

## 5 Vote buying

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One of the most blatant manifestations of political corruption takes place during elections, when politicians attempt to bribe their constituents directly. Focusing on Latin America and East Asia, respectively, Silke Pfeiffer and Frederic Charles Schaffer show that votes are often bought via brokers who forge long-term relationships with target populations, frequently in poorer regions. Using surveys of vote buying in Brazil, Claudio Weber Abramo questions assumptions about levels of bribery in both local and national elections. Leslie Busby assesses an altogether different forum for vote buying: international policy institutions. In her article, she examines the Japanese government's use of overseas development aid to further its interests in the International Whaling Commission.

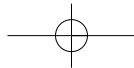
### Vote buying and its implications for democracy: evidence from Latin America

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When we talk about electoral corruption we refer to arrangements between parties or candidates and their donors, on the one hand, or parties or candidates and the electoral administration, on the other. In the first case, donations to election campaigns are returned, or paid off, by favours after the candidate is in power. In the latter, parties or candidates manipulate election results by bribing electoral officers. In the case of vote buying, parties and candidates deal with their constituency directly; voters are bribed for a commitment to a particular electoral behaviour.

Why do people sell their votes? Are they sacrificing political rights and democratic duties for immediate, material benefits, or are they placing their votes under rightful, but different, criteria of preference? Do politicians disregard the principle of gaining power on a convincing political platform when they buy people's votes, or is it a legitimate way to influence voting behaviour prior to an election? And how can vote buying be a profitable business when the secrecy of the ballot must surely guarantee that voters make their decision independently of prior commitments?

In a poll of Latin American national chapters of Transparency International, many respondents pointed to vote buying as a routine aspect of electoral corruption and highlighted the need for better understanding of the problem. In Brazil's municipal elections in March 2001, for example, 7 per cent of voters were offered money for their votes.<sup>2</sup> Different surveys in Mexico place the frequency of vote buying at between 5



per cent and 26 per cent,<sup>3</sup> while a 1999 Gallup survey in Argentina found that 24 per cent of interviewees knew someone who sold his or her vote.<sup>4</sup>

### What is bought and sold

Vote buying refers to the moment an inducement is offered by a candidate or a candidate's agent with the clear intention of harvesting the recipient's vote. Voters may be asked to commit to vote in favour or against a particular candidate; they may also commit to abstain from voting.

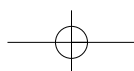
The voter may not end up delivering on the commitment (see 'Vote buying in East Asia', page 83). In cases where the commitment to vote in a specific way was fulfilled, the voter may not actually have been swayed by the payment. A number of parties have run campaigns that focused on disassociating the acceptance of the offer from the actual vote: in Mexico's presidential elections in 2000, opposition candidates called on voters to 'take the gift, but vote as you please'.

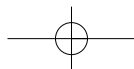
The object of transaction is not always cash. Offers include food, clothes, household goods, medicine, infrastructure, construction material, agricultural inputs and the provision of other services. Short-term jobs and public contracts were traded in Colombia's 2002 presidential campaign.<sup>5</sup> Voters may be granted access to social programmes or other public services in exchange for their vote; they may also be threatened with deprivation of benefits if they do not vote as 'commissioned'. Such threats were one of the foundations of Alberto Fujimori's re-election strategy in Peru in 2000: beneficiaries of the national programme of food assistance, Pronaa, were pressured into giving their vote to Fujimori, attending his campaign events and wearing stickers that promoted his party, as a tacit condition for continuing to receive food subsidies.<sup>6</sup>

This example highlights how vote buying is often accompanied by a second crime: the misuse of public funds to finance vote purchases. As vote buying and selling becomes entrenched in the political culture of a country, the buyer is encouraged to look for more resources to fuel the activity. In Colombia, mayors from the southwestern department of Nariño were accused of using funds from Plan Colombia (a US-sponsored initiative aimed at tackling drugs production and trafficking) to finance their vote buying activities.<sup>7</sup> In another example, governors from Mexico's ruling party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), threatened voters that vouchers distributed in southern states via the Progresa poverty-alleviation programme would be withdrawn if they voted for the opposition in the 2000 elections.<sup>8</sup>

### Who sells and who buys

Different objects of transaction relate to different types of relationships established between buyers and sellers. In some cases, the exchange of benefits or inducements for a voting commitment occurs as a brief transaction immediately before the election. The contact between buyers and sellers is limited to this single moment and it is mostly cash or material goods that are traded. This is quite effective in that it reaches out to a large number of voters. It suffers, however, from a high degree of 'betrayal': voters accept the inducement but don't vote according to the pact.





