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The Cost of Parliamentary Politics in Kenya

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Introduction

Members of Parliament (MPs) in Kenya are amongst the highest paid in the world relative to the size of the economy.¹ Parliamentary seats are among the most sought-after positions in society, bringing the holder wealth and social standing. In recent years, there has been an increasing trend whereby those in lucrative senior private sector positions leave, in pursuit of the perceived comfort and stature of public or political office.

In a situation where political office has become both lucrative and sought after, the stakes around political contests have also risen significantly. In some cases, they are so high that the contests have become a do-or-die affair. Violence around electoral contests is all too common and has been used as a tool to influence electoral outcomes, whether by way of displacement or intimidation of certain sections of the electorate. Post-election violence following the 2007 election claimed in excess of 1,500 lives and displaced more than 300,000.² The ensuing disruption had major socio-political and economic effects on Kenyan society. While the 2013 and 2017 elections were not characterised by the widespread violence witnessed in early 2008, numerous deaths and injuries were reported, many at the hands of the police.

In such an environment, where securing a parliamentary seat is the ultimate aspiration and privilege, and where, for that reason, there are individuals who are prepared to go to great lengths to secure the seat, the cost of politics is unsurprisingly significant.

Methodology

Interviews with politicians - sitting MPs as well as politicians who contested in 2017, but were unsuccessful, academic and non-academic literature, and print media sources were the key resources used in this study. In total, 10 politicians were interviewed from the following political parties - Jubilee Party, Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), Wiper Party, Kenya African National Union (KANU), Ukweli Party - as well as two individuals who contested as independents. Of those interviewed, 50% were women.



I. Historical context

Kenya's immediate post-colonial state was characterised by a strong centralised administration. In 1964, the year following independence, a constitutional amendment transformed Kenya into a republic with a presidential system. Kenya under KANU was a de facto one party state, later becoming a de jure one-party state in 1982, when parliament made an official declaration to that effect. The party was 'all things to all men', to the extent that KANU was known as 'mama na baba' (both mother and father), a reference to the near omniscience and omnipresence of the ruling party. While the party had little to show in terms of ideological leaning, it straddled the political landscape like a colossus.

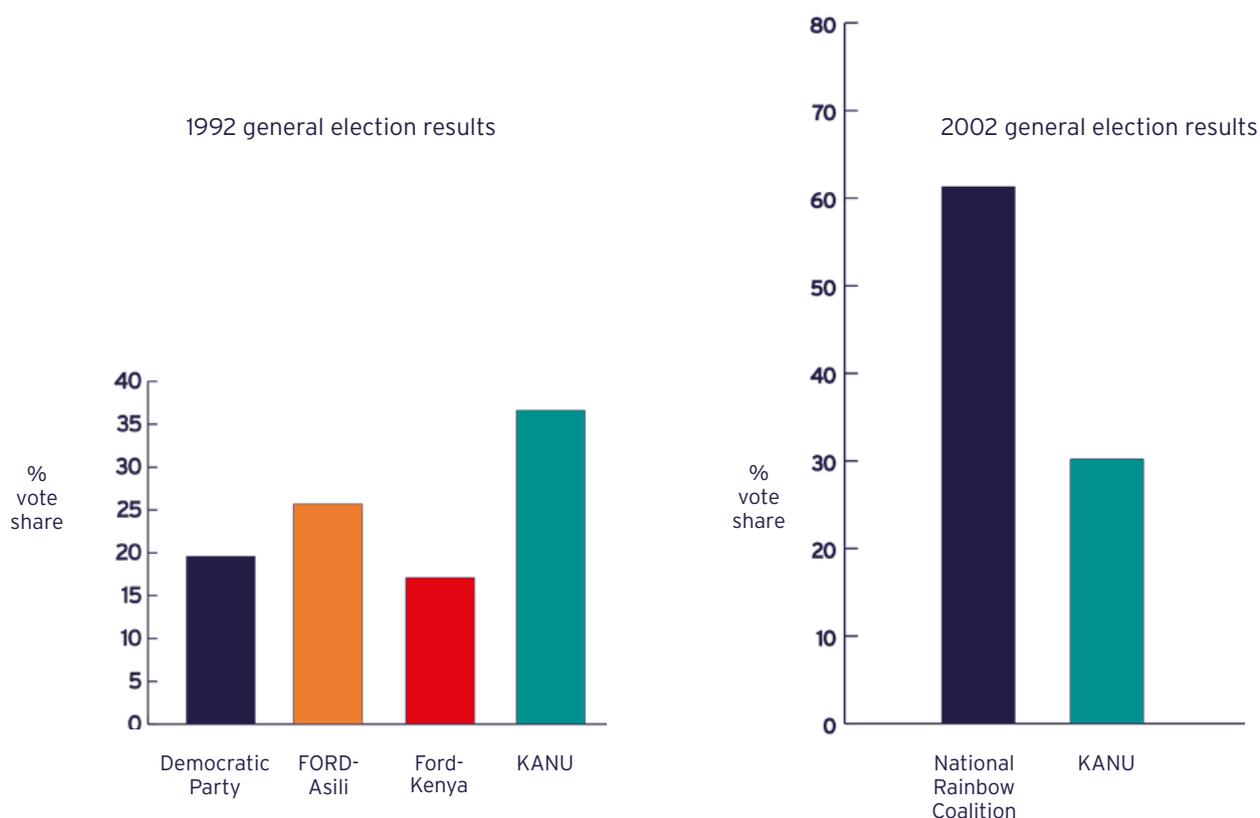
In the period between 1969 and 1982, there was healthy party primary political competition, but no inter-party competition within the de facto one-party set up. With all political activity and competition taking place within KANU, patronage took hold as the driving force in politics. Proximity to the patron and loyalty determined political standing. This was of far greater value than ideology or ability. Kenya's political history is replete with political figures who sacrificed their dignity, and perfected sycophancy to demonstrate their complete and unwavering loyalty to the party and party leader. More often than not this undivided loyalty, more so than wealth, was sufficient to secure the attention of the 'Big Man' and ensure political favour, business opportunities or cabinet positions. The politics of the day, coupled with the one-party state structure, lent itself to the personalisation of power. Kenya's first president, Jomo Kenyatta, was the first beneficiary of this situation, but it was also leveraged by his successor, Daniel Arap Moi.

