of demands for accountability from social media platforms. Any citizen
60 is able to share at little or no cost viral information with millions of people at great speed. A new socio-
61 political order has been created where politicians and political entrepreneurs are grappling with the challenges
62 of pseudo-democracy or illiberal populism. The electoral process is mortgaged by the political leadership to
63 ensure guaranteed results in political recruitment. Institutional guarantees of democracy are getting destroyed
64 by autocratizing forces within the government that watches over the conduct of regular elections. It thus has
65 been elections without democracies and democracies without rights such that might masked in wealth and abuse
66 of political power have continued to prevail. Elections are at the mercies of those who can access power brokers
67 laced with state apparatuses and unregulated influence thereby resulting in poor nauseating citizens' participation.
68 Nigerians are currently in extraordinary times where the basic contours of politics, democracy and society are
69 being renegotiated in varied fronts. Political participation and followership is lost to individual values and worth.
70 Crafty, dexterous and smart political entrepreneurs are thus moving outside the box by creating foundations and
71 social networks funded with personal/individual, cartel monies, interventions and resources from those around
72 the corridors of power to oil and shape political structures while deciding the tone of relevance in the wake of
73 technology mixed with excess money for politics.

74 Invariably, Nigerian politics and administration have degenerated into a gimmick for political office holders
75 and billionaires who have very high propensity to exclude the people from the scheme of affairs. Political leaders,
76 parties and patrons including aspirants to public offices are devising strategies for engaging and getting the
77 electorates through machine politics to support and vote for them in (s) elections. The alienated citizens are
78 getting engaged in qui-pro-quo exchanges for electoral support by provision of jobs, undue assistance that would
79 have been better allocated evenly for socio-economic development. The above situation illustrates realizations
80 of collapsing party prowess in membership and candidate recruitment that elicits genuine followership from the
81 electorates by the political elites. The study therefore seeks to analyze the nature of self-worth electioneering,
82 political merchandising and entrepreneurship embarked upon by Nigerian political leaders, collapsing parties,
83 financiers/brokers, dexterous and crafty politicians for political relevance. It further reassess the vertical linkages
84 between political parties and electorates as complemented by horizontal connection between parties and private
85 contributors that give rise to strategic political brokers who generate, oil and deploy political networks for electoral
86 purposes. The study also explores adaptation and deployment of social media platforms as a sustainable network
87 for political entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

88 3 II. Literature Review and Theoretical Exposition a) Electoral 89 Democracy

90 Call it electoral or liberal democracy, the fact remains that dramatic global waves of democratization endeared
91 democracy to most societies as the best form of government but did not develop democratic culture in many
92 claimant states hence the multifarious perceptions about principles and practices (Huntington, 1991;Rubinstein &
93 Roznai, 2018;Obikeze, Obiora & Chiamogu, 2019). Democratic rules and procedures are described in many ways
94 suiting societies and peoples. It again explains why in recent years democracy has been in recession. Democracy
95 according to International IDEA (2016) is "in a state of unending crisis and there will always be a struggle to
96 find better forms of representation and accountability". Democracy has in many instances and societies reduced
97 to elections and representations in government. Since ??chumpeter (1976, p.269) defined democracy as a system
98 "for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive
99 struggle for the people's vote", the electoral criterion has been the conceptual anchor of democracy. Electoral
100 democracy epitomizes what the minimalist perspective describes as a situation where positions of political power
101 are filled through regular, free, and fair elections between competing parties, and an incumbent government

102 to be turned out of office through elections (Freedom House, 2007). The practice of democracy according to
103 Coppedge (2005) Those electoral criteria state that democracy is a form of government that does not just
104 hold contested elections but define the character of the electoral contest to ensure mass participation through
105 competitive political parties. How this works in Nigeria is a rationale for the collapse of political parties or if
106 you like the destruction of democratic institutions which are fast defining electoral participation. In Nigeria,
107 electoral competition and opposition are getting grossly suppressed in what Schmitter & Karl (1991) referred to
108 as fallacy of electoralism. Elections have continued to receive priority over other dimensions of democracy as
109 clearly enunciated by the maximalist theorists.

