

Vote Buying and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: An Assessment

By

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Abstract

Elections are an essential feature of democracy as a form of government. The essence of elections is to afford the people the opportunity to exercise their franchise. In view of its centrality to the democratic process, elections have been fraught with a myriad of challenges, irregularities and malpractices. These essentially revolve around electoral corruption which manifests in various forms like vote buying, thuggery and victimization of the electorate among others. These vices occur as a result of the desperation to emerge victorious during the elections by the electoral contestants. The return of democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999 revealed that money, politics, and vote buying have become a regular phrase before, during and after elections thereby portending a very dangerous trend to Nigeria's democratization and democratic sustainability. The major objective of the study was essentially to examine the impact of vote buying on the consolidation of democratic governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The study is founded on information obtained from secondary sources. Information was critically analyzed using the descriptive method of documentary analysis and logical conclusions drawn from the analysis. The study found out among others that the act of giving out money or vote buying when elections are approaching and during election has become alarming in Nigeria and that the persistence of the menace undermines the legitimacy of government and engenders voted apathy. It was recommended among others that these vices need to be properly corrected for the dividend of democracy to be enjoyed by citizens of the country.

Key Words: Vote, Vote Buying, Elections, Violence, Democracy, Consolidation

Introduction

An essential feature of democracy as a form of government is the conduct of periodic elections the essence of which is to afford the people the opportunity to exercise their franchise. In view of its centrality to the democratic process, elections have been fraught with a myriad of challenges, irregularities and malpractices. These essentially revolve around electoral corruption which manifests in various forms like vote buying, thuggery and victimization of the electorate among others. These vices occur as a result of the desperation to emerge victorious during the elections by the electoral contestants. This phenomenon though universal, is more prevalent in the Third World, Africa and Nigeria in particular.

Nigeria has since 1999 embraced democratic governance, which pundits and political analysts consider as a panacea for its multidimensional and perennial poverty. However, democracy rather than addressing Nigeria's poverty situation has aggravated the situation (Usman, 2003). Interestingly in Nigeria, available literature (Ukiwo, 2005, Soyombo, 2009) have shown that the



distinctive power of money in politics has been given as one of the reasons that undermined democratic governance in the past and became part of the excuse for military incursions into politics of Nigeria in the First and Second Republics both of which lasted from 1960 to 1966 and 1979 to 1983 respectively. It is against this backdrop that the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in their wisdom made provisions for regulating party financing in the country. In spite of this constitutional regulation, there seem to be a general agreement that politics in Nigeria is almost always about money; how much one has to throw around to elicit support, buy out opponents or for mobilizing people at the grassroots. As a consequence of the prevalent poverty and deprivation in the country, politicians cash in on the situation by using their wealth to buy votes from the already impoverished majority.

Deep concerns have been expressed about the sustainability of the democratic process in Nigeria as poverty induced agitations and violent conflicts spread across the country. Stakeholders in Nigerian Government and politics appear to be at crossroads on what to do to alleviate poverty, which is generally regarded as the greatest threat to the nascent democratic process in the country. Large sections of the population are frantically demanding for the dividends of democracy as the incidence of poverty continually grows throughout the nation. Furthermore, the political process has become so heavily monetized that the poor dare not vie for elective office no matter how knowledgeable they may be. The political process in Nigeria is such that the poor cannot afford the large expenditure involved in political campaigns and maneuvering. This makes politics an instrument solely for the rich and influential (Salamone, 1997). There is thus a need for an assessment of the impact of vote buying on democratic consolidation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

This study adopted the descriptive or analytical research. This comprises of describing a particular phenomenon within the confines of a territory. This approach presents the true picture of a phenomenon. It is designed towards collecting and analyzing data for description, evaluation or comparison. The study is founded on information obtained from secondary sources. Information was critically analyzed using the descriptive method of documentary analysis and logical conclusions drawn from the analysis. Thereafter the descriptive method is adopted in analyzing data for easy comprehension. The rationale for the choice of the sources was for the purpose of making up for the non-use of questionnaires and interviews. The descriptive method was used in analyzing data in the study for easy comprehension.

Problem Statement

The return of democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999 revealed that money, politics, and vote buying have become a regular phrase before, during and after elections thereby portending a very dangerous trend to Nigeria's democratization and democratic sustainability. This has direct implication on good governance processes and political participation and apathy as experienced in the 2019 elections. To corroborate this position, a portion of the communiqué of the Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA) at the end of the Round Table on understanding the electoral process in Nigeria in February 1, 2007, has shown that the role of money in politics is very strong (Adetula, 2005). This paper examines the impact of vote buying on democratic consolidation in Nigeria.





