

Political Sociology Of Rented Crowds And Elections Malpractice In Nigeria: An Invitation To Bad Governance And Under-Development

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Abstract: This work examines politics of rented crowds as an invitation to bad governance and under-development in Nigeria. The performance of the elected politicians ought to be characterized by some indicators of good governance such as, service delivery, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness, popular participation, etc Paradoxically, the reverse has always been the case because the impacts of the rented crowds have pervaded the political landscape of Nigeria. Indeed, every Nigerian is adversely affected by Nigerian factors which are predicated on corruption, greed, selfishness among others. All these are the precursors for rented crowds and elections malpractice which have been having deleterious effects on governance. As a corollary, the much expected dividends of democracy is nothing but a ruse.

The work relies on both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The data sources were complemented with the administration of questionnaires and oral interview with relevant stakeholders and members of the public to obtain more information about the activities of the rented crowds. Data were also sourced from the internet, governmental organizations and agencies concerned with the issue of good governance and elections.

The study raises fundamental question about the desirability of the rented crowds in politics as far as Nigerian political system is concerned. It noted that instead of being concerned with good governance, the political office holders are preoccupied with primitive accumulations thereby using the rented crowd as cover up who goes about shouting unnecessary encomiums whenever the former appears in public.

The study therefore concludes that for the attainment of good governance and development, the use of rented crowds in politics should be de-emphasized in order to pave way for government to be responsible and responsive to the yearnings and aspirations of the people. There must be conscious efforts on the part of the elected politicians to be seen as true representatives of the people by promoting accountability, transparency and probity. This will serve as model for others to be on their toes so as to engender good governance in the land.

Keywords: Political Sociology, Rented Crowds; Elections Malpractice; Bad Governance and Under-Development.

I. INTRODUCTION

The performance of the elected politicians ought to be characterized by some indicators of good governance such as,

service delivery, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness, popular participation, and so. (Ludger, 2014). Paradoxically, the reverse has always been the case because the impacts of the rented crowds have pervaded

the political landscape of Nigeria. Indeed, every Nigerian is adversely affected by Nigerian factors which are predicated on corruption, greed, selfishness among others. All these are the precursors for rented crowds and elections malpractice which have been impacting deleterious effects on governance. As a corollary, the much expected dividend of democracy is nothing but a ruse.

However, the fundamental question is all about the desirability of the rented crowds in politics as far as Nigerian political system is concerned. Instead of being concerned with good governance, the political office holders are preoccupied with primitive accumulations thereby using the rented crowd as cover up who goes about shouting unnecessary encomiums whenever the former appears in public. Rented crowds and elections malpractice in Nigeria is an invitation to bad governance and under-development due to the fact that those so rented are most often than not used as political thugs who are commissioned to carry out much inflicted evils on the society. And again bad governance and under-development are ingredients of un-democratic regimes which must not be on the focus during democratic governance.

This study, looking at the issue from both political and sociological perspectives, therefore investigates the major precursors for all afore-mentioned and how practicable solutions could be rendered in order to reduce the menace.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Arising from introduction are the following research questions:

- ✓ What is rented crowd?
- ✓ Of what impact is the rented crowd to socio-political and economic development of Nigeria?
- ✓ To what extent has the political sociology of Nigeria been aided by the formation of rented crowd?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study's objectives are to:

- ✓ To identify the meaning of rented crowd in Nigerian politics.
- ✓ To assess the impact of rented crowd socio-political and economic development of Nigeria
- ✓ To examine the extent to which the formation of rented crowd has aided the political sociology of Nigeria

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

The study is tested on the following basic assumptions

- ✓ That as long as politics exists, rented crowd lingers on
- ✓ That rented crowd impacts negatively on socio-political and economic growth of Nigeria.
- ✓ That rented crowd has not aided the political sociology of Nigeria as a country

Conceptual Clarification: Political Sociology, Rented Crowds; Elections Malpractice; Bad Governance And Under-Development.

II. POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

Political sociology is the study of power and the relationship between societies, states, and political conflict. It is a broad subfield that straddles political science and sociology, with "macro" and "micro" components. The macro-focus has centered on questions about nation-states, political institutions and their development, and the sources of social and political change (especially those involving large-scale social movements and other forms of collective action). Here, researchers have asked "big" questions about how and why political institutions take the form that they do, and how and when they undergo significant change. The micro orientation, by contrast, examines how social identities and groups influence individual political behavior, such as voting, attitudes, and political participation *Oxfordbibliographies* (2011). While both the macro- and micro-areas of political sociology overlap with political science, the distinctive focus of political sociologists is less on the internal workings or mechanics of the political system and more on the underlying social forces that shape the political system. Political sociology can trace its origins to the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber, among others, but it only emerged as a separate subfield within sociology after World War II. Many of the landmark works of the 1950s and 1960s centered on micro-questions about the impact of class, religion, race/ethnicity, or education on individual and group-based political behavior. Beginning in the 1970s, political sociologists increasingly turned toward macro-topics, such as understanding the sources and consequences of revolutions, the role of political institutions in shaping political outcomes, and large-scale comparative-historical studies of state development. Today both micro- and macro-scholarship can be found in political sociology.

Political sociology having been broadly conceived as the study of power and domination in social relationships, it could include analysis of the family, the mass media, universities, trade unions, and so on. See www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100334761

Political science and sociology began to develop as independent disciplines in the nineteenth century under the influence of marginalist economics which attempted to demarcate the study of the 'political' from that of the 'social' and the 'economic' (see political economy). Political science became focused on the analysis of the machinery of government, the mechanisms of public administration and theories of governance. Sociology adopted a much broader definition of its subject matter. Weber provided the theoretical underpinning for modern sociology defined as the interpretative understanding of social action linked to a causal explanation of its course and consequences. By concentrating on the reciprocal influence of social structure on social action, sociology is free to analyse all forms of social interaction (from language and sexuality to religion and industry).

Three main approaches to political sociology have considerably narrowed its subject area. The first builds directly on Max Weber's notion of 'politically oriented action'. Weber defined an organization as 'political' in so far as its existence and order is continuously safeguarded within a territorial area by the threat and application of physical force

on the part of an administrative staff (see state). The study of the direct agents of the legitimate use of force could, Weber argued, be distinguished from the study of groups which attempt to influence the activities of the political organization. This latter study Weber designated as 'politically oriented' action. Weberian political sociologists have therefore traditionally focused attention on such issues as voting behaviour in communities, ideologies of political movements and interest groups, socio-psychological correlates of political behaviour and organization, and the relationship between economic power and political decision-making. In the late 1960s under the influence of Seymour Lipset and Stein Rokkan a second main approach to political sociology was developed. The sub-discipline now encompassed the comparative and historical study of political systems and nation-building. By analysing the role of political institutions in social development (and revolution) this branch of political sociology has contributed to the comparative analysis of welfare systems, to studies of the relationship between democracy and industrialization, and to charting the role of the state in the creation of national identity. The third focus of modern political sociology is on theories of the state, and here the sub-discipline draws particularly on currents in Western Marxism and contemporary political theory. Building on the Marxist critique of pluralist approaches to the state, political sociologists have focused on the problem of state/society relations and developed detailed empirical studies of the exercise of power both within and between states. According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, there are traditionally four main areas of research in political sociology which are: (i) The socio-political formation of the modern state; (ii) "Who rules?" How social inequality between groups (class, race, gender, etc.) influences politics; (iii) How public opinion, ideologies, personalities, social movements, and trends outside of the formal institutions of political power affect formal politics; (iv) Power relationships within and between social groups (e.g. families, workplaces, bureaucracy, media, etc.).

In other words, political sociology was traditionally concerned with how social trends, dynamics, and structures of domination affect formal political processes, as well as exploring how various social forces work together to change political policies. From this perspective, we can identify three major theoretical frameworks: pluralism, elite or managerial theory, and class analysis (which overlaps with Marxist analysis). Pluralism sees politics primarily as a contest among competing interest groups. Elite or managerial theory is sometimes called a state-centered approach. It explains what the state does by looking at constraints from organizational structure, semi-autonomous state managers, and interests that arise from the state as a unique, power-concentrating organization. A leading representative is Theda Skocpol. Social class theory analysis emphasizes the political power of capitalist elites. It can be split into two parts: one is the "power structure" or "instrumentalist" approach, whereas another is the structuralist approach. The power structure approach focuses on the question of who rules and its most well-known representative is G. William Domhoff.