Whilst the 1980s were repressive, the 1990s were increasingly progressive. The clamour for democratic reform was sweeping across the African continent and Kenya was no exception. The late 1980s saw the beginnings of underground dissent as people, both individually and collectively, beginning to consider alternative political possibilities. This combination of internal agitation and international pressure saw President Moi give in to the demands for political reform in Kenya. But the new multi-party dispensation would allow him to contest and serve two more terms as president.

In 1991, Section 2A of the Constitution was repealed by the Constitution of Kenya (Amendment) Act, paving the way for multi-party democracy and introducing two, five-year term, limits for the presidency. The return to multi-party politics came with increased cost implications, as open political competition required intense organisation and mobilisation, as opposed to reliance on the machinations of the party hierarchy as had been the case under single party rule.

Eight political parties fielded presidential candidates in the 1992 general election. A lack of opposition unity meant that incumbent President Moi and his KANU party were able to register victory with only 36.6% of the vote. The next three candidates, Kenneth Matiba of FORD-Asili (25.7%), Mwai Kibaki of the Democratic Party (19.6%), and Jaramogi Oginga Odinga of Ford-Kenya (17.1%) combined for 62.4% of the vote. In 1997, Moi was again able to defeat a divided political opposition, winning with just 40.4% of the vote. By 2002 the opposition had learned its electoral lessons. With the single agenda of removing Moi and his ilk from power, and an opposition united in this cause, the opposition coalition swept to an overwhelming victory with 61.3% of the vote (see Figure 1 below). These elections were perhaps the least contentious and least violent in the history of independent Kenya. Unfortunately, they were to be followed by Kenya's most violent elections in 2007-08.

Figure 1: 1992 and 2002 general election results in Kenya - major political groupings



Ethnic and political divisions were starkly highlighted in the violence of late 2007 and early 2008. With approximately 50 unique ethnic groups, Kenya is an extremely diverse country and ethnicity plays a significant role in politics and political organisation. Since independence, ethnic mobilisation has been one of the most prevalent tools used to galvanise political support. Ethnic groups form a ready-made voting block of similar interests, with the size of the ethnic group in question determining their ability to leverage bargaining power at the national level. Leading political figures have perfected the art of mobilising their respective ethnic groups and using this support to either leverage more widespread support or negotiate with other political leaders at the national level. This widespread practice has effectively reduced political parties to vehicles for ethnic leaders to ascend to political power, ostensibly acting on behalf of their ethnic groups. This political culture creates a situation whereby issues of national or local interest often take a back seat to the ethnic arithmetic of the day.