There are works on the impact of vote buying in politics especially since the return of democracy in 1999 in Nigeria; the point of departure of this study is to examine the implications of this trend on democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The choice of this problem is predicated on the fact that in the political history of Nigeria since independence in 1960, it has been discovered that more than any other elections in Nigeria, the 1999 national elections were characterized by massive vote buying. This provides the philosophical justification for the study.

Definition of Terms

Democratic Consolidation

Democratic consolidation is the process by which a new democracy matures, in a way that it becomes unlikely to revert to authoritarianism without an external shock and is regarded as the only available system of government within a country. For this study, it means the challenge of making new democracies secure, of extending their life expectancy beyond the short term, of making them immune against the threat of authoritarian regression.

Fourth Republic

The Fourth Republic is the current republican government of Nigeria. It specifically refers to the democratic dispensation in Nigeria Since 1999, which has been governing the country according to the country's constitution. For the purpose of this paper, the Fourth Republic spans the period 1999 and beyond where the country returned to democratic rule after a long period of military interregnum.

Vote Buying

Vote buying is defined here as any form of financial, material or promissory inducement or reward by a candidate, political party, agent or supporter to influence a voter and alter the outcome of the electoral process. Vote buying, in its literal sense, is a simple economic exchange. Candidates "buy" and citizens "sell" votes, as they buy and sell apples, shoes, or television sets. The act of vote buying by this view is a contract, or perhaps an auction, in which voters sell their votes to the highest bidder. In the context of this study, vote-buying can safely be seen as an act of exchanging one's own vote for material gains.

Election

Elections are unarguably the most critical elements of democratic process. Essentially, election constitutes the strategic might to and of the democratic process; hence, the widely held view that election is the major midwife of the democratic process. Thus, the fundamental principle of representative government is that the people should be governed by officers of their own choice.

In a democratic centralism, citizens are expected to take part in the work of the government by voting at polls. However, for the purpose of this paper, election remains the 1999 and 2003 general elections where Nigerians voted for candidates of their choice including President Olusegun Obasanjo in what can be described as the Fourth Republic in Nigeria as well as the other elections since the return to civil rule in 1999.

Electoral Fraud





Electoral fraud, sometimes referred to as election fraud, election manipulation or vote rigging, is illegal interference with the process of an election, either by increasing the vote share of the favored candidate, depressing the vote share of the rival candidates, or both. In this paper, electoral fraud is the subversion of the peoples' wish through the undue manipulation of the electoral process in the 1999, 2003 and other general elections since the return to democracy in Nigeria.

Literature Review

The review of literature is conducted in a thematic structure in order to reflect some key issues which directly or indirectly impinge on the topic under investigation.

The Role of Money in Politics

Fox (2010) argued that money is indispensable in the political process. He noted that campaigns cost money, as political office aspirants need funds to properly remunerate their staff, researchers, policy analysts and the communications experts. He also pointed out that money is needed to print brochures, pamphlets, radio and television adverts, renting spaces for campaign offices, telephone expenses and other office requirements. Fox (2010) maintained that in fact running for office is not different from running a small business where money is central for operations. Fox (2010) posited further that without sufficient funds a candidate could not get his message out, know about the beliefs and interests of his constituency or even know about opponents.

Fox's (2010) opinion emphasizes a reality in campaign financing, i.e. that sufficient funds are required for a successful campaign and that candidates must provide these funds if they are committed to winning the elections. It follows then, that this need can make candidates to resort to illegal means of sourcing for funds when the legal means prove unfruitful. Therefore, the increasing centrality of money in politics and campaigns implies that the more money an aspirant has, the more chances of winning. For candidates with limited means their chances at the polls are slimmer.

Similarly, Ohman (2013) posited that while the nature of politics varies largely between various regions and nations, it is hardly contestable that there is nowhere in the globe where money does not matter in a political decision-making process or in campaign organization. Ohman (2013) argued further that money in politics has a significant nexus with key aspects of any modern state. He also notes that the management of political finance is central to credible and genuine elections and electoral campaigns. This in his opinion is so because money has the propensity to mar competition between and among contestants.

