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The role of private and collective goods in elections: evidence from Ghana

Keith R. Weghorst and Staffan I. Lindberg*

Many accounts of democratization in Africa from the early 1990s were infused with optimism at the outbreak of competitive elections in country after country across the continent. Yet, history has shown that African opposition parties rarely succeed in removing incumbents from office by winning elections. This paper analyzes data from two unique data collection exercises conducted in Ghana as pre- and post-election surveys surrounding the decisive December 2008 election in which NDC came back to power after eight years as the main opposition party. We find that the voters who decided the 2008 elections are more instruments of democracy and provide more rewards to politicians who perform well on constituency development and representation, than to those who act decisively as patrons trying to buy votes.

1 Introduction

Almost all modern definitions of democracy encapsulate Dahl's (1971) dictum that democracy is a political system that is completely, or almost completely, responsive to its citizens. It is well established that this requires competition (or contestation, as Dahl would have it). It is not uncommon to take as a starting point the Schumpeterian notion that identifies electoral competition as the minimal criterion of a democratic system. In other words, democracy is not only a 'regime in which those who govern are selected through contested elections' (Przeworski et al. 2000, 15; cf. Przeworski and Limongi 1997, 178) but more importantly 'democracy is a system of government in which parties lose elections' (Przeworski 1991, 10; cf. Sartori 1988).

There are at least two good reasons for this approach. Without political opposition, there is no choice, and when there is no choice the people cannot exercise the discretion that is essential to democratic representation (Dahl 1971, 1989). Without at least one viable opposition party, the mechanism of vertical accountability whereby the principal (the people) can hold the agent (elected politicians) responsible, breaks down (cf. Przeworski, Stokes & Manin 1999). As noted by Huntington (1991, 174) multiparty elections imply the demise of dictatorships. The power to 'throw the rascals out' is the citizens' main weapon in the constant struggle to make sure that elected representatives are responsive. In addition, it has been evidenced that turnovers play a

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determinant role in establishing legitimacy for political institutions, and thus in democratic consolidation (Moehler & Lindberg 2009; cf. Andersen et al. 2005). It is therefore imperative that we gain more knowledge about what makes for strong opposition parties that can win elections in Africa's new and emerging democracies.

The other reason why this is important is the lack of development in most African states (e.g. Bates 1981, Hyden 2006, van de Walle 2001). Elections, in so far as they are rudimentarily free and fair, are decided by voters. If voters in general award politicians power on the basis of provision of private, clientelistic goods, the logic of vertical democratic accountability is undermined. Politicians become free to siphon off resources from the state, create inefficiencies in markets to increase rent, and engage in other illicit practices as long as voters reward vote-buying efforts with political loyalty. However, if a critical mass of voters decides to put emphasis on provision of collective goods and services when making a decision at the polls, a series of successive elections have the potential to induce such pressure as to force politicians to become developmental agents. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that viable opposition parties are necessary not only for democracy to function but also for making politicians provide development rather than clientelism. The thesis that representative democracy is a route to solving deficits of public and collective goods hinges on the role of elections as 'instruments of democracy' (Powell 2000).

Ghana is a good case with which to explore the question of what makes opposition parties strong in Africa. After five successive elections since 1992, there have been two alternations in power and both of the two main parties have managed to make a 'come back' after losing. In the last election in December 2008, the former ruling party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), won both a legislative majority and the presidential election. This history creates a close to ideal testing ground for considering what 'works' for opposition parties in Africa: clientelism or development?

2 Opposition in Africa

Many accounts of democratization in Africa from the early 1990s were infused with optimism at the outbreak of competitive elections in country after country across the continent. Yet, the lack of strong opposition parties in many African countries has made some observers see a return of semi-authoritarianism (Carothers 1997), or 'big man' clientelistic politics, even the context of multiparty elections (e.g. Ake 1996, Bratton 1998, Mbembe 1995, Rakner & van de Walle 2009, van de Walle 2007, Wantchekon 2003). One of the most problematic elements in the consolidation of African democracies relates to the underdevelopment of parties. Credible opposition parties are essential (Diamond 1996, 229). Yet, many political parties in Africa lack clear political objectives, platforms, and 'brand names.' The consequence has been that rarely do opposition parties have much opportunity to challenge incumbents and remove them from office. This may be partly an effect of historical experience. Nearly every sub-Saharan African state that received colonial independence during the 1960s had at some point, or still retains, a dominant party system (Collier 1982, 8).