III. RENTED CROWDS

The concept of 'rented crowds' begins with the development of political parties especially in Nigeria with inception of Democracy. Rented crowds are the recruited individuals in the society by the cabal politics. According to Junaid Mohammed (2017) *There was nothing genuine about it. They (the people who jubilated upon Buhari's return) were rented crowds.* He told Punch,

"We know how they were recruited. Some of the characters in the cabal and their lackeys have a voice in the media. Their thugs in town were the people who were given money and some transport were provided for them. Some came from as far as Kaduna, Jos and other areas — so, I'm not surprised. In my own experience is politics, if it is anything to go by, rented crowds don't confirm or deny anything. And anybody who has been in (Nigerian) politics for over 40 years will tell you that rented crowds don't prove anything and they don't disprove anything either.

Furthermore, the concept of rented crowd became more popular consequent upon the abject poverty in the society which has characterized Nigerian politics. According to Fourstar82, (2003), rented crowds are *Wankers who will protest against anything and everything even if they don't know what they are protesting about. Mostly made up of foul smelling hippies and moronic people.* www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Rent%20a%20crowd

The primary purpose for the formation of rented crowd is to generate fake enthusiasm from flash mobs to the campaign trail. For instance, according to THE ATLANTIC Jul 22, 2015 Dan Schneider indicated as follows:

Donald Trump's presidential campaign announcement last month was widely mocked, not only for the rambling diatribe he used to launch the campaign but for the actors he paid \$50 apiece to cheer for it. Journalists responded with a predictable amount of schadenfreude when it was revealed that the Trump campaign hired actors to attend his rally, lighting up Twitter with jokes at Trump's expense and "You're Hired!" headlines. The incident was even memorialized with its own coy shout-out by The Simpsons.

The idea of paying for the appearance of excitement offends the belief that a political campaign's fortunes should be somewhat rooted in genuine support for a candidate. The kind of grassroots fervor generated by Barack Obama in 2008, Ron Paul in 2012, or Bernie Sanders today is aspirational for campaign organizers. However, for politicians with a dearth of excitement, the reason for faking it is obvious: Phony support can generate buzz and media coverage of their campaign—which in turn could theoretically morph into real support, as voters start to hear more about the candidate.

IV. ELECTIONS MALPRACTICE

Elections Malpractice involves electoral fraud, election manipulation, or vote rigging is illegal interference with the process of an election, whether by increasing the vote share of the favored candidate, depressing the vote share of the rival candidates, or both. Electoral fraud, election manipulation, or vote rigging is illegal interference with the process of an

election, whether by increasing the vote share of the favored candidate, depressing the vote share of the rival candidates, or both. What constitutes electoral fraud varies from country to country.

Many kinds of election fraud are outlawed in electoral legislation, but others are in violation of general laws, such as those banning assault, harassment or libel. Although technically the term 'electoral fraud' covers only those acts which are illegal, the term is sometimes used to describe acts which are legal, but considered morally unacceptable, outside the spirit of an election or in violation of the principles of democracy. (Sanni, 2007) Show elections, in which there is only one candidate, are sometimes classified as electoral fraud, although they may comply with the law and are presented more as referendums.

In national elections, successful electoral fraud can have the effect of a coup d'état or corruption of democracy. In a narrow election, a small amount of fraud may be enough to change the result. Even if the outcome is not affected, revelation of fraud can have a damaging effect, if not punished, as it can reduce voters' confidence in democracy.

A list of threats to voting systems, or electoral fraud methods considered as sabotage, is kept by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (Sanni, 2007) and is considered sabotage of the highest degree.

V. BAD GOVERNANCE AND UNDER-DEVELOPMENT

According to the World Bank's measures of good governance, a country with bad or poor governance holds the figures of any or all of the indicators less than one and close to -2.5 (World Bank 1999). What are the causes of bad governance? Is political underdevelopment largely due to the ways in which interactions with the 'metropolitan countries' have shaped, and continue to shape, poor countries? This paper argues that 'bad governance' is made, not born, and 'we' (human beings) play a part in creating and maintaining it. To buttress this argument, Delta State in Nigeria opines thus: *I am not saying restructuring is not important. But they are bordering more on the failures of the governance system to such an extent that people are now feeling very pained over the years. It's not the fault of one particular government. Over the years, we have failed to diversify the economy. "We have just concentrated on the oil economy, and to that large extent, we try to destroy the agricultural economy and industrialization, which was already picking up at a point in time. We refused to use the money from oil to critically address those issues and that is what has brought us to where we are. It is the pain that the people are going through that is making people to begin to talk about the discourse of restructuring.* (The Punch 27th, 2017)