It is therefore of little surprise, that the parties that enjoy the most support are those associated with the larger ethnic groups. It is equally of little surprise that, given that parties are not established on the basis of political ideology or inclination, it is not uncommon for politicians to defect from one political party to another as the political realities of the day demand. As such, every electoral cycle, a plethora of new political parties come into existence. This presents a challenge for the development of democratic practice in Kenya.

The number of registered political parties has increased exponentially since 1992 when only 10 were in existence. In 2008, 168 were registered. Though the presence of more political parties has provided more democratic choice, the rate of proliferation has further contributed to the tendency for politicians to move from one political party to another to enhance their own political ambitions. As a result, in many cases political parties have lost their *raison d'être* and become mere vehicles in the pursuit of a single political goal, winning power. In recognition of the need to curtail the 'briefcase political party' industry, Kenyan authorities made a concerted effort to de-list inactive political parties.³ In August 2019, Kenya had a much reduced, though still significant 68 registered political parties.⁴

The promulgation of a new constitution in 2010 was a defining moment in Kenya's history and a significant step towards resolving the myriad social and political injustices that resulted in the outbreak of violence in 2007-08. Hailed as one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, it was the result of decades of political debate. 68.5% of Kenyans approved its adoption in a referendum. The new constitutional dispensation devolved powers to 47 newly created counties who were to be governed by a host of new elective positions: County Governors, Senators, Women's Representatives and Members of the County Assembly.

With six elective positions available in each county - if you include the votes for the President and members of the National Assembly - larger political parties sought to secure their dominance by piggy-backing on the popularity of the presidential candidate to seek all six elective seats in a particular county: a six-piece suit in Kenyan parlance. From a parliamentary perspective, the effect of this voting phenomenon in 2017 was less interrogation of the quality of parliamentary and other candidates: a more important consideration for voters was whether they belonged to their preferred political party and its leader.⁵

II. Current drivers of the cost of parliamentary politics

Kenya spent 70 billion Kenyan shillings (KSh) (US\$ 686 million) on the 2017 general election and repeat presidential poll - required after a successful Supreme Court petition by runner-up Raila Odinga to have the presidential election results annulled. Around 85% of this figure was given to the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC).⁶

With slightly under 20 million registered voters, the cost per registered voter of Kenya's most recent election was US\$25.40, second only to Papua New Guinea in global rankings, whose polls cost US\$63 per voter. Neighbouring countries have all been able to conduct much more cost-effective elections: Rwanda (US\$1.05), Uganda (US\$4), and Tanzania (US\$5.16 per voter).⁷ According to IEBC Commissioner Abdi Guliye, the reason for this disparity comes down to trust. In a 2017 interview with *The Standard* newspaper he opined that because Kenyans do not trust each other or their institutions, it becomes necessary to spend a tremendous amount of money to bridge the trust deficit. This comes in the form of expensive electronic gadgetry, and a ballot paper with additional security features that make it more secure than some currencies.⁸ Despite these additional security features, the IEBC server was hacked during the 2017 election, which, in part, led to the nullification of the presidential results.

Elections themselves are expensive exercises but so too is aspiring for political office. Political culture plays a significant role in determining the cost of politics. The inflated costs of seeking election in Kenya do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, they are the product of social and political behaviours developed over time. The onset of the political process for any aspiring political candidate is the question of motivation. Why run for political office? In some cases, it might be a burning desire to be of service. On the opposite side of the spectrum, the egocentric need for recognition and social standing that accompanies political office in Kenya may drive aspirants' bids. There are also those who fall somewhere in between these opposing dimensions; those who seek political office for its proximity to power to be able to further their personal as well as community interests.

Getting on the party ticket

In many parts of Kenya party primaries can be more important, more competitive, and thus more expensive than the election campaign itself. Where a political party is also the party of the foremost regional political leader, and thus the party of choice for the ethnic group or a regional stronghold, being a candidate on its ticket in the election campaign provides almost certain victory at the ballot. During the 2017 election, a Jubilee ticket in Central Kenya or Rift Valley, or an ODM ticket in Nyanza region or parts of Western and the Coastal region proffered a distinct advantage on the holder and were thus fiercely contested. These ethnically homogeneous, or stronghold, regions present a democratic challenge, as it is extremely difficult, though not impossible, for a minority group candidate in that region to compete politically.