A contrasting scenario is where vote buying takes place in the context of long-term relations between candidates, their agents and the population of a community. In this case, relations are cultivated throughout the entire electoral cycle.

In communities where the public service system is dysfunctional or non-accessible, private agents – who act as intermediaries between politicians and the electorate – establish networks of patronage (*clientelismo*) within the community. In Brazil such agents have earned a distinctive soubriquet, *cabos eleitorais*, which can be loosely translated as ‘precinct captain’. ‘Captains’ operate in a network of contacts and favours and are crucial community reference points since they have the power to grant access to public services and provide other help in solving problems. Because they guarantee access to state services, they generate trust, commitment, but, above all, dependency. This pays off on election day: commitments to vote generated under these conditions result in high rates of compliance.<sup>9</sup>

The linkage between patronage and vote buying seems to indicate that low-income sectors are more prone to be targeted by vote buyers. While 6 per cent of respondents of an Argentine survey indicated that they received something from a candidate or party in the October 2001 legislative elections, this share increased to 17 per cent among low-income respondents.<sup>10</sup> Mexican surveys confirm low-income neighbourhoods are more likely to be subject to vote buying.<sup>11</sup> But the correlation may not always hold, as suggested by the results of recent surveys carried out by Transparência Brasil (see Box 5.1, ‘Vote buying in Brazil: less of a problem than believed?’, below).

#### Box 5.1: Vote buying in Brazil: less of a problem than believed?

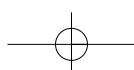
Vote buying is a concern raised periodically in the Brazilian media, by politicians and civil society organisations. Transparência Brasil sought to test whether this concern reflected reality, conducting surveys after the 2000 municipal elections and the 2002 federal and state elections (including the election of president and state governors). Both surveys involved nationally representative samples of 2,000 voters.<sup>1</sup>

In both elections the concentration of vote buying was found to be more marked in less-developed regions (North-Centre West and North-East) than in the richest parts of the country (South and South-East). But its incidence did not reach levels that corroborate the grim view commonly held by Brazilians.

In the 2000 elections, 6 per cent of voters interviewed reported that they had been asked to sell their votes for money. In the 2002 survey, the question was rephrased to include offers of goods or favours extended by the public administration. Although the question was broader, the overall percentage of offers of vote buying in 2002 was lower, at 3 per cent.

The shift from 6 per cent in 2000 to 3 per cent two years later cannot be directly interpreted as a falling trend in vote buying.<sup>2</sup> It is more likely due to the different nature of the elections. Municipal elections (2000) involve only local candidates and voters, who tend to have closer socio-political exchanges, while federal and state elections (2002) are broader and voters tend not to know the candidates personally.

New legislation enacted in 1999, making it easier to disqualify candidates involved in vote buying, may have played a role. The electoral justice system in 2000 was not fully



prepared to enforce the new law. By May 2003, the federal Supreme Electoral Court had begun reviewing nine cases against governors elected in 2002 and eight against state legislators, all accused of 'illicitly pursuing votes' (more than vote buying, this charge extends to the provision of transportation to voters on election days and other illegal practices).

Both surveys indicated that there are misconceptions about vote buying in Brazil. The educational level of the voters had only moderate influence on offers to buy their votes. Perhaps surprisingly, fewer voters with only primary education or below were subjected to offers than persons with secondary or higher education. Age, however, was significant: the younger the voters, the more frequently they were asked to sell votes.

Another common belief is that the poorer the voters, the more vulnerable they are to offers. The surveys showed this not to be true. Offers cut equally across all income levels and, in fact, were less frequent among lower-income voters than higher-income ones. However, given that the poor make up the largest portion of the population, in raw numbers, more offers were made to the poor than to people from wealthier classes.

Also contrary to common belief, the size and type of the city (capital, periphery or interior) seems irrelevant to the frequency of the vote buying phenomenon.

Saying that vote buying is less of a problem than widely believed is not to say it is not a problem. Projected on to the electoral demographic of 100 million voters (voting is mandatory in Brazil), the reported cases suggest that about 6 million people were offered money for votes in 2000. In 2002, some 3 million voters were subjected to offers to trade votes for money, goods or favours. These are not small numbers.

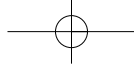
The results also indicate that strategies to combat spurious electoral transactions (such as public campaigns against vote buying) need to address the entire spectrum of voters, not just specific segments, though special attention should be paid to more vulnerable regions.

