

“Vote and make soup”: money politics and democratic decline in Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Elections in Ondo State have historically been akin to organised crime. Following violence that usually characterizes elections in the state, its environment has always been tension-soaked. Expectedly, the need to conduct peaceful elections has gained currency in the intellectual space. In fact, the phenomenon has not eluded mentioning in the public discourse. However, there has to date been little systematic evaluation of the relationship between vote buying and the 2016 gubernatorial election in the state. There was a new coinage in the political lexicon in the state: “vote and make soup”. “Vote and make soup” strategy deployed by a section of the political class was very new to electoral process in the state. This article investigates the influence of the strategy on the outcome of the 2016 gubernatorial election and the effects of such strategy on democracy in the state. Using mixed method techniques, this article finds evidence that “vote and make soup” strategy reduced regular violence that hitherto trailed electoral process in the state and influenced the outcome of the election. The findings are relevant both for understanding the dynamics of violence-free electoral manipulation, and also for the effect of such procedural perversion on democracy in Ondo State

Keywords: Democracy, Elections, Electoral Process, Money Politics, Violence.

1. Introduction and the problem

Election is conducted within democratic environment (Smith, 2009), and it has generally been avowed as the fulcrum of any democratic governance (Dahl, 1989; Diamond, 2008; Diamond, 1999). This is truism as elections are integral to democratic consolidation of any country. Conduct of elections has become a standard by which country's democracy is rated along generally acceptable standards. These standards, encompassing open competition; popular and meaningful participation; responsiveness; transparency and accountability; and, freedom, are yardsticks through which democratic credentials of any country are gauged (Dahl, 1989; Diamond, 1999). However, there is a consensus among scholars that these standards are not only deficient in Nigeria's democracy, but the attempts to subvert the little dosage of these standards in order to serve the interests of a few, rather than a greater majority, still loom high (Adeleke, 2016; Arowolo, 2013; Mahmud, 2016; Okechukwu, 2014; Omoleke and Olaiya, 2015). The emerging democracy has been variously described as artificial, weak and has the tendency to repudiate the inalienable ethos of its true identity (Adeleke, 2016; Arowolo, 2013; Mahmud, 2016; Okechukwu, 2014; Omoleke & Olaiya, 2015).

Consequently, elections in Nigeria since 1999 have been marked and marred by distractions and irregularities (Mahmud, 2016; Okechukwu, 2014; Omoleke and Olaiya, 2015; Omotola and Aiyedogbon, 2012). The 2003, 2007 and 2011 elections in Nigeria were characterised by palpable fears, widespread intimidation and terrific violence, including large-scale destruction of lives and property (Arowolo, 2013; Egharevba, 2005; Idada and Uhunmwuango, 2012; Ojo, 2000). However, the 2016 gubernatorial election in Ondo State was a marked departure from the violent norm that defined the previous democratic transitions in Nigeria. The 2016 Ondo State election offered a newer trend to election and electoral behaviour in Nigeria; it was acknowledged to be violence-free, no recorded evidence of kidnapping, thuggery, assault, murder or ballot snatching (Adigun, 2016). It was therefore a unique mode of transition with pervasive allegations of vote buying and money-induced voting by a political party in the election (Ibrahim, 2016).

As a subset of Nigeria, elections in Ondo State were patterned along violence and manipulations (Adigun, 2016; Ibrahim, 2016). This was the case with the 1979, 1983, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 general elections (Abbass, 2008; Adeleke, 2016). As a matter of fact, cases of arson, high profile killings of opponents, maiming of unsuspecting electorates, snatching of electoral