110 **4 b) Political Entrepreneurship**

111 According to Holcombe (2002, p.143), "political entrepreneurship occurs when an individual acts on a political
112 profit opportunity". For Carpio (2017), "political entrepreneurs are people who create ideas and innovations, and
113 act as new leaders in the field of politics". They are individuals and groups who seek to improve the science
114 and art of politics through disruption, innovation and evolution of new approaches to politicking. The founders
115 of movements such as the Chartists and Suffragettes, Capitalists and Marxists, Futurists and Luddites were all
116 political entrepreneurs. In Nigeria, the overt inability of political parties to galvanize, articulate and aggregate
117 interests with clear-cut programmes and ideologies merged with unmitigated intraparty conflicts has created
118 groups with deep rooted divisions as political associations where membership and candidate recruitment are
119 grossly inefficient. Everybody is for and against the political parties and no nobody is a staunch member. Access
120 and tendencies to fasten realization of personal interests determine membership of political parties in a society
121 where citizens wield cards of various parties at the same time. Political entrepreneurs explore and exploit nuanced
122 avenues to find placements for themselves, their candidates and political parties as the only legitimate framework
123 for electoral participation. They create, oil and promote groups both physical and virtual to the advantage of
124 their clients and ready brokers where votes are bought and sold. Political entrepreneurship therefore is the art and
125 craft of creating, sustaining and using informal platforms for electoral mobilization and participation. Dexterous,
126 innovative and technology savvy politicians create, oil and fund these structures for electoral purposes.

127 There are avalanche of such structures, groups, movements and umbrella bodies around communities, electoral
128 wards, states and geopolitical zones. The existence and activities of such socio-cultural groups and platforms as
129 Ohaneze Ndi-Igbo, Afenifere, Arewa Youth Assembly, National Youth Council of Nigeria, Ijaw Youth Council,
130 Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), United Anambra Youth Assembly (U-AYA), Egbesu
131 amongst others speak volumes in describing the dynamics of politicking in the polarized Nigerian state. These
132 groups endorse and promote the candidacies of their children in national elections and fan embers of sectionalism.
133 They constitute unimaginable fora for charting unexplored courses where political brokers, godfathers and
134 mothers exploit to garner endorsement that facilitate electoral malpractice. Votes are easily bought and sold in
135 places where the electorate are not staunch supporters of opposition and will not stand to defend their preferences.
136 The electorates mortgage their conscience over unresponsive government subsumed in flawed electoral processes
137 where they feel that their votes are not likely to count.

138 **5 III.**

139 **6 Theoretical Framework**

140 The paper adopted political clientelism as its theoretical framework of analysis. Political clientelism refers to the
141 practice of providing personal favours that could take the form of jobs, contracts, welfare support, money, and
142 other kinds to members of the electorate in exchange for electoral support. Scholars traditionally defined the
143 theory as the distribution of selective benefits to individuals or groups in exchange for political support (Katz,
144 1985; Hopkin, 2001; Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). Hopkin (2006) qualified clientelism as a form of personal,
145 dyadic exchange that is marked by a sense of obligation. The sense of obligation here refers to the drive to
146 reciprocate the favour by way of granting electoral support. By dyadic exchange as an element of clientelism,
147 Hicken (2011) observed that there must be direct, face-to-face interactions and transactions between the patron
148 and client. Discussing clientelism as a method of electoral mobilization, Stokes (2013, p. 649) succinctly declares
149 that it is "the proffering of material goods in return for electoral support, where the criterion of distribution that
150 the patron uses is simply: did you (will you) support me?" In our context where there is poverty of leadership
151 and governance challenges, resources distribution and allocations are grossly lopsided resulting in widespread
152 poverty and massive unemployment. Extending personal favours ranging from payment of school fees for student
153 members of a constituency, attendance and support for wedding parties and burial ceremonies/rites, sinking
154 of boreholes and extending electricity to communities by patrons and brokers using state resources cornered
155 unto private foundations became critical. It could come in the form of discretionary provision of privileges by
156 government representatives, political parties and prospective contestants of public positions of trust to members
157 of the electorates, political wards and or group of persons in anticipated exchange for their votes. This privilege
158 or favour is gifted in contingent reciprocity of political support. The privilege could as well come in the form of
159 pork-barrel programme from the government which shares a lot of similarities with clientelism. For Hicken (2011),
160 clientelism describes unbalanced relationships between political patrons, brokers and clients. Where the patrons
161 and brokers refer to the political financiers and godfathers, the electorates constitute the clients. The proponents