*Claudio Weber Abramo (Transparência Brasil)*

#### Notes

1. For more information on the survey see [www.transparencia.org.br](http://www.transparencia.org.br). The 2000 survey was conducted by Ibope on behalf of Transparência Brasil and Instituto Paulo Montenegro, based on personal interviews conducted 15–20 March 2001. The 2002 survey was conducted by Ibope on behalf of Transparência Brasil and União Nacional dos Analistas e Técnicos de Finanças e Controle, interviews conducted 14–17 November 2002. The surveys were conducted in four regions, with age and income selection based on data from the Brazilian census and Supreme Electoral Court. Margin of error: 2.2 percentage points and confidence level of 95 per cent. Auditing of interviews: Approx. 20 per cent. The samples used in the surveys reported here allowed for conclusions concerning only the primary question. In order to test hypotheses relating to socio-economic strata, how many voters who sold their votes actually voted for the paying candidate, or similar ones, much larger samples would be needed.
2. Transparência Brasil intends to repeat the surveys systematically, which will provide the data needed to assess trends.

A further assumption that follows from the connection between patronage and vote buying is that parties traditionally involved, or identified, with clientelistic practices are more likely to buy votes than others. Surveys in Argentina provide clear evidence that not only class, but also party – the Partido Justicialista in Argentina's case – is linked to vote buying.<sup>12</sup> In Mexico, where 4.4 per cent of interviewees reported receiving gifts from the opposition National Action Party (PAN) in the 2000 elections, 15.3 per cent admitted accepting gifts from the ruling PRI.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, the effectiveness of the two



parties' vote buying strategies differed considerably; survey data reveals that, while less than 50 per cent of voters who took inducements for the PRI voted for its presidential candidate, the rate of effectiveness among PAN's purchased voters was 82 per cent.<sup>14</sup>

### Enforcing the pact between buyers and sellers

The degree to which vote buying prevails in a society reflects the capacity to reinforce and monitor the pact established between agents and voters. From a candidate's perspective, this determines the cost benefit relationship of his or her investment; from a voter's perspective, it determines the risk associated with non-compliance.

Candidates and agents make use of a range of strategies to reinforce the pact with voters. Frequently, voters fear reprisals if they don't accept the inducement or don't vote as instructed. In cases where payment comes after the vote, the risk of non-compliance is that the voter will not be paid. In Argentina, Uruguay and Panama, the parties themselves produce ballots. Here one frequent strategy, as described by a party operative in the Argentine province of Misiones, is 'giving voters food and drink, keeping them in their houses overnight and then slipping ballots "straight into their pockets" as they were taken off to the polls'.<sup>15</sup>

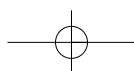
Another effective vote buying scheme is 'the carousel'. The buyer gives the voter a pre-marked ballot paper and offers money in return for a blank one. The voter deposits the pre-marked ballot and returns the blank one given to him by the election officials to the buyer. The buyer then gives the seller the promised money or goods.<sup>16</sup> In many countries, party operatives offer bus transportation from outlying areas to polling places, a strategy that in Mexico has earned its own name, *acarreo* (which literally means 'transport', but in Mexico is taken to mean specifically peasants being bussed in to vote). While not an actual act of vote buying, the service reinforces the pact between buyer and seller.

But again, these strategies can only be effective if candidates have a way of monitoring the outcome. Sophisticated methods may be employed to hinder voters from issuing their votes secretly, for instance by forcing them to record how they voted, or to fold the ballot in a distinctive way.

A by-product of the shift to counting and declaring voting results in smaller polling areas – which increases transparency in the counting process – is that it also affords the vote buyer more accurate information on the target population. In cases where direct observation of a voter's choice isn't possible, party workers can observe other actions and behaviour from which they can deduce voters' choices. 'You know who's with you and who's not with you', said a Peronist party worker in Argentina.<sup>17</sup> In this context, the notion of a secret vote becomes relative – and so does the voter's ability to separate the offer from the actual vote.

### The accountability question: where to draw the line

If vote buying compromises the secrecy and freedom of the vote, it necessarily affects the grounds of accountability and democracy. This leads us back to questions raised



above. Can a dividing line be cleanly drawn between vote buying – a criminal offence in most jurisdictions – and other legitimate forms of influencing and manipulating the vote during election campaigns? Or are there areas where the distinction is blurred?

Indeed, we are used to election propaganda that plays with attractive promises, very often directed at particular social sectors, which diminishes their claim to be collective political programmes. We are equally used to campaign parties at which food and drinks are offered for free.<sup>18</sup> If we look closer at the problem, however, there are criteria that can help us to position particular actions and behaviour along a continuum, with vote buying at one extreme and the use of the vote as a fundamental instrument of democratic control at the other.<sup>19</sup>

The manipulation of votes always carries an element of privatising and personalising the relationship between politicians and the electorate – election campaigns target particular interest groups. Vote buying, however, drives this privatisation to an extreme. It breaks it down to a bilateral relationship between a vote buyer and a vote seller with the tribute for the vote mostly provided prior to the election. While this doesn't necessarily preclude the voter from having expectations of the politician after the election, acceptance of the offer may well influence the incumbent's perception of his or her mandate. Seen from this perspective, it is irrelevant whether the vote is cast as committed. In this, vote buying differs from election promises that raise legitimate expectations and can arguably become the baseline for monitoring once the elected candidate is in power.