Ohman (2013) asserted that while money is an indispensable aspect of contemporary politics, it also presents challenges for democracies across the globe. To him, however, it is viewed that these challenges translate to breaking the link between the electorate and the elected public officials. In his opinion some of the problems of money in campaign politics include creating a situation in which the differences in resources can make some voices louder than others in the political process. This implies that the wealthy can manipulate the entire process in ways that are undemocratic.





Furthermore, giving politicians room to give preferential treatment to their financiers than to the electorate thereby negatively affecting public procurement and development initiatives is another problem of money in campaign politics. Others are abuse of state resources, negative influence of illicit funds in politics. Criminals could use their donations to exert influence on politicians in the bid to avoid investigations into their nefarious activities, foreign funds if allowed into a political system would result in politicians paying more listening to foreign interests at the expense of the indigenous voters and the problem of high level of campaign spending may result in the impossibility of emergence of new political forces in the state. The last is vote buying which implies attempts to win elections through spending rather than popular support which constitutes an impediment for free and fair elections (Ohman, 2013).

Ohman's (2013) opinion as presented in the foregoing brings to light the negative effects of uncontrolled use of money in the electoral campaigns and politics by the politicians. Though the necessity of its use cannot be overemphasized yet its flagrant use poses challenges, which have the capacity to violate the essence of elections in a democracy. It can, therefore, be gleaned from Ohman (2013) that too much money in politics makes governance undemocratic.

According to Walecki (2000) political finance is influenced by, and influences, relations between parties, politicians, party membership and the electorate. To him money matters for democracy because much of democratic political activity simply could not occur without it. Narrow definitions of political finance tend to focus on campaign and party funding. In fact, many extra-party actors are involved in political competition with the objective of shaping public policy agenda, influencing legislation or electoral debates and outcomes. A primary example was the Fujimori- Montesinos case in Peru. In mid-September 2000, a videotape was released that showed Vladimiro Montesinos, the head of Peru's National Intelligence Service, apparently engaging in vote-buying by handing around US \$15,000 to opposition congressman Luis Alberto Kouri to switch sides and give the government a majority in parliament. The scandal led to the resignation of Alberto Fujimori as President of Peru (Walecki, 2000).

Illegality is crucial to many definitions of political corruption; however, some legally sanctioned but dubious uses of state resources in semi-authoritarian and authoritarian regimes cannot be defined as corruption according to this approach. Thus, the law is not a proper guide not only because it is not perfect with regard to encompassing all cases widely perceived as corrupt, but also because the law itself may be a result of political corruption. Indeed, the range and scope of illegal political funding depends on country- specific funding regulations, while irregular political finance emerges in the gap between a country's legal provisions and the reality of its corrupt political funding practices. In this case, the irregular or informal political finance system refers to legal contributions from disreputable sources or acceptance of money in return for favors.

The restrictions imposed on political parties and individual candidates by funding regulations often create loopholes allowing for irregular political finance. As an example of a legal but questionable donation, in 2001, Indian billionaire Lakshmi Mittal had donated £125,000 to Labour Party funds prior to receiving British Prime Minister Tony Blair's backing for the takeover of the Romanian Sidex Steel Plant (Pinto-Duschinsky, 2002).





In fact, Porta and Vannucci (1999) argued that political finance scandals might initially consist of simple criminality by politicians or may be more overtly concerned with corruption in political finance. To them a problem in definition arises from the fact that money obtained corruptly by politicians for their private use may well be used to fund their campaign, in which case there is a case of political finance corruption. Furthermore, a fragmented and non-institutionalized party system encourages big business (in Central and Eastern Europe, the oligarchs) to form client circles and establish their own political parties, set up parliamentary factions or become media-owners.

Politics in such countries is, to a large extent, a combination of business projects run by powerful oligarchs enjoying political immunity and individuals using office as a means for gaining wealth. Thus, there is no obvious boundary between individual criminality and systemic corruption of political finance. In 1999, a Geneva court convicted former Ukrainian Prime Minister Pavlo Lazarenko of money laundering and confiscated US \$6.6 million from his Swiss bank account. Lazarenko accepted two charges of money laundering. According to his lawyer, he confused his public office of regional governor and his private commercial interests. The government of Antigua and Barbuda announced that Lazarenko's bank accounts had been used for laundering US \$80 million. Now in jail in San Francisco, Lazarenko faces charges of laundering US \$ 14 million allegedly stolen while in office (Walecki, 2000).