For many political aspirants, the real competition lies at the primary phase. A majority of those interviewed for this study confirmed this 'political reality'. Half spent in excess of KSh 15 million (US\$147,000)⁹ just to try and

get on the ballot paper, with a number admitting to spending more at the primary phase than at the election phase. One individual interviewed spent KSh 25 million (US\$245,000). Of this formal filing fees constituted a nominal expense, while branded campaign materials were a top expense for all concerned. Some other major costs incurred at the primaries phase included mobilisation costs - fuel, logistics, security, roadshows and rallies - and payment of campaign teams. Depending on the dynamics and location of a constituency, campaign teams can constitute a major cost given that apart from compensating the individuals involved, they include overheads such as rent and communications.

Most respondents stated that the dynamics of a constituency as well as geographical location and population were relevant factors that influence the cost of the campaign. A majority felt that urban constituencies required more resources and a more sophisticated campaign, but one dissenting MP felt that rural constituencies were more expensive since the culture of handouts was more prevalent.¹⁰

What is clear is that it is necessary to invest very heavily in the primary campaign if one expects to win a parliamentary seat. Political aspirants who contest in smaller parties are spared the vagaries and expense of the competitive primaries season and are able to clinch the tickets of their respective parties with little or no competition, but their likelihood of electoral success is considerably lower. Between 2013 and 2017, for example, only six seats in the National Assembly were held by candidates who were not part of the ruling Jubilee or opposition Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD). The heavy investment at the primary stage heightens the stakes during the campaign, with candidates willing to do whatever it takes to ensure their investment at the primary stage will not be in vain.

It is important to note that while it is both difficult and expensive for candidates to get on the party ticket, this challenge is further exacerbated for women candidates. The importance of the candidate selection process for women cannot be overstated. While trends indicate an increase in the number of women in elective positions, the numbers still fall short of Kenya's constitutional requirement of one-third. Whilst the rationale behind the creation of the women's representative position - at the county level - may have been noble in terms of enhancing women's representation, it may have inadvertently produced undesirable results. According to a 2015 report, 'there are indications that the creation of special parliamentary seats for women county representatives created further challenges for women who wish to represent a party in an election for a regular constituency seat, requiring them to raise and spend even more money during the nomination phase because the regular seats are now perceived as "men's seats"'.¹¹

Minimal party support

Save for flying the party banner, candidates can only realistically count on limited support from the party. In terms of financial resources, this will depend on the size of the party, and the significance the party ascribes to the seat in question. The party, through its machinery, may only be able to mobilise volunteers and special interest groups at the grassroots level for meetings and political rallies.

From the perspective of the party, the primaries present an opportunity to generate some rare and precious resources from aspiring candidates. Most political parties in Kenya suffer from a perennial lack of resources. Outside the political season, many fold down to a minimal retinue of staff and operations slow to a crawl. Only the larger, more established parties can maintain operations and activities on a regular basis, buoyed by greater access to a financial support base and benefiting from the Political Parties Fund (PPF).

Due to an extremely high legal threshold,¹² only a select few parties benefit from the PPF. Following the 2017 elections, only Jubilee and ODM qualified to receive a share of KSh 371.2 million (US\$ 3.6 million) (0.3% of national revenue) allocated by parliament for the 2017-18 financial year.¹³ A framework that is so rigid as to benefit only two parties to the exclusion of all others should not be viewed as enhancing democracy and strengthening political parties. There is also insufficient evidence available to indicate the extent to which the parties use these funds to support prospective candidates.

For the most part, candidates take on a significant role in funding political parties at the grassroots level. Due to the commercialisation of politics, and the knowledge that political aspirants are willing to spend significant

sums to get elected, the electorate expect politicians and political parties to compensate them for their support. It is, therefore, almost inconceivable for most Kenyans to pay a membership fee to join a political party. In practice, membership cards are usually purchased in bulk by a candidate or political benefactor and distributed at political rallies and meetings. It is considered a worthwhile investment in building a potential base of 'party' supporters.

Legal disputes and the challenge of independents

While holding the party ticket in a dominant party context might be an advantage, it does not guarantee victory, or indeed an easy electoral victory. Two significant hurdles remain. The first surrounds legal disputes; an unwelcome and often costly distraction. The primary responsibility for adjudicating party nomination disputes falls on the Political Parties Disputes Tribunal (PPDT) and the IEBC. 306 disputes over the legality of candidates were filed in 2017, with the two biggest parties - ODM (160) and Jubilee (76)¹⁴ - accounting for over two-thirds of those. A further illustration of the significance of securing the dominant party ticket in many parts of the country.