What is traded against the vote in this bilateral relationship is cash or material goods, not a political platform against which the candidate can be held accountable after being elected. And finally, while the vote becomes an effective instrument for accountability only through its collective force, a bilateral relationship between a vote buyer and a vote seller implies a strong imbalance of power, especially in cases where the vote is sold as a result of coercive pressure.

In sum, the more personalised, short-term, material and coercive the exchange between politician and voter, the more clearly we can talk about the criminal offence of vote buying – and the clearer the negative implications for accountability.

### Reform efforts

Given these negative implications, what can be done to curtail vote buying? Reform activities have tended to focus on raising awareness and changing voter attitudes, on the one hand, and reforming the regulatory and institutional framework for elections in order to decrease incentives for candidates to buy votes, on the other. The latter obviously starts with criminalising vote buying by enacting the relevant laws. The law needs to establish a clear definition of the offence and provide for adequate sanctions. Two modifications introduced into the Brazilian legislation on vote buying in 1999 made it more powerful: the new law debars candidates who attempt to buy votes and exempts those who sell their votes from sanctions in order to encourage voters to denounce vote buying candidates.<sup>20</sup>

Apart from specific laws on vote buying, the general normative framework around elections and political finance can help generate an environment hostile to vote buying, provided that laws are enforced. High levels of disclosure provided by campaign finance rules increase the incentives for candidates to channel their campaign expenses towards legitimate areas. The capacity to reinforce and monitor the commitment made by voters will vary with the vote-secrecy safeguards provided under the electoral system. Also, centralised counting procedures (with maximum, as well as minimum, numbers of voters at polling stations) can limit the possibility of monitoring election outcomes, while party list systems depersonalise election campaigns.<sup>21</sup> Party-neutral ballots produced by public entities at public expense with careful control over their distribution, and with all candidates for office listed simultaneously, help to ensure free and secret voting. Systematic analysis of the impact of these measures remains both a challenge and a necessity. The accompanying case study on Thailand, to cite one example, does not paint a very encouraging picture (see 'Vote buying in East Asia', page 83).

Another case worth studying is Mexico, where the traditional vote buying activities of the PRI lost their effectiveness in the 2000 elections. One reading of this is that seven decades of authoritarian rule and dubious electoral practices had discredited the party and, consequently, its vote buying practices had the effect of repelling voters. The jury is still out on whether this was a product of the opposition parties' advice, to 'take the gift, but vote as you please', or indicative of a positive change in voter attitudes. Nonetheless, what the results do seem to express is that there has been a change in political culture with implications for how voters perceive and relate to vote buying.<sup>22</sup> The recent Mexican experience also serves to remind us of the factors that motivate and underpin vote buying. While a narrow focus on tackling vote buying, for instance through regulatory and institutional reforms, is helpful, the underlying problems, such as poverty, patronage and voter alienation, also need to be addressed.

## Notes

1. Silke Pfeiffer is regional director for Latin America at Transparency International.
2. Bruno Wilhelm Speck and Claudio Weber Abramo, 'Transparência Brasil/ Ibope Survey – Summary Report', [www.transparencia.org.br](http://www.transparencia.org.br), 2001.
3. Wayne Cornelius and Luis Estrada, 'Mobilized Voting in the 2000 Elections: The Changing Efficacy of Vote Buying and Coercion in Mexican Electoral Politics', in Jorge I. Domínguez and Chappell Lawson, *Mexico's Pivotal Democratic Election* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, forthcoming).
4. Gallup Argentina 'Informe', [www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/capacitybuild/pdf/arg\\_report.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/capacitybuild/pdf/arg_report.pdf)
5. *El Mercado del voto*, [votebien.com](http://votebien.com), 25 January 2002, available at [www.terra.com.co/elecciones\\_2002/cubrimiento\\_especial/financiacion/25-01-2002/nota47324.html](http://www.terra.com.co/elecciones_2002/cubrimiento_especial/financiacion/25-01-2002/nota47324.html). The existing empirical data on vote buying is still limited in quality and quantity. The variation in results may relate to the different methodological approaches, scopes of analysis and objectives of the various surveys.
6. Asociación Civil Transparencia, 'Una historia que no debe repetirse', [www.transparencia.org.pe/publicaciones/2000](http://www.transparencia.org.pe/publicaciones/2000)
7. *El Mercado del voto*, [votebien.com](http://votebien.com).