materials and general destruction of properties were a replica of what obtained in the larger set, Nigeria (Adeleke, 2016; Ibrahim, 2016). Abbass (2008:2) aptly captures the political atmosphere of elections in the state when he asserts that “conflict-ridden situations have historically featured in all elections conducted in Ondo State since the 1950s”. Hence, issues surrounding the electioneering processes potentially relate to violence and violation of the rights of individuals. Corroborating Abbass’ submission, Inokoba and Kumokor (2011) affirms that electoral violence is one of the challenges of electoral process in the state. Speaking on the evils of violence, Animashahun (2010) perceives violence as illegitimate or unauthorized use of force to effect decisions against the will or desires of others. Corroborating the positions of Inokoba and Kumokor (2011) and Animashahun (2010), Nwolise (2006) posited that electoral violence means all forms of organized acts or threats; physical, psychological and structural geared towards intimidating, harming, blackmailing political stakeholders before, during and after an election with a view to determining, delaying or otherwise influencing an electoral process.

In a similar vein, Egharevba (2005) identified the lop-sided structure of the Nigerian State as one of the factors impairing democratic growth in Nigeria. According to him, the structure of the Nigerian state creates a situation of mutual suspicion among the ethnic groups, which has negatively affected the conduct of elections. Ethnicity, not the quality of candidacy of contestants, defines the pattern of voting in Nigeria. Also, Ojo (2000) identified intolerant posture of the political elite as the bane of democracy in Nigeria. Departing from his line of reasoning, Oke (2010), identified leadership ineptitude as the bane of democracy in Nigeria. According to him, all the problems of democracy and electoral politics in Nigeria could be surmised under failure of leadership.

The study jointly conducted by Idada and Uhumwuangho (2012) revealed that democratic decline in Nigeria was caused by electoral violence. Also, Ojo (2000) identified intolerant posture of the political elite as the bane of democracy in Nigeria. Both Achebe (1984) and Osaghae (1998) identified leadership failure as the basic cause of democratic decline in Nigeria. Despite the centrality of peaceful, credible, free and fair election to the enthronement of good governance, elections in Ondo State have been riddled with violence. This position was supported by a number of scholars who have worked on elections in Ondo State in particular and Nigeria in general (Adigun, 2016; Arowolo, 2013; Arowolo and Lawal, 2009; Animashahun, 2010; Ibrahim,

Arowolo: "Vote and make soup": money politics and democratic decline in Ondo State, Nigeria 2016; Inokoba and Kumokor, 2011). Electoral violence and intimidation have undermined electoral process in the state (Ibrahim, 2016).

Inferred from the foregoing is that there is a problem with elections in Ondo State and that issues related to electoral violence, politically motivated killings, arson, thuggery and general destruction of properties are identified as some of the challenges facing elections and electoral processes in the state. What has not featured in the various studies is the effect of "vote and make soup" strategy on the outcome of the 2016 gubernatorial elections in the state. This is a newly introduced gimmick of winning election through vote buying and other pecuniary inducements rather than the usual violence that trailed elections in Ondo State. In fact, this new coinage in the political lexicon in the state deserves intellectual engagement in the public discourse. Therefore, scholars ought to be interested in this new dimension of election rigging, which has largely influenced the voting pattern and changed the political ambiance of election in the state from hitherto tension-soaked to a tension-free atmosphere. This study therefore interrogates the effects of vote buying on the outcome of the 2016 gubernatorial election in Ondo State.

For the purpose of achieving the central objective of this study, the work is organised into five sections. Section one is the introduction, giving general background information of the study and stating the problems leading to and encouraging democratic decline in Ondo state in particular and Nigeria in general. Section two focuses on the discourse of the concepts and context. Section three is the theoretical background of the study. The fourth section presents methods of data gathering and analysis, including research design adopted by the study. The fifth section attempts at establishing the relationship between vote buying and the outcome of the 2016 gubernatorial election in Ondo state, as well as the effects on democracy in the state. Section six concludes the study and presents a set of recommendations necessary for the attainment of democratic consolidation in the state.