The political underdevelopment that is characteristic of much of the 'South' largely results from the ways in which states have been created and political authority shaped through interactions with the wealthier 'core' countries in the context of global economic and political systems. Political underdevelopment stems, to a large degree, from low levels of dependence of state elites on their own citizens. Poor world states are relatively homogenous in their formal organizational

characteristics. The heterogeneity in the actual functioning of states stems largely from wide differences in patterns of state-society relations (UNCTAD, 2007). The degree of dependence of states on citizens is the most significant element in this pattern. Low levels of dependence of states on citizens are found in three main types of circumstances. These circumstances overlap a great deal in practice, but are best treated as separate for analytical purposes: (1) Where state elites enjoy strong external financial and/or military support even when they are in conflict with many of their own citizens. (2) Where states are dependent on 'unearned income'. 'Earned income' is when the state has to put in organizational and political effort in working with citizens to get its money. Unearned income generally comes from mineral revenues or overseas aid. (3) Where state elites, and sometimes their challengers, have abundant resources and scope to purchase supportive military force that can be used against their own citizens. (4) In some countries it has been relatively easy in recent decades to exercise a kind of state power by purchasing military force with the proceeds of sales of valuable commodities on global markets. The low dependence of poor-world states on their own citizens, in any of these forms, is possible only because of the great political and economic inequalities between states at the global level. Poor-world states have been created and shaped through interactions with the wealthier and more powerful 'core' countries. Several evident policy implications arise from this: (1) Poor countries need to tax themselves more. There is no convincing evidence that, on a country by country basis, increases in aid levels actually reduce the effective tax effort. (2) However, it is clear that in aggregate governments of poor countries reap an unusually low proportion of GNP in the form of taxes. (3) Doing something about that would also provide the (reliable) resources they need to tackle poverty and deprivation. (4) There is a need for more effective restrictions on international arms sales and on international purchases of commodities from 'tainted' sources. (5) We should be less concerned with manipulating state institutions of poor countries in the name of 'good governance', and put more effort into creating the environmental conditions that will encourage the emergence of more productive state-society relations.

VI. RENTED CROWDS AND ELECTIONS MALPRACTICE: INVITATION TO BAD GOVERNANCE?

The evil effects of rented crowd in Nigerian politics are worthy of mention for the understanding of the reading public here. Political godfathers in Nigeria are known to have used unemployed youths as rented crowd to undermine the democratic process, thereby hindering the election of competent leaders by the electorate (Okoye-Nebo, C., Iloanya, K. & Uduze, U. 2014). Unemployed youths have been used by political godfathers across the country to engage in anti-democratic activities during the fourth republic. Political Godfathers usually hire unemployed youths to oppress, intimidate or kill political opponents who they believe stand the chance of defeating them in general elections (Sanni, 2007; Abdullahi, 2005). In other instances, during elections

they are engaged to monitor and defend the votes of their particular candidates by standing at the polling booths to steal or prevent ballot boxes from being stolen depending on their strength and popularity in the political wards (Pastore, 1950). Sometimes, the political godfathers use these unemployed youths to engage in stuffing of ballot boxes with ballot papers, Illegal thumb-printing of ballot papers, ballot box snatching, mobilize children for under-age voting, amongst other activities that border on rigging of elections (Olarinmoye, 2008). Okoye-Nebo (2014) write that the inability of the Nigerian state to provide stable power supply has made it hostile to investment. Bad governance could be seen in the area of economic perspective for instance Manufacturing industries that rely on generating plants to power their manufacturing outfits end up operating at higher costs than their competitors in other countries, and in the era of globalization, they choose to close shop or relocate to countries with favourable operating environment. Closure or relocation of such industries leads to loss of jobs and inability to create new ones, which heightens the crisis of youth unemployment in the country (Onifade, 2011). The closure and relocation of the industries affects economic development as the contribution they were making to the national economy will be lacking. The closure or relocation of manufacturing industries and investors makes it difficult for the country to attract new foreign direct investment which is regarded as a major requirement for the attainment of economic development Sanni, S. (2007). It globally acknowledged that for any country to achieve economic development it must industrial to the extent of having comparative advantage in particular manufactured products. Where industries instead of growing, close shop because of unfavourable operating environment it has grave implications for the national economy. Contrary to the projections of United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2007) that Nigeria was to emerge as the 40th most attractive location for foreign direct investment FDI in the world, Ezekiel (2010) and Williams (2011) report that the volume of new FDI attraction had continued to dwindle, as Nigeria attracts less volume of FDI than Angola and Ghana. This may not be unconnected to high level of insecurity in different parts of the country of which unemployed youths have been the principal actors. (Onifade, D. 2011).