8. Cornelius and Estrada, 'Mobilized Voting in the 2000 Elections'.
9. Bruno Wilhelm Speck, 'Wahlen und Stimmenkauf in Brasilien', *Tópicos – Deutsch-Brasilianische Hefte*, 42. Jahrgang, Heft 4 2002 1 2003.
10. Valeria Brusco, Marcelo Nazareno and Susan C. Stokes, 'Clientelism and Democracy: Evidence from Argentina', presented at 'Political Parties and Legislative Organization in Parliamentary and Presidential Regimes Conference', Yale University, 2002.
11. Cornelius and Estrada suggest that the profile of voter most likely to be subject to vote buying is older than 50, male, medium educated, lower income and urban.
12. Brusco *et al.*, 'Clientelism and Democracy'.
13. This higher percentage could also be attributed to the fact that, in general, the ruling party has more access to resources that can be used to induce voters to vote a certain way than the opposition.
14. Cornelius and Estrada, 'Mobilized Voting in the 2000 Elections'.
15. Brusco *et al.*, 'Clientelism and Democracy'.
16. This practice has been well documented, for instance during the 2003 Armenian elections (see OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, 'Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, Yerevan: February 2003) and the 2000 Mexican elections (see US-based *Christian Science Monitor*, 26 June 2000).
17. Brusco *et al.*, 'Clientelism and Democracy'.
18. During the 2001 presidential elections in Peru, the chief of the electoral observation mission of the OAS maintained that the offering of T-shirts, calendars, tools and food shouldn't be judged negatively, or be considered as acts of vote buying. See [www.peru.com/noticias/AutoNoticias/DetalleNoticia4170.asp](http://www.peru.com/noticias/AutoNoticias/DetalleNoticia4170.asp)
19. Speck, 'Wahlen und Stimmenkauf in Brasilien'.
20. Bruno Wilhelm Speck, 'A compra de votos – uma aproximação empírica', *Opinião Pública*, Revista do CESOP, Campinas, vol. 9, no. 1, 2003.
21. Frederic Charles Schaffer, 'What is Vote Buying?', presented at 'Trading Political Rights: The Comparative Politics of Vote Buying', International Conference, MIT, Cambridge, 2002.
22. *Ibid.*

## Vote buying in East Asia

Frederic Charles Schaffer<sup>1</sup>

Vote buying in East Asia abounds – from the quasi-democracy of Cambodia to the established democracy of Japan. This article focuses on three countries, Taiwan, Thailand and the Philippines, where data on vote buying is unusually rich.

A few statistics: in the Philippines, an estimated 3 million people nationwide were offered some form of payment in the 2002 *barangay* (community-level) elections – about 7 per cent of all voting-aged adults.<sup>2</sup> In Thailand, 30 per cent of household heads surveyed in a national sample said that they were offered money during the 1996 general election.<sup>3</sup> In Taiwan's third-largest city, Taichung, and its surrounding county, 27 per cent of a random sample of eligible voters reported in 1999 that they had accepted cash during previous electoral campaigns.<sup>4</sup> While these numbers – all derived from mass surveys – must be treated with caution, they provide a conservative, if rough, gauge of just how widespread the practice has been in recent years.<sup>5</sup>

The amount of money offered to voters varies greatly, depending on the competitiveness of the election and local levels of prosperity. At the low end, voters from one poor neighbourhood of Manila received only 30 pesos (US \$0.60) during a relatively non-competitive *barangay* race in 2002. By contrast, middle-class voters in the Taiwanese county of Hualien were given up to 2,000 Taiwanese dollars (US \$60) in a hotly contested 2003 magisterial by-election. In Thailand, the average offer per household in the 1996 general election was 678 baht (US \$27), though Bangkok residents were likely to be given twice as much as rural dwellers.<sup>6</sup>

The total sum of money spent by candidates on buying votes can be high. One congressional candidate in the Southern Luzon region of the Philippines admitted to doling out 4 million pesos (US \$160,000) to voters on the eve of the 1992 election.<sup>7</sup> Prosecutors at the Taiwanese ministry of justice reckon that a typical legislative candidate in an urban area might easily distribute up to 100 million Taiwanese dollars (around US \$3 million).<sup>8</sup> The Nakhon Ratchasima Rajabhat Institute, which monitors poll fraud in Thailand, estimates that candidates gave a total of 20 billion baht (US \$460 million) to voters in the 2001 legislative elections.<sup>9</sup>