Therefore, money matters for democracy because much of its political activity simply could not occur without it. However, when discussing its costs and benefits one should stress that the misuse of money in politics can create some major problems for a political regime. Since the nineteenth century, most of the democracies have managed to eliminate the buying of votes and associated methods of electoral bribery. Yet, even those regimes face a situation where a number of different problems related to money in politics still remains to be solved.

However, a system that prohibits corrupt electoral practices in the funding of parties and election campaigns should be designed differently from a system that promotes political equality (Adetula, 2000). The unfair electoral advantages of some parties or candidates in democratic regimes are not classified here as political finance related corruption as they result from the unequal distribution of income and wealth among the public into the political process.

Adetula (2000) notes that in many societies, the role of large donors raises concerns about the operation of representative government. This issue of private donors is also relevant in newly established democracies. In one of its surveys in the transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the World Bank (1999) uses illegal political finance as one of six dimensions of the state capture phenomenon. The resulting Illegal Private Political Finance Index measures the percentage of firms that consider themselves directly affected by illegal political donations (World Bank, 1999).

The index does not give a full picture of corrupt political finance. It fails to take into consideration many forms of irregular political finance, including misappropriation of public funds (unauthorized use of public resources for political purposes such as a ruling party using its influence to embezzle funds from the coffers of state-owned companies) or abuse of state resources for political finance purposes (the use of state employees, offices and vehicles for campaign purposes). Thus, it is important not only to evaluate illegal private political funding





but also to analyze the degree of illegal state funding and abuse of state resources. Government favoritism to maintain privileged positions within the economic system for powerful political and economic elites, together the general lack of political accountability, leads to corrupt political finance.

Money and the Electoral Process in Nigeria

It has been highlighted in the foregoing arguments that the political process requires funding in order to operate; therefore, money is a necessary requirement for the success of an election. However, the amount of money, the source of the money, and the specific purpose the money serves in the execution of a campaign or electoral activity are important matters to consider. At the outset, it should be acknowledged that money is needed and is used in all electioneering activities all over the world. The problem of money in politics arises only when set limits, sources, and uses are either violated or abused by politicians and other relevant actors. In a situation where, prescribed limits or sources are ignored, the political space and the institutions governing the processes of elections and politicking become compromised. In societies undergoing political transition like Nigeria, legal frameworks and the implementation of the existing legal limitations regarding election financing, accounting, and auditing are weak and unsustainable (Smah, 2000).

The failure of the system to be transparent raises fundamental issues, which touch on justice and equity principles. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria's experience has shown that the electoral laws made are hardly enforced comprehensively (Smah, 2000). The violation of the laws with impunity by political actors and players creates a fragile system that is ready to collapse at the perception of real or imagined injustice and deprivation. However, the main roots of violence associated with the political process are the basic political culture and its zero-sum philosophy. In addition to the zero-sum philosophy, there is an investment mentality that governs party and election funding in Nigeria. These twin-faceted and related issues, which are explained in this paper, remain the cardinal fulcrum upon which the culture of violence, illustrated in assassinations, attempted assassinations or arson, is built and sustained.

Various types of democracies from different parts of the world exhibit different kinds and magnitudes of weaknesses, thus making some states more vulnerable than others. It is pertinent to note that in countries like Nigeria, corruption is a major problem. The legitimacy of authorities in power is compromised by widespread incidences of corruption in public and private life.

The electoral process is not immune to corruption; indeed, while corruption in most spheres of the national life is often undetected due to the very low level of literacy, awareness, or social consciousness, corruption in the electoral system provokes violent protest. This is against the backdrop of perceived injustices, deprivation and collective assault that are meted out on the sensibilities of all financiers and other citizens who may have genuinely participated in the electoral process at one point or the other (Adetula, 2000).

Unlike in other parts of the world, attempting and losing an election in Nigeria means to be expelled from political life. The winner takes all. Those who win in elections do so at the expense of the losers. Once an individual's chances are scuttled by opponents, for whatever reason, he or she becomes completely irrelevant. He or she cannot contest an election again. It is





against this backdrop that one works so hard to win such an election. When a candidate is sure of losing an election, his or her members or followers votes are traded for positions in the regime of the winners. Vote-buying at the party or flag bearer's level becomes one of the most accessible means of securing political relevance and participation. If negotiations fail to produce a workable bargain at this level, then violence takes center-stage.

Political investors and other major financiers of the political process or of individuals seeking appointed positions often fund these activities for ulterior motives. Knowing that losing an election in Nigeria has dire financial consequences, the certainty of candidates getting something in the end, through vote-buying and other corrupt activities, encourages the willingness towards funding of political activities, especially elections. As such, electoral funding is an investment with (expected) returns.