2. Conceptual discourse

Scholars have variously defined democracy (Bealey, 1988; Dahl, 1989; Diamond, 2005; Harding, 2012; Harris, 1980). This perhaps makes democracy a nebulous concept (Crick, 1964). Despite the conceptual ambiguity of democracy, it remains the most sought after and the most subscribed by every modern society (Smith, 2009; Heywood, 2007; Roskin, *et al.*, 2008). This is because democracy creates a platform for citizens' participation (Roskin, *et al.*, 2008). Citizens'

participation is gauged through the role they play or are allowed to play in politics as guaranteed through democratic tenets (Ikpe, 1988).

This can only be achieved through true democracy. Giving an idea of what true democracy connotes, Diamond (1989) submitted that true democracy places emphasis on freedom, and open competition, popular and meaningful participation, responsiveness, transparency and accountability, freedom to organise, freedom to protest anti-people policies and freedom to demand and assert citizens' rights and interests, freedom of the press to report, investigate and expose government policies and actions without fear or favour. This view was also stressed by Smith (2009) when he operationalised democracy as a system of government that provides meaningful and extensive competition between individuals and groups, highly inclusive levels of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, civil and political liberties sufficient to ensure such competition and participation, representative parliaments, the responsibility of government to parliament, regular free and fair elections, freedom of expression and association, and an extensive suffrage.

Being a system of rule that allows for citizens' participation, and through their participation legitimizes the government, as Ajayi and Ojo (2014) have observed, most regimes lay claim to semblance of democratic credentials. This is why Ikpe (1988) has noted that the tenets of democracy as enunciated above make democracy an essentially inevitable and all-embracing system of government. As important and desirable as democracy seems, all citizens cannot occupy government to directly take decisions that affect them (i.e. direct democracy). Direct democracy is no longer fashionable (Gaus and Kukathas, 2004), and has been replaced by what Gaus and Kukathas (2014) called "representative democracy". Representative democracy – a form of indirect democracy which guarantees the citizens the opportunity to choose those who will represent them in government – therefore evolved as the only workable system (Ajayi and Ojo, 2014).

It is irrefutable that direct democracy has been replaced by representative democracy, and since representation demands an election of a selected few, scholars have argued that democracy encourages the rule by the propertied class (Gaus and Kukathas, 2004; Lenin, 1976; Smith, 2009). This is because the principle of representation on which democracy is operated has conceded to the representatives the opportunity to manipulate the represented (Lenin, 1976). This is true in Nigeria as the practice of democracy has been said to be bastardised (Ake, 1991; Idada and Uhumwuango, 2012; Inokoba and Kumokor, 2011;

Omoleke and Olaiya, 2015; Nkolika, 2008; Ojo, 2000; Osaghae, 1998). As Suberu (1988) has posited, an underlying feature of Nigerian democracy is the profound disconnect between the citizens and their elected representatives. Scholars are in consensus that this deep distrust between leaders and followers is a function of recklessness in governance displayed overtime by the elected representatives, manifested in bad governance, corruption and electoral violence (Adeleke, 2016; Arowolo, 2013; Mahmud, 2016; Okechukwu, 2014; Omoleke & Olaiya, 2015). This is the point of democracy decline in Nigeria.

Votes no longer count, and as posited by Adeleke (2016); Arowolo (2013); Mahmud (2016); Okechukwu (2014); and, Omoleke & Olaiya (2015) elections in Nigeria are up for grab by the highest bidders. When democracy is being sold and bought, then civilian coup is imminent. The emerging democracy in Nigeria has been compromised to serve the interest of the rich (Matenga, 2016; Nkolika, 2008). This is what Nkolika (2008) describes as "democracy for sale" and Matenga (2016) as "cash for votes". This worrisome level to which democracy has degenerated perhaps explains the proliferation of literature on how to address the multifaceted problems of democracy in Nigeria. However, the effect of "vote and make soup" strategy on the 2016 gubernatorial election in Ondo State, Nigeria hardly features in the existing literature on democracy. This study therefore explores this new important area and by so doing contributes to the gap in literature.