Vote buying in all three countries has institutional causes. The weakness of parties in the Philippines and the existence of multi-member districts in Taiwan and, until recently, Thailand have made electoral systems in each country candidate-centred. As a result, candidates (and their factional or party backers) have strong incentives to build personalised networks of support. Key players in the construction of these networks are 'vote brokers', known as *tiau-a-ka* (pillars) in Taiwan, *huakhanaen* (voting chiefs) in Thailand and *lidars* (leaders) in the Philippines. Traditions of gift giving and benevolence make the distribution of money and goods a preferred method of building personal networks. As such, vote buying is often less an explicit contract (as 'buying' might erroneously imply) than a form of gift-giving intended to demonstrate a candidate's compassion, good will or respect.

Even if vote buying is culturally embedded, offers of money or goods in no way guarantee that voters will cast their ballots as candidates or vote brokers hope. Survey data from the Philippines shows that among the poor – who tend to be the target of vote buying – material offers decisively influenced the vote of only about 30 per cent of the people who accepted them in the 2001 elections.<sup>10</sup> Using a finer-tuned method, the scholar Chin-Shou Wang compared the numbers of votes garnered by Kuomintang (KMT) candidates in one Taiwanese town to the number of voters who received money from KMT vote brokers, which he was able to determine by gaining access to the lists of names used by the vote brokers themselves.<sup>11</sup> He found that at least 45 per cent of the people who received money did not vote for KMT candidates in the 1993 elections.

Whatever the influence of money and goods on the electoral choices of voters, vote buying has ramifications that extend beyond the ballot box. To give but one example, vote buying candidates are often financially backed by drug syndicates, gambling lords and strong-arm godfathers who are happy to provide funds in exchange for protection and influence. Vote buying thus fuels organised crime.<sup>12</sup>

### Reform efforts have limited success

Reformers in all three countries have tried to combat vote buying. Efforts to curb demand usually entail voter education. The Taiwanese government launched a massive advertising campaign leading up to the 2001 elections; schoolchildren were even sent home with information so that they might educate their parents. In the Philippines, public education campaigning has been an undertaking of civil society groups such as the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections. In Thailand, a network of election monitoring organisations hosted educational forums prior to the 2000 elections.

Scattered evidence suggests these educational efforts have not been very effective. One survey of 56 poor voters in the Philippines found that only one was swayed by four sample ads in deciding whether to accept money.<sup>13</sup> After interviewing some 1,700 attendees of five education forums in Chiang Mai province in Thailand, evaluators found that 'there was a slight increase after the forum in the number of participants who believed that it was wrong to sell their votes and not vote for the buyer'.<sup>14</sup>

Efforts to curb supply target the behaviour of candidates and their agents. In Taiwan, prosecutors investigated thousands of alleged vote buyers in the 1990s. Few investigations, however, resulted in conviction, often because of political interference. Of greater impact was the defeat of the KMT presidential candidate in the 2000 election by Chen Shui-bian, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) leader who rode to power partly on his pledge to root out political corruption. By many accounts the first post-KMT elections, held in 2001, saw some reduction in vote buying, partly because of the strenuous anti-vote buying campaign of the new DPP administration, and in part because the KMT's vote buying machine broke down in many locales. Nevertheless, many KMT – and DPP – candidates still found it possible and advantageous to engage in vote buying.

A comprehensive set of supply-side reforms was written into Thailand's 1997 constitution. Among its provisions are: strict controls on campaign finances; the centralisation of vote counting at the district level; the introduction of a party list system to encourage voters to choose their members of parliament based on party platforms rather than personalised ties; barring constituency members of parliament from becoming ministers (thus denying them access to ministerial funds); a switch from multi-member to single-member constituencies, which was intended to dry up the pool of second and third 'surplus' votes available for purchase; the introduction of compulsory voting to expand the electorate and thus make vote buying prohibitively expensive, and the creation of a new independent body to administer elections and disqualify candidates who break the law.

This panoply of measures met with only limited success in the post-reform elections of 2000 and 2001. In the judgement of one observer, 'vote buying by no means disappeared and candidates and parties exhibited impressive flexibility by adapting their vote buying to the new electoral environment'.<sup>15</sup> To escape scrutiny and punishment, some vote brokers approached only relatives and close friends. Others began using more intensively a strategy already present in the early 1990s, that of 'indirect' vote buying – hiring people to work as canvassers in an effort to win their allegiance.

Brokers also paid inflated crop prices to farmers, distributed donations at bogus funerals and gave 'salaries' to voters who joined their political parties.

