



# Election Fraud: Comparative Perspective

Dr. Marcin Walecki  
**IFES**



**"It's not who votes that counts.  
It's who counts the votes."**

*—apocryphally attributed to  
Iosef Vissarionovich Stalin,*





# Introduction

- Parties and political corruption:  
(TI Global Corruption Barometer)  
  
'In 36 out of 62 countries surveyed, political parties were rated by the general public as the institution most affected by corruption'
- Electoral fraud can appear in all different shapes and sizes, during all parts of the electoral process and can be carried out by many different stakeholders – from ruling governments to individual voters



# Pre-election day fraud

<u>Campaign</u>	<u>Registration</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><u>Abuse of state resources</u></b> to finance campaigns and undermine political opponents</li><li>• Unfair access to media</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not registering voters who are likely to vote for the wrong candidate/party</li><li>• Not removing dead voters from the roll</li><li>• Not registering certain candidates/parties</li></ul>



# Election day fraud

- Ballot stuffing and multiple voting
- Intimidation and **vote buying**
- Not allowing voters to vote for their candidate of choice by running out of ballot papers (in the cases where ballot papers are available at the polling station) or not voting at all by closing the polling station early
- Counting and reporting
- Spoiling ballots: Destroying individual ballots marked in favour of the wrong candidate/party by marking or tearing them during the count
- Misreporting: Reporting the wrong results when all the votes have been counted
- Tampering with electronic voting machines
- Altering the code in electronic voting machines to report the wrong results



# Fraud and Electoral Administration

- Allowing ineligible persons to vote or allowing voters to cast more than one ballot;
- Changing or destroying voters lists;
- Preventing qualified voters from casting a ballot;
- Substituting fake ballots for votes legitimately cast, or casting ballots in the name of voters who did not go to the polls;
- Not marking a ballot as directed by someone who requested assistance in voting;
- Stuffing ballot boxes with pre-marked or spoiled ballots;
- Destroying ballots that were validly cast;
- Not accurately counting the ballots or recording incorrect information on the tally sheets;
- Changing the election results or announcing false results.



# Vote Buying

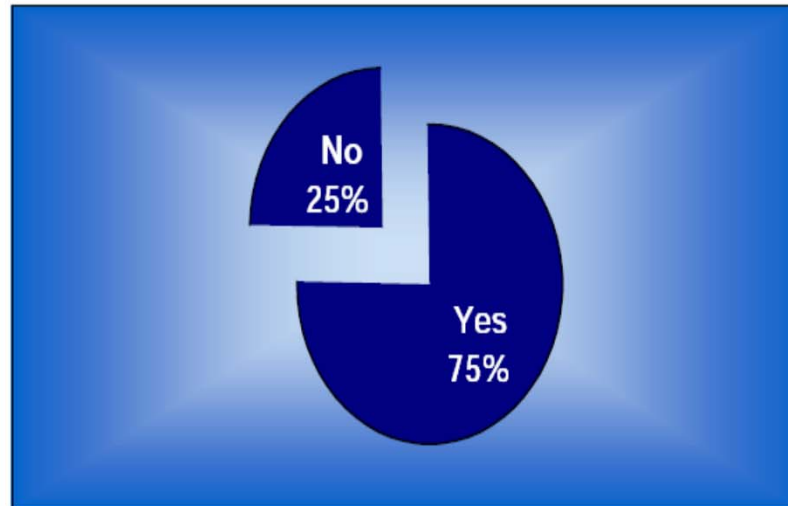
- Offering money or providing other incentives to voters for them to vote (or not to vote) for a candidate/party. Might require voters to prove to the buyer who was voted for (by e.g. pre-marking the ballot paper or by taking pictures of the marked ballot paper inside the voting booth etc.)
- Vote buying is often accompanied by the misuse of public funds to finance vote purchase and has strong links with organized crime groups
- The degree to which vote buying prevails in a society reflects the capacity to reinforce and monitor the pact established between agents and voters – focus on the vote-secrecy safeguards provided under the electoral system





**Figure 3. Were you or any of your relatives/friends suggested bribe for voting a certain party or a candidate?**

75% of the respondents answered that bribe was offered to them or their relatives/friends, and 25% either said that they haven't heard about offering bribes for votes, or refused to answer.