The eventual failure to gain massive returns from such investments triggers violence. This could be at the individual or corporate/social level. At the individual level, campaign officials, candidates, and officials representing political institutions become ready targets of assassinations and murder. For example, after the 2003 general elections, the Chairman of Kogi State Independent Electoral Commission was murdered on March 3, 2004, by yet to be identified assassins (Adetula, 2005).

At the societal level, corporate organizations may organize protests, which sometimes may be lawful and other times are unlawful, to express their grievances. These may turn out to be fueled or taken over by aggrieved parties, interest groups, and other big-time losers. However, in some other instances, activities of the opposition may be termed heating up the polity by the government of the day. Police brutality, abductions, and other forms of state-sponsored terrorism usually become veritable philosophies of law enforcement under the guise of protecting lives and property.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the theory of Clientalism. Clientalism has been developed in the 20th century as a framework for explaining political corruption and electoral process globally. It initially originated from the Greek language which refers to obey and patronize (Morse etal, 2010). Clientalism is a process of political strategy and mobilization of politicians and electorates for power control. It involves a complex network of client-patron relationship reaching different segments of the society including politicians, political parties, administrators and electorates (Roniger, 2004). Clientalism is a framework developed to explain the political economy of leadership and governance (Daramont, 2010).

Clientalism is a model that explains vote buying, rewarding opposite politicians and voters for switching votes in favor of their clients in an illegal way that leads to corruption and abuse of political offices. The above means that, the political process is corrupted by manipulation and malpractices where corrupt political office holders rule for personal interest and distribute resources and benefit to their patrons instead of fair and equitable allocation (Morse etal, 2010). A good practical example is Nigeria where vote buying and bribing of politicians and electoral officials has been institutionalized for decades. A patron-client relationship emerged in the process of struggles for power particularly in a democratic regime during elections (Isaksson & Bigsten, 2013). Clientalism is harmful to democracy as it slows





economic development, strangulates democracy, institutes dictatorship and abuse of political offices as well as entrenches massive political corruption (Stocks, 2013).

In linking this theory with this study, Ogundiya (2009) identifies that, the Nigerian state is a cliental and prebendal polity where elites acquire power at all cost for personal wealth accumulation using their client in a patron-client relationship during elections. Vote buying and bribing their ways into the elective offices are perpetuated at all levels. In addition, the examination of the mechanism for acquiring power and what the rulers did with the power after election is a clear clientalism in Nigerian context as they bargain and re-bargain power and votes for personal benefits.

Discussion of Findings

Vote buying has characterized all elections in Nigeria starting from the 1999 general election upward. People or citizens were offered money, food, clothing, jobs, at times inducement of 500 Naira, all these are capable of influencing voters to change their minds and perception towards candidates of their choice. Nigeria's elites were not comfortable with the manner at which the country's electoral process was going through, which has made it a priority for the government to control the attitude. Thus, it has canvassed for actions of Nigeria's leaders such as Chief Olusegun Obasanjo to address the matter.

Nigeria's former President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo tried to curb vote buying in the country through signing of harmonized Electoral Bill on 6th June, 2006 that became the Electoral Act 2006 in Nigeria (Adetula, 2008). This Electoral Act serves as a guide for political parties and their candidates particularly in regulating party finance in the country. Electoral Act and other reforms in Nigeria is done in order to restore public confidence in the country's political process. Having signed the Electoral Act 2006 into law, the level at which vote buying is accelerating in Nigeria is highly alarming. For instance, the source from Afrobarometer reported cases of vote buying in Nigeria where it was quoted that:

...485 cases of vote buying as experienced by 296 respondents out of a random sample of 2410 Nigerians. Because there were more crimes than victims, it follows that many individuals (196, or about two-thirds of all victims) were approached from more than one partisan group. The largest political parties were the most active in vote buying. According to the survey respondents, the Peoples Democratic Party made 40 percent of all reported attempts to buy votes, followed by the All Nigeria Peoples Party (31 percent) and the Action Congress (10 percent) ...In part because of competing inducements, vote buying is probably an ineffective strategy for securing votes (Afrobarometer, 2007).