Reflecting on the overall sense of these post-reform adjustments, two scholars conclude that 'vote buying was rampant even though the new laws forced it to become more discreet'.<sup>16</sup> Also noteworthy is that the amount paid out to individual voters is thought to have been higher in the 2000 and 2001 elections than in elections past. This increased payment may partially explain why, by one estimate, the cash flow generated in the 2001 general election was 25 per cent higher than in the last pre-reform election in 1996.<sup>17</sup>

## Notes

1. Frederic Charles Schaffer is a member of the School of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, United States; and a research associate at the Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, United States.
2. Social Weather Stations, 'National Survey', Quezon City, Philippines, 2002.
3. Phongpaichit Pasuk, Nualnoi Treerat, Yongyuth Chaiyapong and Chris Baker, 'Corruption in the Public Sector in Thailand: Perception and Experience of Household', Political Economy Center, Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 2000.
4. Kuen-Shan Cheng, Ye-Li Wang and Yun-Tsai Chen, 'Analysis of the Causes of Vote Buying, and the Study of How to Prevent It', Taipei: Ministry of Justice, 2000 [in Chinese].
5. The Philippines survey, conducted by Social Weather Stations from 24 August to 8 September 2002, gathered data through face-to-face interviews with 1,200 adult respondents nationwide, chosen using multi-stage probability sampling for a 3 per cent margin of error. The Thailand survey was conducted by ABAC-KSC Internet Poll Research Centre in October–December 1999; 4,013 face-to-face interviews were conducted with household heads across the country, chosen using multi-stage cluster sampling. The Taiwan survey was commissioned by the Ministry of Justice; 1,168 interviewees were randomly selected and interviewed by telephone in September 1999.
6. Pasuk *et al.*, 'Corruption in the Public Sector in Thailand'.
7. *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (Philippines), 8–9 May 1992.
8. Author's interview at the Department of Prosecutorial Affairs, Ministry of Justice, 12 August 2003.
9. *Newsweek* (US), 15 January 2001.
10. Frederic Charles Schaffer, 'Disciplinary Reactions: Alienation and the Reform of Vote Buying in the Philippines', prepared for the conference, 'Trading Political Rights: The Comparative Politics of Vote Buying', MIT, 2002. The figure cited was calculated from a survey conducted by Pulse Asia in June 2001, involving face-to-face interviews with 1,200 adult respondents nationwide chosen using multi-stage probability sampling for a 3 per cent margin of error.
11. Chin-Shou Wang, 'The Dilemmas of Clientelism: Electoral Mobilization of Clientelism in Taiwan, 1993', *Carolina Papers: Democracy and Human Rights*, no. 1, 2002, University of North Carolina Center for International Studies.
12. See Yung-mao Chao, *Change and Characteristics of Taiwan's Local Politics* (Taipei: Hanlu, 1997 [in Chinese]); Patrick I. Patiño, 'The Color of Money: Elections and Big Business', *Conjuncture* (Philippines: Institute for Popular Democracy, 1998); James Ockey, 'The Rise of Local Power in Thailand: Provincial Crime, Elections and the Bureaucracy', in

- Money and Power in Provincial Thailand*, edited by Ruth McVey (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000); and *Philippine Star* (Philippines), 26 June 2003.
13. Schaffer, 'Disciplinary Reactions'.
  14. Laura Thornton, 'Combating Corruption at the Grassroots: The Thailand Experience, 1999–2000', National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 2000.
  15. Allen D. Hicken, 'The Market for Votes in Thailand', conference paper, MIT, 2002.
  16. Aurel Croissant and Jörn Dosch, 'Parliamentary Elections in Thailand, March 2000 and January 2001', *Electoral Studies* 22, 2003.
  17. Thai Farmers Research Center, '2001 General Election Likely to Generate over Bt 25 billion Cash Flow', 28 December 2000.

### Box 5.2: Vote buying at the International Whaling Commission

The Japanese government has been accused for years of using official development assistance (ODA) to recruit developing country members into the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in support of its whaling interests. Attention has been drawn particularly to fisheries grant aid and related technical cooperation administered primarily by Japan's Fisheries Agency.

In recent years, the number of developing countries joining the IWC and systematically backing Japan's position has increased to 16.<sup>1</sup> Among them are six eastern Caribbean islands, whose IWC voting records show a striking correlation between votes in support of Japan's interests and the flow of Japanese fisheries aid.<sup>2</sup> With this support, Japan can block the adoption by three-quarters majority of any binding measure not to its liking and it is close to having a simple (51 per cent) majority with which to revise the IWC's rules of procedures, including the introduction of secret ballot voting on any issue – voting is now by roll call – thus making it harder to hold individual governments accountable for their positions.