Some of the respondents even mentioned the type or amount of the offered bribes. According to the analysis, the offered bribes were of the following types:

- money – 52% (money offered varied from 600 to 10 000 drams, app. \$1 - \$18).
- goods – 26% (the goods offered were of different value as well: 1 pack of cigarettes, )
- services – 11% (the main services offered included: paying the utility fees, reconstruction of roads and the entrances of the buildings, baptizing, etc.)

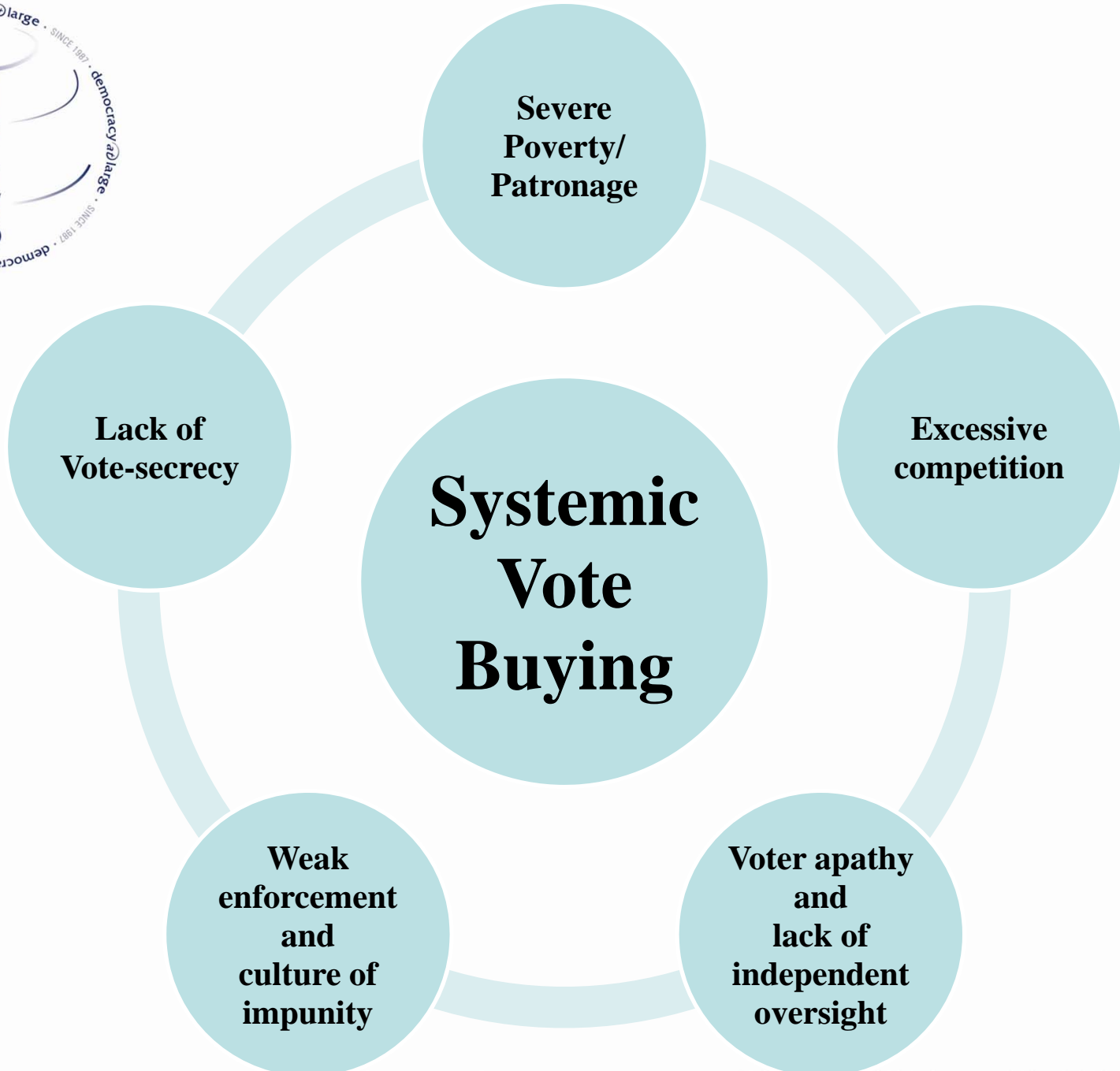
11% of the respondents refused to specify the type of the bribes offered.