Political parties' behavior varies in several important ways. One could legitimately ask why opposition parties choose to act differently depending on the structural cleavages they represent (e.g. Lipset and Rokkan 1967), the incentives generated by the electoral systems they face (e.g. Sartori 1976, Lijphart 1984), or whether they are office-, voter-, or policy-seeking parties

(Strøm 1990). However, for the purposes of establishing what opposition parties can do in order to strengthen their position and win elections, our focus is on the preferences of voters whom parties seek to catch (cf. Downs 1957). Using two surveys carried out before and after the election on December 7th 2008 in Ghana, we analyze voters' retrospective sanctioning and prospective selection of incumbents and opposition candidates.

Perhaps the most prevalent explanation of the proliferation of non-democratic behavior among political elites in Africa relates to the personalization of the state, where individuals use state institutions to accrue private wealth, and reward political supporters using private, clientelistic goods to maintain their position in power (e.g. Barkan 1979, Bayart 1993, Hyden 2006, Jackson & Rosberg 1982, Joseph 1997, Joseph 1987, Reno 1998, van de Walle 2001). The question is, are voters in Ghana beguiled by clientelism thus undermining both democracy and development, or do they evaluate and reward politicians who focus on collective goods provision? This is the empirical focus of our paper.

3 ... and in Ghana

In 2008, Ghana experienced a series of political events that took many observers by surprise: an African political party that lost a run-off presidential election by less than one half of one percent of the popular vote gracefully accepted defeat. In doing so, the National Patriotic Party (NPP) ensured that Ghana experienced a second alternation, pushing it into the ranks of the strongest performing democracies in Africa. The party which had come to power by democratically ousting the NDC regime led by John Jerry Rawlings, was in turn forced out of office by the ballot box. In other words, Ghana had finally passed the classical 'two turnover test.'

We seek an explanation for this in preferences of citizens. Yet, to locate the shift between the two elections in changing voter preferences goes against the vast majority of literature on the African citizen in the electoral context. Africans are assumed to vote ethnically, and elections are seen as little more than ethnic censuses propelling relevant cleavage structures of society into the public sphere. Vote shifts that *do* occur in African electoral systems tend to be explained by a sort of clientelism that almost always benefits the incumbent party (Lindberg 2003, van de Walle 2007).

The argument about ethnicity is relatively straightforward. Partisan identities are limited and seldom constitute 'cross-cutting cleavages' that assuage ethnic divisions; ethnic identities instead become mechanisms for mobilizing political support (Barkan 1979, Fridy 2007, McLaughlin 2007, Posner 2007; cf. Lipset 1961). This occurs because they have real incentives to do so: voters receive 'psychic benefits' from supporting candidates like themselves (Chandra 2004) and in lieu of clearly defined policy aims, use ethnicity as a cognitive shortcut to estimate similar electoral preferences (Ferree 2006). Responding to such incentives, citizens can be expected to vote along ethnic lines and thus elections in Africa's developing democracies can result in censuses of salient ethnic identities (Lijphart 1999, Synder 2000). At its core, ethnicity captures a multi-faceted identity defined by a shared myth of common ancestry, encompassing clan, language, religion, region, and even nation. (Chandra 2004, Chazan 1983, Fearon and Laitin 1996, Horowitz 1985, Young 1976). Yet, even if these ethnic identities are multi-faceted and it has been demonstrated that their make-up and intensity can change over time (Posner

2005), ethnic patterns hardly explain dramatic changes in voting patterns such as between the 2004 and 2008 elections in Ghana.

The second main explanation centers on political clientelism and patronage as instruments that elites can use to subvert the logic of democratic accountability (e.g. Cox & McCubbins 1993, Stokes 2005). Keefer & Vlaicu (1997) posit that political clientelism is a strategy for politicians to gain credibility, when it is lacking otherwise. For example, it has been shown that Members of Parliament in Ghana spend a tremendous amount of time in their constituencies providing personal assistance to voters, by paying educational expenses, attending funerals, distributing jobs and other benefits, as well as direct financial transfers in the form of ‘small chops’ (Lindberg *forthcoming* 2010; cf. Wantchekon 2003). A number of scholars attribute this pattern to poverty (e.g. Dixit & Londregan 1996). For the poor, immediate improvements in their often precarious material conditions take priority and the cost of buying political loyalty from a poor person can be assumed to be much lower than beguiling the rich (cf. Stokes 2005). Among others, Kitschelt & Wilkinson (2007) suggest that in addition to level of development, the level of political competitiveness impacts on the cost and benefits of clientelistic strategies. The value of the marginal voter, hence the acceptable price of a *quid pro quo*, is much higher in competitive districts than in safe havens. Yet, candidates can also use clientelistic goods to drive up turnout (mobilization rather than persuasion) much along the lines suggested by Nichter (2008) and Dunning & Stokes (2008), or do both, as evidenced by Magaloni et al. (2007).