These numbers would likely have been higher, but for the fact that the PPDT only sat in Nairobi, thereby restricting access of aggrieved parties who were unable to afford the transport and logistical costs associated with filing a dispute in the capital. Remote counties such as Wajir, Mandera and Lamu recorded zero disputes.¹⁵ The PPDT spent three months attending to complaints arising out of party primaries, while it also had to spend ten days dealing with disputes arising from party lists. In the aftermath of the 2017 elections, several hundred election petitions were filed across the various elective seats, 125 of which were in respect of parliamentary contests.¹⁶ Settling these through the courts is a further cost to be met by the candidates.

A second challenge for prospective party candidates arises from poorly drafted legislation, which permits vanquished foes from the primaries re-entering the race as independent candidates. While there have been laudable attempts to address party-hopping - defecting to a different party after losing the primaries in an existing party - a loophole was left open for independent candidates. This was exploited during the 2017 elections. In the first widespread showing of independent candidates since the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution 3,752 out of the 15,082 aspirants who contested elections in 2017 did so as independents.¹⁷

If this loophole is not addressed, the number is only likely to grow in future elections, posing a significant quandary for party candidates. Even with the benefit of a dominant party ticket, it is likely that they will still have to invest significantly in the campaign, especially when faced with a strong independent, who may carry a sympathy vote if the electorate feel he or she was hard done by in the primaries. In some cases, an aspirant, having lost at the primaries phase, may quickly register as an independent candidate, not with the intention of contesting the election, but as leverage to extract an inducement from his or her opponent to step aside. In other cases, an aspirant who has lost at the primaries phase and registered as an independent candidate could be 'convinced' by the party leader, hierarchy or competing aspirant to set aside his or her ambitions. Many of these behind closed doors interactions carry significant cost implications.

The campaigns

The campaign phase of the election cycle presents a completely different set of dynamics. While those who faced competitive primaries and those who were subjected to less rigorous selection processes meet as equals on the campaign trail, from a strategic perspective they face vastly different challenges.

During the primaries, the respective party leadership will not have openly supported any one candidate over another, although their close lieutenants will be well known to all and will enjoy their implicit or informal backing. But once individuals have emerged victorious from competitive dominant party primaries in ethnically homogenous or stronghold constituencies, they enjoy the significant advantage of the party machinery behind them. Furthermore, they have access to a political currency worth its weight in gold in their respective regions: the support of the party leader. The party leader, in many cases, is more than just the leader of the political party: they are also the de facto leader of the ethnic group and therefore a veritable deity to the party rank and file.

For those who were subjected to less rigorous selection processes, it is at this stage that the rubber meets the road. Without the ability to ride on the popularity of a strong party leader, they will largely have to rely on their own efforts to coordinate and fund campaigns. Smaller parties, short on resources, are unlikely to be able to offer much support in this regard. In 2017 some candidates of smaller parties strategically pledged their support for a dominant party presidential candidate in the hope of benefiting from the call for six-piece voting.

But even for candidates who have a public endorsement from the party or the leader, costs remain high. There was a broad-based consensus among respondents on the amount of money one would have to raise to run an effective parliamentary campaign. At the more conservative end of the spectrum, respondents felt it would cost a minimum of KSh 20 million (US\$196,000) to run an effective campaign across both the primary and campaign phase. At the higher end of the spectrum, respondents felt that it could cost KSh 35 million (US\$343,000) or more. Reflecting on these costs, almost all respondents admitted to having spent more on their 2017 campaigns than they originally anticipated, with one stating: 'I prefer not to think about how much I spent on the campaigns. It's enough to make you give up politics'.¹⁸ And the costs are set to rise yet further. Half of the respondents expected to spend more in future campaigns, whilst none would contemplate spending less.

It is difficult for many Kenyans to secure the resources required to mount this kind of campaign. A parliamentary campaign is a significant financial endeavour, one which warrants bringing together family and friends for a 'harambee' - a fundraising event. It is also not unusual for business leaders to make sizeable donations to campaigns. This is often done to protect their own interests or to be used to build alliances with those close to the seat of power. However, all respondents cited personal resources and family and friends as the top two sources of funding for their parliamentary bids. In a few cases, aspirants were creative: one resorted to crowdfunding to raise the required resources, while another leveraged personal connections with supportive women's groups. Regardless of how creative or driven one might be, none were able to avoid digging into their own pockets. When the campaign budget was stretched, one aspirant was forced to sell a vehicle, while another opted to take a bank loan to bridge the shortfall.