162 of this theory include Alex Weingrod (1968), James ??cott (1969;1972) According to ??cott (1969) as cited in
163 Stokes (2013), the relationships between political patrons, brokers and clients constitute influential familiarity in
164 which the patron provides protection or benefits, or both, for clients who in turn, reciprocate by offering political
165 support and assistance to the patron in elections. Initially considered a pre-modern approach, contemporary
166 democratization process in Nigeria, is making political clientelism pervasive. At the wake of poor governance
167 subsumed in massive electoral apathy and withdrawal by the people from the sit-tight political leaders, Berenschot
168 (2018) observed that political underlies a host of developmental challenges from corruption and inadequate public
169 service provision to ethnic violence and a weak rule of law". Clientelism as a political theory is heightened by
170 the pervasiveness of vote-trading in emergent but fledgling democracies where the government is not delivering
171 the expected democracy dividends. Clientelism which is a quid-proquo kind of politicking and electioneering
172 campaign automatically renegotiates political support from impoverished electorates who tend to accept and
173 waiver on the platter of a bird at hand. People hold onto the gifts in expectation for never coming deliverables
174 from political brokers. It makes people accept the candidacy and aspiration of entrepreneurial politicians by
175 granting them political supports.

176 7 IV. Electoral Democracy and Political

177 Entrepreneurship in Nigeria: Tracing the Nexus

178 The Nigerian state is facing daunting challenges in its system of governance and administration such that
179 political institutions are witnessing coping problems. Democracy is witnessing crises of political representation
180 and accountability (Witter & de Vries, 2013). Citizens are deserting the political arena with rising trends of
181 low electoral turnout, increasing volatility, and imminent collapse of political party and party systems. Clearly,
182 the fourth industrial revolution is geometrically changing and shifting cultures, work and politics (Carpio, 2017).
183 Exponential advancements in information and communication technologies (ICTs) are overarchingly opening up
184 and disrupting socioeconomic and political norms with political actors being in a hurry to find, anchor and
185 sustain placement for themselves, their groups and sometimes for the society with a bid to remain politically
186 relevant. Nigeria has witnessed a rising tide of contentious elections ending in heated debates, court challenges,
187 protests and legitimacy crises. In other words, conduct of elections and electioneering have triggered bloodshed,
188 destruction, and undermined the capacity for stable governance, political inclusion, and national integration.
189 This is mainly because of the zero-sum nature of politics leading to bitter tumultuous elections laid bare by
190 divisions within parties which is commonly propelled by the predatory character of its ruling class.