3. Theoretical analysis of money politics in Ondo State

Central to the theoretical analysis of money politics in Ondo State, Nigeria is the two publics postulation of Ekeh (1975). The theory of two publics as developed by Peter Eke has expressive analytical underpinning central to the understanding the dimensions of vote buying and the motive of vote selling. The theory is germane to providing explicit explanations for the pandemic corruption ravaging electoral politics in Nigeria (Adamu *et al.*, 2017).

To start with, one of the debilitating effects of colonialism, according to Ekeh (1975), was the effusion of two public realms, which it created: the primordial and civic public realms which, related differently with the private realm in terms of morality. As theorized by Ekeh (1975), Nigeria's case is pathetic as it is a victim of conflicting loyalty: amoral civic public realm and moral primordial public realm. Citizens expect rights from the state but are not always inclined to expend duties for the state but for the native sector. This tragedy, as explained by Ogundiya (2009), forms the basis of an "amoral civic

public realm”, and “moral primordial public realm”. The concept of “amoral civic public realm” explains a situation, where citizens perceive the state as a product of exploitative colonial rule and therefore illegitimate with no moral linkages with the private realm, while “moral primordial public realm” is a public perception of the primordial space as legitimate and to which absolute patriotism should be accorded. It was an amoral public realm in which cheating the system was considered a patriotic duty (Ogundiya, 2009). As the two actors operate in the two realms, conflict of loyalty pervades and defines the relationship, and this, more often than not, results in a situation where the state apparatus is employed to fatten the nest of the primordial public, thereby legitimizing corruption in the civic public space (Ogundiya, 2009; Osaghae 1988). This situation is well captured by Peter Ekeh (1975: 108) when he explains that:

A good citizen of the primordial public gives out and asks for nothing in return; a lucky citizen of the civic public gains from the civic but enjoys escaping giving anything in return whenever he can. But such a lucky man would not be a good man were he to channel all his lucky gains to his private purse. He will only continue to be a good man if he channels part of the largesse from the civic public to the primordial public. That is the logic of the dialectics. The unwritten law of the dialectics is that it is legitimate to rob the civic public in order to strengthen the primordial public.

This scenario is what defines elections in Ondo state. The state is seen as an artificial contraption which should only be subjected to abuse and victimization (Osaghae, 1998). This reality explains the dynamics of vote buying and vote selling in Ondo State. This is true to the extent that vote is tied to the aspirations of personal benefits derivable from election victory. The electorate, who also did not see any hope in the state, was inclined to selling their votes in order to derive immediate gains. There is predominant conviction that government is a tool of corrupt enrichment and therefore every government in power pursues parochial and personal interests, and this reinforces the desire of the electorate to sell their votes. Consequently, electorates vote for pecuniary interests; sale of votes becomes a rule rather than the exception (Matenga, 2016).

Peter Ekeh’s (1975) thesis is central to explaining money politics in Ondo State as political elites buy votes from the electorate, who are ready to exchange their votes for money. Both the politicians and the electorate perceive, at least in their subconscious state, the state as an avenue to further and serve the primordial interests. This consciousness facilitated the desire to sell and

buy votes, which necessitated the pilfering of state resources by politicians in government (Abdulrahman, Danladi and Sani, 2016) for aggrandising the primordial interests. The pandemic nature of money politics in Ondo State is a function of perception of the state as artificial abstraction by the electorate who desire to sell their votes and the politicians who seek political power through vote buying (Adamu *et al.*, 2016). It was easy for politicians to buy votes and convenient for the electorate to sell votes because of their perception of the state as a contraption of some sort, alien to their socio-cultural setting and alienating itself more through policies and actions that reinforce disloyalty of the primordial public to the state (Ogundiya, 2009; Sakariyau *et al.*, 2015). This is exhibited through several years of bad governance, unemployment and promotion of actions and inactions that deepen poverty (Adamu *et al.*, 2016; Bratton, 2008; Sakariyau *et al.*, 2015).