Voters expect 'something' in return

MPs have the unenviable task of living up to the monumental expectations of the electorate. Given the prevailing political culture, there is the expectation that MPs or those vying for the position will be able to resolve a myriad of problems facing their constituents. These range from individual needs, such as sustenance and medical care, to community needs such as schools, health centres and roads. This first occurs on the campaign trail but the expectation that MPs will provide for individual and community needs continues when in office. In fact, once elected it increases as the expectation of the voter is that the MP has an improved ability and capacity to cater to these and other needs, due to their hefty salary and standing in society.

Once elected to office and complete with the title 'Honourable', MPs find that the expectations of the electorate can be a tremendous burden. While parliamentarians may intend to focus considerable energy on the fulfilment of their legislative agenda, most voters feel that the primary role of their MP is to provide for their basic needs. While many elected members have lamented this reality, few have shied away from the model, or actively attempted to change this regressive political culture. Of these basic needs, the most frequent requests for assistance, according to survey respondents, were those relating to education, medical bills and funerals. One MP stated that he had been able to mitigate his spending on medical needs by focusing on the establishment of new medical facilities all over his constituency.

Contrary to popular opinion, MPs opine that despite the salaries they earn, the expenses associated with being in office are so great that they often exceed their income, leaving many in a state of perpetual 'poverty'. One sitting member estimated his weekly expenses in relation to his constituents demands for assistance to be a minimum of KSh200,000 per week (US\$1,960).¹⁹ Most respondents stated that while in office, they spent more than 100% of their salaries meeting constituent needs. One admitted to spending KSh500,000 (US\$4,900) per month on funerals alone, with an additional KSh150,000 (US\$1,470) outlaid every weekend on church fundraisers. Given the extent of these financial outgoings it is clear that over and above their

legislative responsibilities, MPs play a social welfare role in the lives of their constituents. This is a gap that exists as a result of a lack of a sufficient social welfare system in the country. With many MPs outlaying most, if not all, of their entire salary to meet constituent needs, the likelihood that they are willing to engage in corrupt practices, in order to supplement their income, grows.

Kenyan legislators: pay and benefits

| As of 2017 the remuneration for Kenyan MPs was as follows: | |
|--|--|
| Basic salary (monthly) | 621,250 Kenyan shillings (KSh) or US\$6,100 |
| Allowances (monthly)* | KSh852,033 or US\$8,400 - maximum possible KSh299,163 or US\$2,900 ²⁰ - minimum possible |
| * Comprised of sitting allowances (chair KSh8,000 per sitting and member KSh5,000 per sitting) and a transport allowance based on constituency distance. There are five zones with allowances ranging from KSh266,663 to KSh738,833. | |

Parliamentary remuneration in Kenya is substantial. MPs' salaries are 98.6 times higher than Kenya's 2018 GDP per capita of US\$1,793.²⁸ There are generous retirement benefits.²⁹ The minimum monthly amount received by a Kenyan MP (salary plus allowances) is KSh920,413 (US\$9,204), while the maximum possible would be KSh1,473,283 (US\$14,733). Over and above this basic salary and allowance package, MPs are also entitled to medical coverage for themselves and their immediate family, life insurance up to three times the basic remunerative package and a loan of up to KSh 7 million Kenyan shillings (US\$69,000) for the purchase of a car, to be repaid prior to the next election. In addition to the title of 'Honourable', these are also important to consider given that 59% of MPs lost their seats in the 2017 elections.³⁰

III. Outlook

All respondents agreed that the cost of seeking political office is rising, and that the costs make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the average person to seek political office. Getting into politics is increasingly challenging for those who are led by a conviction to serve their communities and the national interest. Women and youth are also disproportionately disenfranchised from key decision-making structures, as high costs effectively lock these large demographics out of representation in mainstream politics. Although there have been improvements since the introduction of the 2010 Constitution women still only account for 23% of the seats in the National Assembly and Senate.²¹ It is incumbent upon political parties to be more proactive in nurturing and supporting youth and women candidates.