# Vote-Buying as a global issue

<p><b>Antigua &amp; Barbuda</b></p>	<p>The “mass distribution of imported hams, turkeys and other giveaways” in the 1999 elections in Antigua and Barbuda meant that the cost-per-vote amounted to at least US\$60 (estimate offered by the ruling Antigua Labour Party) and may have been as high as US\$300 (the oppositions' preferred figure).</p>
<p><b>Italy</b></p>	<p>In the late 1970's, electioneering in Southern Italy was described as “cynical buying and selling of votes in return for a kilo of past, bills of 5,000 or 10,000 lire (\$5-10), or coupons for gasoline, for the cinema, and in one classic case, even for prostitutes.”</p>
<p><b>Philippines</b></p>	<p>During the 2002 local elections, about 7% of all voting-aged adults nationwide received some form of payment.</p>
<p><b>Thailand</b></p>	<p>Over 64 percent of total respondents in the survey say they would accept cash from the candidates in the coming general election in Thailand. And a whopping 83 percent said they'd look the other way if they saw vote-buying going on in their communities.</p>





# Detecting Vote Buying

- Candidates donate cash
- Incumbent candidate is distributing welfare during campaign period
- Entertainment (e.g. lotteries, phone cards) and treating (e.g. alcohol)
- Listing of Rally attendance is being taken
- “Coordinators” are receiving large amounts of cash
- Bused attendees from long distances and attendants not predominantly partisans or sympathizers



# CSOs Monitoring of Electoral Fraud

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Who's involved</b>	<b>Where</b>	<b>When</b>
Vote Buying	High income candidates	Poverty stricken areas	Campaign period, last weeks
Bribery	High Income	Electoral Officials, Judges	Last days of campaign, vote counting, electoral disputes
Abuse of SR	Incumbents	Public Offices, State Agencies	Pre-campaign and campaign period





# The Abuse of State Resources

## Definition:

The misuse of state powers and resources by politicians and political parties to further their own prospects of election in violation of norms and responsibilities governing the exercise of public office.





# Abuse of State Resources in Historical Perspective

- In the period between 1846 and 1886 the British Liberals and the Conservatives used an annual grant £10,000 (Secret Service fund) to finance national party organizations,
- Illegally financing of the 1928 Elections in Poland with unauthorized state resources. The money came from a fund at the disposal of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers which, just before the elections, was raised by 4000% (from 200,000 PLN to 8 million PLN),
- The 1936 US Elections were dominated by gross political abuses of federal funds and eventually the passage of the Hatch Acts of 1939 and 1940,
- Similar practices (abuse of state resources, secret funding from state companies), although more sophisticated, are still present in many democracies.





# Institutional Resources

- Government Resources
- Employees
- Transportation (cars and helicopters)
- Offices (e.g. central and local authorities)
- Public companies
- Equipment (e.g. mobile phones)
- Buildings



# Administrative Resources: Samples

- The use of the state apparatus for electoral purposes has been noted in many semi-authoritarian and transition regimes
- Use of transportation, office space, or employees of local administrations for campaigning
- Campaign managers and PR companies hired by state owned enterprises or administration
- Using of public events or public premises for campaign purposes
- Targeted spending at specific groups of voters in order to boost the electoral prospects of the ruling party



# Who can be involved?

- **Misuse of state resources constitutes the principal source of funds for governing parties in many transition regimes**
- **Presidential Administration**
- **State controlled companies and public agencies**
- **Foundations and state supported non-profit organizations**
- **'Political' Ministries and Security Agencies**
- **Central and local administration**
- **State and semi-private media**
- **Parliamentary fractions and MPs offices**



# Detecting Abuse of State Resources

- Vehicles with government plates
- Public Officials/Civil Service as Campaign Staff
- Security forces playing active part in campaign
- Staff making compulsory contribution
- Equipment used for campaign purposes
- Political meetings are held in government offices



# Abuse of State Resources in CEE

## Hungary

- Increase in government advertising in the 2002 elections for the benefit of the ruling party. The Country Image Centre was used to praise government activities and criticise the activities of previous governments.

## Georgia

- During November 2003 Elections in 26 districts observers reported instances of local campaign headquarters being established in State premises of which 20 were regime party offices.

## Ukraine

- Direct allocation of public funds to incumbent presidential candidate from non-specific budget items in the 1999 Presidential Elections.