There is indeed a disconnect between the followers and the leaders. The disconnect has reached a level, where the electorate no longer trust the political class (Bratton, 2008). During the 2016 gubernatorial election, a section of the electorate, especially the financially challenged, believed that the only benefit they could get from engaging in electoral politics was to sell their votes (Abdulrahman, Danladi and Sani, 2016; Ibrahim, 2016). Conscious of the high rate of poverty in the state and the willingness of the electorate to sell their votes, the crafty politicians introduced a new coinage during voting exercise, "vote and make soup", to manipulate the minds of the willing electorate and sway votes (Matenga, 2016; Ovwasa, 2014). Two publics theory aptly captures this scenario as politicians seek political offices not for collective interests but for personal and family interests as there was naked display of money politics to occupy political offices for personal gains.

Therefore, the dimensions of vote buying and the motive of vote selling are a function of how the duo of politicians and electorates perceive the state. This theory aptly explains the dimensions of vote buying and vote selling in Ondo State during the 2016 gubernatorial elections. However, by default, vote buying and vote selling actually reduced the tensions that hitherto trailed gubernatorial elections in the state in the past (Amadi and Ekekwe, 2014; Ameshi, 2017).

4. Study areas and methodology

This study was carried out between September 2017 and February 2018 in the three senatorial districts of Ondo state, Nigeria. The three senatorial districts are: Ondo north, Ondo central and Ondo south. One local government

per senatorial district was surveyed. In the north senatorial district, Owo local government was selected, Akure south local government was selected for central senatorial district and Ilaje local government was selected for southern senatorial district. These three local governments were selected because they had history of election violence and the three most popular and leading candidates of the 2016 gubernatorial election in Ondo State hail from those local governments (Adigun, 2016; Ibrahim, 2016). Rotimi Akeredolu (All Progressives Congress) hails from Owo in the northern senatorial district of the state; Eyitayo Jegede (Peoples Democratic Party) hails from Akure in the central senatorial district (Akure); and, Olusola Oke (Alliance for Democracy) hails from Ilaje in the southern senatorial district.

The study used questionnaire as the survey instrument and primary source of data collection to study the relationship between “vote and make soup” strategy and the outcome of 2016 gubernatorial election in Ondo state. The study used three thousand questionnaires, 1000 each from the three local governments. The population of this research work constituted the eligible and registered voters from the selected local governments in the three senatorial districts of the state as it was impossible to carry out an effective study using all of the voters in the 2016 gubernatorial election. The research work selected 1000 eligible voters from each of the three local governments of Owo, Akure and Ilaje with a population of 218, 886 (119, 577 registered voters); 353, 211 (registered voters of 262, 623); and, 290,615 (registered voters of 126,112) respectively. The sampling population of the study was 3000. The study used multi-stage sampling technique. The population of the three local governments was clustered as they contained various communities. These clusters were later chosen at random to draw samples from them, using simple random sampling technique, while accidental sampling was used to select the final respondents.

5. Data presentation and analysis

This section presents a thematic discussion of findings. On the reasons for voting, the respondents chose among the various reasons for voting in the questionnaire. The reasons ranged from financial inducement, ethnicity, party affiliation, personal relationship, party ideology/manifesto and others. For financial inducement, 1798 respondents, representing 60% voted because they were enticed with money. 406 respondents, representing 13.5% voted because of ethnicity, while 164 respondents, representing 5.5% voted for personal relationship. 354 respondents, representing 11.8% voted for party affinity and

253 respondents, representing 8.4% voted because of party ideology/manifesto and 25 respondents, representing 0.8% voted for undisclosed other reasons. From these findings, it could be deduced that majority of the respondents that voted did so because of pecuniary considerations. Those who did not vote gave loss of confidence (apathy) in the system as a reason (Fieldwork, 2017).