In order to address the cost of politics, and indeed gender inequalities, it will be necessary to explore a raft of constitutional, political and parliamentary reforms and interventions that are more just and inclusive. These include the consideration of a presidential versus parliamentary system of government; a debate about the first-past-the-post winner takes all versus proportional representation election system; and the viability of the constitutional one-third gender rule, which is yet to be achieved. In recent months, there has been considerable debate among the political class about just such a reform package. However the fact that the proponents are political actors ensures that healthy scepticism concerning this debate prevails; with questions asked as to whether it will be done with a view to levelling the playing field and ensuring that politics is less about money and commercial interests, or whether the aim is to reinforce the status quo.

At the political level, the findings of this study highlight the need for a holistic, open, transparent, and enforceable campaign finance infrastructure in order to address the transactional and commercial nature of Kenyan politics. As these practices are well-established and deeply entrenched, it will take considerable time, effort, and resources to address them. Despite the passage of the Election Campaign Financing Act in 2013, due to various technicalities, the commencement date of the Act was delayed, until after the 2017 elections.²² Long overdue, the infrastructure set out in the legislation covers the candidate selection process, donation and spending limits, bookkeeping and disclosure requirements and provides for mechanisms designed to enforce regulations.²³ It will be of utmost importance that the IEBC, as mandated by the Act, upholds and enforces these provisions and that the requirements are communicated to both political parties and candidates aspiring for elected office ahead of the next election cycle.²⁴

The larger problem, however, is systemic, and will require more than parliamentary or political reforms to resolve. It has taken decades of political evolution to arrive at the current state of affairs, and it will take time and concerted efforts to address it. All stakeholders in the political cycle have contributed to the malaise. For as long as significant proportions of Kenyans rely on the 'benevolence' of the political class for their survival, it will be difficult to eradicate the handouts-for-votes practice. A continuous civic education programme not only on the rights and responsibilities of citizens, but also on the roles of various political officials, which are not well understood by the general public, is needed. Over and above that, however, there is a need for Kenya to legislate for a social welfare system to cushion the most vulnerable in society, such that they do not need to turn to elected politicians in times of need.

IV. Summary

As a result of the costs involved, politics tends to primarily attract the well-to-do and those with the capacity to raise the requisite funds. Political parties have increased dramatically in number since the multi-party dispensation came into force in 1991. But it is debatable whether this political pluralism has reaped any notable democratic dividends. Many political parties have been personalised and are associated more with individuals or ethnic groups, than with ideological or political pursuits or positions. They have become mere vehicles to ascend to political power: a regressive political culture which comes at a significant cost to democracy.

The current framework, where state funding for political parties only benefits the largest and most successful, entrenches the dominant party culture and excludes and inhibits the development of smaller political parties and candidates. But getting on the ticket of these dominant parties requires significant financial outlay. In such an environment, youth and women are the biggest casualties, with the main opportunities available to them being in peripheral or supporting roles.

The 2010 Kenya Constitution created more political opportunities, all of which come at a cost to the taxpayer. There are now 47 county governors, at least 47 senators, 47 women representatives, and at least 1,450 members of county assemblies.²⁵ The increasing numbers of aspirants seeking political office would suggest that the rewards are worthwhile, even if the costs are high, and growing.

'Political office is like winning a lottery and people are willing to kill or maim for it',²⁶ is the view of Patrick Lumumba, a former Director of the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission. Whilst 'no MP gets rich from their salary'²⁷ was one view, the proximity to power certainly can have financial benefits according to Mr Lumumba, alluding to numerous unresolved political corruption scandals involving MPs in Kenya. The costs involved with seeking and holding political office in Kenya plays a part in fuelling political corruption.

The transactional nature of Kenyan politics, where the politician is seen as a benefactor, and the voter expects 'something' in return for his or her vote or support, is inimical to political progress. It serves to entrench the status quo and limits genuine political expression and debate. Political discussion is diminished and narrowed down to basic bread and butter issues of immediate survival. This has created a vicious cycle in which the electorate seek to benefit from the benevolence of politicians, thereby neglecting medium and long-term interventions that would guarantee community and national prosperity. Most of all, it ensures a continual increase in the cost of politics.

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12. As per the Political Parties Act (Section 25(2)) a party shall NOT qualify for the fund if: the party does not secure at least 3% of the total number of votes at the preceding general elections; or more than two-thirds of its registered office bearers are of the same gender; the party does not have, in its governing body, representation of special interest groups; the party does not have at least - 20 elected members of the National Assembly, three members of the Senate, three Governors and 40 members of County Assemblies.
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