191 The continued evolving political environment of states where democracy is facing crises of consolidation
192 with authoritarian populists harping on regular elections while destroying the real institutional guarantees of
193 democracy are generating concerns for systemic analysis. As aptly captured by Lentsch (2018), liberal democracies
194 are in crisis in states where the political leadership is wielding excessive powers. Today, it is difficult if not
195 impossible to make definitive statements about politics. Politics has developed unguarded wings and indefinite
196 tentacles that are going beyond traditional wits. Apt comprehension and forecasting are time, state and regime
197 specific thereby making general statements fallacious and in some contexts incongruent. In Nigeria, the state is
198 captured and operates in the hands and guide of political leaders (within the presidency) with minimal attention
199 to the will of the people (Anazodo, Igbokwe-Ibeto & Nkah, 2015). Even when Diamond (2020) did not accept
200 that Nigeria has attained the status of a liberal democracy, we assume that having conducted several elections
201 since the beginning of the fourth republic that Nigeria can as well pass for one of the status as advanced by
202 Schumpeter (1976;2000). At that, the introduction and implementation of novel and innovative socio-political
203 engineering becomes a central question of political analysis. No wonder, Year On Team (2013) observed that
204 "we are living in an exciting time of expansive digital and social frontiers, where old paradigms and beliefs are
205 crumbling under the weight of parasitic systems and corruption, giving rise to intelligent tribes searching for new
206 answers and constructs". Political entrepreneurship has widespread spectrum with unimaginable potentials.
207 Perspective individuals and organizations are now developing new group dynamics and citizen engagement
208 to reinventing political leadership structures, breaking down ideological divides, evolving innovative advocacy
209 tools and technology, trying more effective methods of social organization, changing cultural perceptions and
210 perhaps most importantly citizenry empowerment to adapt structures, vents and clichés for power struggle and
211 consolidation where political parties are becoming less relevant. They create new frameworks and tools for more
212 effective political mobilization, support and grounds for easy rallies and seamless channels for profit maximization.
213 Most Nigerian political entrepreneurs are not interested in effective leadership and communication but in creating
214 viable business models for merchandizing political support and patronage. They build platforms to make money
215 and garner relevance. Astuteness in political entrepreneurship is a function of apt identification of political
216 problem situations and the ability to determine possible working solution to the problem situation. In Nigeria,
217 one of the most ravaging problems of liberal or electoral democracy is the collapsing political party prowess in the
218 recruitment of members and candidates for elections which have given rise to unprecedented withdrawal of citizens
219 concerns to parties but to individuals. Votes are cast for candidates and not political parties in contemporary
220 Nigerian elections. Politicians opting for elections today win and lose on the basis of self-worth and personality
221 merged with state action. Ruling parties with apparatuses of state force and machinery, do influence election
222 outcomes but votes cast are candidate specific and oriented. Knowing that Nigerian political parties are without
223 clear cut ideologies and manifestoes, it is easy clientelism as "a means of electoral mobilization The vertical

224 and horizontal relationships between political parties and political power brokers are fast collapsing in an era of
225 mistrust between the duo. There is trust deficit between party financiers/brokers and party candidates owing
226 to established informal protocol breach between Dr. Chris Ngige and Chief Chris Uba in Anambra state among
227 others. Getting political godsons to stick to terms of engagement in contemporary has become problematic. If
228 the political leadership (those wielding executive powers) did not endorse a candidate, he go through the crucible
229 to fare well in elections. He solely depends on his individual worth to achieve electoral success and not party
230 structures. Billionaire candidates are fast taking over the system with uncouth wealth through the activities
231 and programmes of pseudo political foundations. The new political normal is that aspirants to public positions
232 start with charity bodies to achieve popularity. They have all come to the realization that the party has failed
233 and that the electorates have withdrawn from the government due to long period of irresponsiveness and bad
234 leadership. The emergent approach by political entrepreneurs involves savouring their paths with personal and
235 or groups largesse to communities and sections of the constituencies to garner political support. Prospective
236 aspirants now provide public infrastructures such as roads, hospitals, and empowerment programmes in order to
237 earn the people's support during elections. This explains why even legislators scamper for projects to salvage
238 their prospects of returning to the hallowed chambers. Thence, the real imports of the phrase "attracted and
239 facilitated" that follow government projects today. Members of the State and National Assemblies aspiring to
240 remain relevant move around offices in ministries and departments (MDAs) in search of job opportunities and
241 projects to facilitate to earn the phrase on project signboards.