Out of those who voted because of financial inducement, 1699 out of 1798, representing 94.4% further confirmed that they would still sell their votes in subsequent elections in the state. This further confirmed that "vote and make soup" strategy tilted the election in favour of the political party that shared money, using the "vote and make soup" coinage. It reinforces the central thesis of this study that the outcome of the election was determined by money politics and this eliminated violence that hitherto characterised previous elections in the state. Majority of the respondents, 2217 in number, representing 73.9% agreed that those who voted for financial inducement did so because of poverty, while 783, representing 26.1% claimed that they sold their votes because they had lost confidence in politicians (Fieldwork, 2017).

6. Discussion of findings

This research work examines the relationship between vote-buying and the outcome of the 2016 gubernatorial election in Ondo State and the effects of emerging form of malpractice on democracy, using quantitative method in the analysis of data gathered through questionnaires. The literary meaning of the phraseology "vote and make soup" is an act of inducing a section of the electorate, particularly those who are poor and those who have lost confidence in the political system, that if they voted, they would give them money to make soup for themselves and their families. According to the findings, the party agents of a particular candidate, who later won the election, would demand that voters show them their ballot papers at the point of voting. Voters were willingly showing the party agents their votes for the agents' candidate and money was freely distributed at the polling units. Voters were given between three thousand naira and five thousand naira (between \$8 and \$13) (Fieldwork, 2017). This was the rigging strategy the candidate and his political party deployed across the polling units in the state (Fieldwork, 2017).

In fact, the party that adopted this strategy (vote and make soup) won in fifteen out of eighteen local governments in the state. He won in all the three senatorial districts of the state, defeating the arch rivals even in their primary constituencies (Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), 2016).

In concrete terms, APC candidate, who is the present governor of the state, defeated the PDP candidate in his local government (Akure South) and won five of the six local governments in his senatorial district (INEC, 2016). The tables below show results distribution across the three senatorial districts.

TABLE 1: ONDO SOUTHERN SENATORIAL DISTRICT RESULT DISTRIBUTION

Local Government	AD	APC	PDP
Ese-Odo	3,562	10,700	8,701
*Ilaje	*22,789	*7,030	*5,007
Ile-Oluji/Okeigbo	4,525	10,681	8,306
Irele	6,710	11,138	5,907
Odigbo	8,187	17,581	8,668
*Okitipupa	*16,294	*14,930	*8,668

Source: INEC, 2016

TABLE 2: ONDO CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT RESULT DISTRIBUTION

Local Government	AD	APC	PDP
Akure North	4,123	10,710	6,498
Akure South	12,270	25,797	25,105
Ifedore	4,629	10,958	6,747
Idanre	4,836	10,981	7,575
*Ondo East	*2,742	*4,253	*7,317
Ondo West	7,154	20,672	17,382

Source: INEC, 2016

TABLE 3: ONDO NORTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT RESULT DISTRIBUTION

Local Government	AD	APC	PDP
Akoko North West	4,831	13,048	6,049
Akoko North East	5,367	13,645	6,496
Akoko South East	270	6,384	4,239
Akoko South West	9,359	9,892	7,691
Ose	4,272	13,454	6,520
Owo	2,469	32,988	4,241