This tactic hasn't been limited to bids for higher office. Political protests have also used such services to fortify its crowds: *The New York Times* reported that, during this year's NYC Pride Parade, a group of anti-gay marriage "protesters" were actually several hired day laborers. Local carpenters unions—notably the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council of Carpenters—have been using such tactics for years, paying temporary workers (and often the homeless) to walk picket lines during a strike.

These days, if a candidate or protest organizer is short on numbers, he or she can simply pick up the phone and call a company like Crowds on Demand, a Los Angeles-based company that provides rental crowds for campaign rallies and protests (Onyango-Obbo2017) The company was founded in late 2012 by Adam Swart, a UCLA grad who majored in political science. It is among a very small number of U.S. companies that offers rental crowd services in the U.S.

(including Crowds for Rent and the Trump-hired Extra Mile Casting), and perhaps the only one that does so openly.

While Crowds on Demand was initially geared toward corporate events and PR stunts, Swart says that soon after the company's founding, would-be elected officials began reaching out for his services in order to give their campaigns a boost. Some have used his services to protest opposing candidates; others have used them to create the appearance of larger turnouts at their own events. "Our business is about cultivating perception. It's basic marketing," Swart said.

Outside of the realm of politics, Crowds on Demand offers an array of crowd-providing services, ranging from a "celebrity shopping experience"—the client mobbed by fake paparazzi outside a posh L.A. boutique—to big PR stunts, such as a 100-person flash mob at a corporate trade show. Swart says his gigs have ranged from two people to hundreds, and that with enough notice (and money) Crowds on Demand can offer more than 1,000 people. But whether the setting is a campaign rally or a convention hall, Crowds on Demand's goal is always the same: getting people's attention (Olarinmoye, 2008).

Crowds on Demand offers its services in San Francisco, New York City, and Washington D.C. Thousands of people have applied to be extras with Crowds on Demand. Swart says that he has the most "crowd actors" in cities where real actors tend to try to make it—New York and L.A.—but he has actors available in political hotspots such as Iowa and New Hampshire as well. And while his company generally works in more populous areas, it isn't limited by geography—or ideology for that matter (Abdullahi,2005). Voters may be given money or other rewards for voting in a particular way, or not voting. In some jurisdictions, the offer or giving of other rewards is referred to as "electoral treating". Electoral treating remains legal in some jurisdictions, such as in the Seneca Nation of Indians. Or when a situation gives room for voters' intimidation which may involve putting undue pressure on voters or group of voters so that they will vote a particular way, or not at all. The implication is bad governance indeed

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implication of rented crowds is that if it is carried out by the government, it shows that such government is not popular. And we are supposed to be concerned about the state of the country — recession, armed robbery, kidnapping, militancy in the Niger Delta and terrorism in the North-East, economic mismanagement and the compounding problem of corruption. In addition to these challenges, it is really unrealistic to expect Nigerians to be happy which is an invitation to bad governance. It has been previously stated in this study that the performance of the elected politicians ought to be characterized by some indicators of good governance such as, service delivery, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness, popular participation, etc Paradoxically, the reverse has always been the case because the impacts of the rented crowds have pervaded the political landscape of Nigeria. Indeed, every Nigerian is adversely affected by Nigerian factors which are predicated on corruption, greed, selfishness among others.

All these are the precursors for rented crowds and elections malpractice which have been infusing deleterious effects on governance. As a corollary, the much expected dividends of democracy is nothing but a ruse.

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