The IWC's US \$33,000 annual membership fees for developing countries were reduced in 2003 to US \$17,000, still more than most of these states pay in contributions to the UN and its agencies. These substantial fees continue to be paid regularly, which, when viewed in tandem with the positions taken by these states in support of Japan's whaling industry, raises questions about motivations.

There is clear evidence that Japan has used promises of aid and threats of its withdrawal to build a voting bloc that otherwise wouldn't exist. In July 2000, Dominica's minister for environment, planning, agriculture and fisheries, Atherton Martin, resigned in protest at his country's vote against a South Pacific whale sanctuary proposal, because the negative vote contravened a cabinet decision that Dominica should abstain. It was later revealed that Japanese officials had visited the island and threatened to withdraw aid if Dominica did not oppose the proposal.<sup>3</sup>

Although Japanese officials and their counterparts in recipient countries generally deny vote buying, statements in the media support the allegations. Japan's former vice minister of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, Hiraoki Kameya, said in June 1999 that it was 'essential to increase the number of nations supportive to Japan ... [and therefore] necessary to couple effectively the ODA and the promotion of IWC membership'.<sup>4</sup> Antigua's prime minister Lester Bird was even more direct: 'I make no bones about it ... if we are able to support the Japanese and the *quid pro quo* is that they are going to give us some assistance ... that is part of why we do so.'<sup>5</sup>



Since 1987 when it began, Japan's grant aid to the eastern Caribbean IWC members has totalled US \$190 million in the fisheries sector alone, representing more than 96 per cent of Japan's overall grant aid to each of these six small island states; some 22 fisheries complexes have been built or promised as a result. This aid programme was analysed by economist Bernard Petitjean Roget in 2002. Noting that the fishing industry in these countries amounts to 1–2 per cent of GDP, he comments that with such sizeable contributions some tangible developments in the fishing sector should be expected, but he finds no evidence 'to suggest that this aid package is bringing any convincing results to bear on this economic sector'.<sup>6</sup>

He also judges that the construction budgets of some complexes were greater than could be justified by the actual facilities, raising questions about the final destination of any excess funds. Moreover, the complexes are commonly located in the constituencies of influential politicians. In Dominica, former minister Atherton Martin reported that 'there is a pattern here of aid ... for projects that move around, depending on the location of the prime minister's constituency and not according to any reasoned plan for the development of the fisheries sector'.<sup>7</sup>

While this is a difficult issue for the IWC to confront, it did pass a resolution in 2001 proposed by New Zealand that endorsed 'the complete independence of sovereign countries to decide their own policies and freely participate in the IWC (and other international forums) without undue interference or coercion from other sovereign countries'.<sup>8</sup>

The real solution will come from within the countries concerned. In Japan, NGOs and others are placing the ODA system under increasing scrutiny; an independent inquiry into its use to support what Bernard Petitjean Roget calls 'institutionalised corruption' would be timely.

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#### Notes

1. As of July 2003, these states are: Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Benin, Commonwealth of Dominica, Gabon, Grenada, Republic of Guinea, Mongolia, Morocco, Nicaragua, Palau, Panama, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Solomon Islands. Cape Verde and Ivory Coast were present as observers.
2. Aid figures compiled from Japan's ministry of foreign affairs statistics. See 'Briefing on Japan's Vote-Buying Strategy in the International Whaling Commission', Third Millennium Foundation, Paciano, Italy, May 2002, available from [www.3mf.org](http://www.3mf.org)
3. A full account of this episode, and an analysis of the issue and what it represents for Dominica, can be found in Atherton Martin's 'Statement on IWC 2001', published as one of a series of discussion papers by the Dominica Academy of Arts and Sciences. See [www.dacademy.org/whaling.html](http://www.dacademy.org/whaling.html)
4. *Suisan Keizai Shimbun*, 24 June 1999 (translation), speech to the press club of Japan's ministry of agriculture, forestry and fisheries.
5. Interview with CANA news service, 14 July 2001.
6. Bernard Petitjean Roget, 'Socio-Economic and Political Aspects of the Aid Provided by Japan to the Fishing Industry in the Small Independent Islands in the East Caribbean', October 2002. Published by the Eastern Caribbean Coalition for Environmental Awareness, Martinique and the Swiss Coalition for the Protection of Whales, Wadeswil, Switzerland. The full report is available on the websites of both organisations: [www.ececa.org](http://www.ececa.org) and [www.asms-swiss.org](http://www.asms-swiss.org)
7. Martin, 'Statement on IWC 2001'.
8. This resolution on 'Transparency within the IWC' was predicated on the 1970 'Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in Accordance with the United Nations Charter'.