Source: INEC, 2016

From the tables above, it is clear that APC candidate, who introduced “vote and make soup” strategy, won the election in fifteen local governments but lost in three asterisked local governments. The study found out that ethnicity, in addition to money, played a role in the outcome of the election. For instance, in southern senatorial district, from where AD candidate hails, AD won in Ilaje local government, which is the AD candidate’s local government of origin and also won in Okitipupa local government, which is a stronghold of the former governor of Ondo State, Olusegun Agagu, an ally of the AD candidate as indicated in Table 1 (Fieldwork, 2017). Again, to demonstrate the place of ethnicity, PDP won in Ondo East local government which is also in the centre, from where PDP candidate hails and the constituency of the immediate-past Ondo State Governor, Olusegun Mimiko, a PDP governor and a close ally of the PDP candidate as indicated in Table 2. Surprisingly, APC candidate defeated PDP candidate in his local government of Akure South, reinforcing the primacy of money in the election. However, the study found out that rather than usual violence that trailed elections in the state in the past, “vote and make soup” strategy actually brought about peaceful election. This was true to the extent that the party agents of the opposition candidates conspired and collected money thereby betrayed their candidates in the election. Rather than violence, electorates collected money and left the polling units in happiness (Fieldwork, 2017).

Another important finding was that other candidates also distributed money to the electorates but did not have as much money as the party that won the election. While “vote and make soup” strategy was spread across all the local governments, wards and polling units, other candidates spent money in insignificant number of areas and the outcome of the election reflected the highest bidder. In a way therefore, money was the major determinant in the election and not competence of the candidates, party manifestoes or ethnicity. The introduction of money, as discovered by the study, also changed the voting pattern in the state. Before now, two major factors used to determine election in the state: ethnicity and violence. A candidate from the most populous ethnic group would stand a better chance in election and also candidate with monopoly of violence would also likely to win election (Fieldwork, 2017). So, 2016 gubernatorial election was a marked departure from tension-soaked to tension-free and credibility-deficient exercise. The study found evidence that though vote-buying was a form of electoral manipulation, but it was able to curb political killings, arson, maiming and general destruction of property.

7. Conclusion

Based on the result of this study, it could be concluded that the outcome of 2016 gubernatorial election in Ondo state was generally influenced by and reflected vote buying. It was further established that ethnicity, even though it did not significantly affect the outcome of the election, played a role in the said election. The foregoing discussion of findings has established a nexus between vote buying and the 2016 gubernatorial election in Ondo state. The current study has not only shown, very unambiguously, the nature and manner of electoral irregularities in the conduct of the 2016 gubernatorial election in Ondo state, but has also demonstrated the way by which politicians perverted the process in order to gain undue advantage. As the post election period has revealed, there have been widespread complaints of lack of good governance in the present administration of the state. This is a validation of the postulation that vote buying can and actually facilitates democratic decline in the state. Despite the electoral reforms that heralded the birth of electoral act 2010 as amended, electoral shenanigans still subsist. The puzzle then is: why is electoral manipulation possible? What other measures could be introduced to halt the decline of democracy? It would seem that the institutions in charge of election and security are vulnerable and could be easily influenced. Strengthening them would make the difference. Strategies for strengthening electoral institutions such as INEC could include granting INEC financial autonomy through frontline charge prioritisation. This will make INEC truly independent. Secondly, appointment of INEC national chairman and other national officers should be devoid of partisanship. The executive arm of government should be divested of the power to appoint them.

As it currently shows in Ondo state, vote buying can always lead to bad governance and democratic decline as the so-called elected politicians would recoup their “investments” made in the elections to the detriment of providing critical infrastructures and welfare opportunities for the people. Therefore, vote buying under any guise should be seriously frowned at. Political parties caught in the art and act of distributing money should be disqualified and banned from participating in the future election for a specified number of years, not subceeding ten years. Proper monitoring and review of funds spent on election is also recommended. There should be spending limit for electioneering campaigns. Also, the source(s) of money used for electioneering campaign should be probed into. Secret voting atmosphere should be guaranteed. Youth and women empowerment should be prioritized as poverty constitutes one

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of the basic reasons for pecuniary inducement at the polling units. Women and youths are the most active voting population and they are easily induced because of poverty. Empowering them therefore will significantly reduce the incidence and willingness of vote selling. Political/voting education is also desirable. Such enlightenment campaigns should be translated into various indigenous languages focusing on the evils of vote buying and the implications for democracy and governance, including the future of unborn generation.

Biographical Notes

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