242 V. Exploring the Social media Option for Political Entrepreneurship in Nigeria

243 Equally seeking relevance, dexterous and crafty politicians, who are not that wealthy, chart courses in the use
244 of technology. ICTs has overwhelmingly changed the tone and pattern of politics especially in structure building
245 and mobilization. Where parties are relapsing, individuals' networks and self worth are becoming paramount.
246 Political entrepreneurs are becoming innovative with the use of ICTs to garner structures and memberships that
247 can easily be mobilized. They build, promote and oil these members as ready hands for negotiating support for
248 willing politicians who can foot their bills. The structures are their political investments whose access could go
249 to those that can afford it.

250 With very high internet penetration in Nigeria and unassuming increment in the number of social media users,
251 the chances of deplored and directly engaging the electorates in groups have become latent options. Nigerians
252 use more of such social media platforms that have messengers where they easily get added or join group chats
253 and follow notable personalities and celebrities. Political entrepreneurs explore social media chat groups such as
254 those from States, Senatorial Districts, Federal Constituencies, State Constituencies, Local Government Areas,
255 Clans, Town Union, Wards, Communities, Villages, Families, Party Groups, Professional Associations, Labour
256 Unions, Alumni Chat Groups, Social Clubs, Big Cities' chat groups to build their political platforms. They
257 also engage field workers to obtain direct phone contacts of registered voters from electoral wards to build their
258 data bases from where they reach the electorates. Many social media users get added to groups without their
259 permission and the need for connections and information push them to remain members of such groups. These
260 coupled with overwhelming poverty, push many citizens to continue with groups where the entrepreneurs get to
261 make stipends available to them and make promises of doing more. He periodically engages them in virtual and
262 physical meetings where they part with foodstuff, clothing materials and information on state of the nation. He
263 develops direct relations and gets to attend social events such as burial, wedding and other ceremonies thereby
264 endearing himself to the members.

265 Everybody likes recognition and getting to be identified with in times of need especially in moments of
266 grief. Members of this groups have shared responsibility of promoting its ideals and marketing its prospective
267 candidates. The promoters of these groups also favour unemployed members with jobs and contracts to oil the
268 group. A typical example of these groups is found in United Anambra Youth Assembly (U-AYA), Ifeanyi Ubah
269 Youth Organization, Soludo Campaign Organization, etc. At the level of social media, promoters build and
270 nurture groups as political structures that are easily mobilized for elections. They easily market their views and
271 candidates at minimal costs using these social media groups. Members of such groups propagate their views and
272 programmes consciously and subconsciously by discussing and sharing such views with other social media users.

273 8 Concluding Remarks

274 Social media has become the engine of communication in contemporary Nigeria. It has given way to new modes
275 of relationships and interactions where people build networks with persons that they do not know but have
276 new media presence. It creates platforms for simultaneous and instant messaging and reaching out to people
277 at very little or no costs and has revolutionized media landscape. Social media thus offers a variety of avenues
278 through which political candidates can communicate with people. It has been widely used by politicians to create
279 awareness and mobilize supporters. Social media sites connections and networks for political entrepreneurs to
280 reach, keep in touch, feel the pulse of the electorates and mobilize communities for electoral purposes.

281 Social media platforms thus provide sustainable latitude for advancing electoral participation and consolidating
282 democracy in Nigeria. Social media represents a veritable avenue for political change by socializing citizens into
283 the political beliefs required for democratic citizenship, and thereby promoting liberal democracy. It facilitates
284 online communities chat groups created by political entrepreneurs for members, readers, listeners and viewers to
285 discuss issues, have their voices heard, and get feedback in record time. The fact that social media is a supportive

8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

286 avenue for sharing views and opinions and discussing political life in the country implies that the social media
287 can play an important role in deepening democracy. Social media therefore is a plausible option for political
mobilization and participation in Nigeria.



Figure 1:

288

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