Vote buying has resulted in lack or loss of confidence among Nigerians the in country's electoral process. The abuse of money in politics in most of the developing countries often resulted in violence. As earlier mentioned, Nigeria's political history is characterized with series of abnormalities ranging from social injustice, corruption, political instability, poor governance, vote-buying, politics of godfatherism, among others (Adetula, 2008). These imbalances in Nigeria's political arena has influenced the decision to curb the menace. Prior to the Electoral Act of 2006, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) under the 1999 Nigeria's Constitution was empowered to monitor the financial activity of political parties in the country. Such power includes audit of parties' funds and as well as evaluation of annual examination for





political parties which its reports would be published for public information. As part of monitoring of party finances and curbing the excesses in party's spending, INEC for instance through the approval of the National Assembly earmarked N600 million for the registered political parties in Nigeria for the conduct of 2003 general election.

Although, the monitoring action by INEC posed many challenges to the commission which some of it evolved from the report submitted by a group known as the Transition Monitoring Group. These groups reported that the party primaries conducted by political parties such as Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), All Nigeria's Peoples Party (ANPP), United Nigeria Peoples Party (UNPP), National Democratic Party (NDP) among others were characterized with widespread of bribery. The group as quoted by Adetula (2008:12) stressed that, "there was widespread bribery of delegates with sacks stuffed with money to influence votes."

Political parties mostly receive donations and source their finance externally aside from the money budgeted for them by the federal government of Nigeria. These were part of what the 2006 Electoral Act tried to monitor. According to Sections 93 Sub section 1-3 of the 2006 Electoral Act, it was stipulated that the Presidential and Governorship aspirants must not spend above N500,000,000 and N100,000,000 respectively. The spending capability of Senatorial candidates, House of Representatives, State House of Assembly together with Chairmanship of local governments, and Councillorship were reduced to N20,000,000, N10,000,000, N5,000,000, N500,000 respectively.

Nigeria since 1999 has experienced a successful transition of power from one civilian administration to another (Omotola, 2010). Out of those transitions through the conduct of general election in the country, vote buying was more pronounced during the 2015 and 2019 elections. During 2015 and 2019 elections, political parties and their candidates were found giving out cash at the same time using others means to induce voters. As argued by Onuoha and Ojo (2018:1), "vote buying is not fundamentally new to Nigeria's electoral politics or only restricted to Nigeria". However, Nigeria's government is trying to curb the menace of vote buying in the country. Apart from the measure taken under the Electoral Act of 2006 to reduce the rate of vote buying in Nigeria politics, another giant stride was made by government through Article 130 of the amended 2010 Electoral Act.

Although vote-buying during elections is not peculiar to Nigeria or new in the nation's democratic process, the practice has in recent times become a significant tool of securing political power as witnessed in Edo State gubernatorial election and widely witnessed in the July 14, 2018, Ekiti State governorship polls. Howbeit, the magnitude of vote buying and selling in the 2018 Ekiti State election was too glaring to the extent that both local and international observers decried that such bizarre engagement has never been experienced in the Nigeria's electoral trajectory.

As noted by Fredric and Andreas (2005), there are enormity of implications posed by vote buying in electoral process as prospective vote buyers typically have no guarantees that voters who accept their material offers shall dutifully reciprocate on election day. There is always uncertainty due to the fact that vote buying, even when akin to a commercial transaction, takes





place in a non-licensed black market of illicit exchange, rather than a normal consumer market embedded in a network of legal safeguards.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Vote buying is a criminal act which should be curbed in Nigeria. As a popular adage that says, “there could be no acceptance without offer”, meaning that if the politicians and their parties do not make offer of money or gifts to the masses, there would not be acceptance for such offer. The act of giving out money when election is approaching and during election is becoming alarming in Nigeria which need to be properly corrected for the dividend of democracy to be attained in the country. In order to achieve this and make way for a credible candidate to emerge in an election, vote trading should be discouraged in its totality in Nigeria.

Thus, the following suggestion could assist the country in addressing the issue of vote buying in Nigeria:

First, the Secret ballot system should be more enhanced to enable voters exercise their voting right confidentially and at the same time prevent party agent from seeing voters’ thumbprint on ballot paper. Secondly, civil society and the likes should mount pressure on the law enforcement agencies such as Police, Civil Defence, among others to arrest, investigate and prosecute actors involve in vote trading. Thirdly, the Electoral Act should be reviewed periodically in order to amend and address lapses that are likely to affect the electoral process. Furthermore, there should be proper awareness and orientation to the general public through civil society and mass media on the danger involve in vote trading. Finally, the federal government of Nigeria should ensure that the country’s economy is in good shape in order to reduce the poverty rate and improve peoples’ standard of living in the country.

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