Against this background, the present paper provides some evidence on two questions. The first concerns what factors drives voters to support opposition parties and thus make them stronger in the polls, laying the foundation for alternations in power and thus making elections ‘instruments of democracy’. The second concerns the extent voters are ‘farming clientelism’ or creating incentives for politicians to be agents of development. We investigate this by examining the pattern of reasons given by voters ahead of the polls for why they could possibly vote for the opposition or switch their vote to do so, and comparing this with the evidence on why they eventually voted they way they did.

4 Methodology

The basis of our analysis is two unique datasets collected by one of the authors in August 2008 and July 2009. The first survey was conducted almost four months before Ghana’s concurrent presidential and legislative elections on December 7. At this point, the primary elections for both legislative seats and presidential slots had been finalized and the revision of the voters’ register just completed, but the campaigning had not really got started. We were therefore able to minimize the impact of the campaign on our results. This provides an ideal period to assess performance-based evaluations of Members of Parliament (MPs) independent of the campaign. The second survey was carried out in July 2009, six months after the installation of the new government and legislature. Thus, respondents would have at least some minimum level of information on the behavior of their MP after taking office.

Each survey included 1600 or more subjects who were recruited through a clustered, stratified, multi-stage area probability sampling procedure.¹ We included one constituency from nine out of the ten regions in Ghana, reflecting a wide range of districts from safe havens to hotly contested constituencies, with 160 subjects interviewed in each constituency.² Each survey consisted of a number of questions that probe a subject's past voting behavior, exposure to political activities, past and future evaluations and expectations of members of Parliament, and the nature of interaction with local and national political authorities, as well as a host of demographic probes, such as ethnic identity and religion. While many of the questions included in the survey employed forced-response formats, several of the questions were open-ended and gave subjects ample opportunities to elaborate and explain their answers. This served the purpose of building rapport with the survey administrator to enhance response quality and to increase the sheer volume of information produced by the survey (cf. Groves et al. 2004). We also wanted to make sure to capture the full range of responses to questions such as those addressing why a individual decided to vote for a different party in the last election, or chose to split his or her vote between two parties' candidates in the presidential and legislative elections respectively. These answers were then post-coded, informed by theories of clientelism and

¹ This is following a procedure established by Lindberg and Morrison (2005, 2008). The strategic selection of constituencies was done in this project in order to get enough respondents from each constituency in order to make possible valid inferences about particular areas. This procedure involved first stratifying constituencies in the 2008 elections by Ghana's ten regions. Since a random selection procedure could lead to inclusion of extreme outliers, one constituency was strategically selected from nine of the ten regions (two from Greater Accra) by weighting a number of both quantitative and qualitative indicators in order to ensure a representative selection of constituencies as far as possible. Within each constituency, we used polling stations as the sampling frame, and 16 of them were selected at random by a computer. The final stages of sampling were guided by the Afrobarometer standard household methodology protocol (cf. Afrobarometer Survey Methods 2009).

² Three constituencies were safe-havens for the two dominant parties in their geographical strongholds. Kwabre, in the heartland of the Ashanti region, was selected for the New Patriotic Party (NPP), and Ho West in the Volta region for the National Democratic Congress (NDC) respectively. Akim Swedru in the Eastern region is another NPP safe haven chosen to capture that region but also reflect the fact that the NPP have almost double the number of safe havens compared to the NDC. Besides being safe havens, each of these constituencies has a diverse population of urban and rural residents engaged in trading, farming and education (cf. Lindberg and Morrison 2005). Three competitive districts, in which the two dominant parties were equally competitive, as neither had a clear majority or power had alternated between them, were also selected. The Central region and the Greater Accra region have been contested regions for both parties in several elections. Both Cape Coast and Ablekum South had been NPP constituencies over the last three election cycles but with radically decreasing margins, and both were eventually lost to the NDC in 2008. Both have a combination of fishing, farming, trading, and small-scale cottage industry communities, and a mixture of urban and rural communities. The last competitive area was Bolgatanga, in the far north of the country. In addition to contributing to geographical representation of the country and inclusion of some minority ethnic groups from the North, it is a constituency where one of the small parties has won a seat in the past. During the time of the survey, the PNC was holding the seat although it was lost to the NDC in the 2008 election. In addition to the six constituencies above, four semi-competitive constituencies were selected. Kpone-Katamanso lies on the outskirts of the Accra/Tema metropolitan area with a mixed population of various occupations who often work in the capital but live outside. Ewe-Gwira is located in the Western region and a traditional stronghold of the CPP, which is the party with the strongest historical link to the country's founding father Kwame Nkrumah. Jaman South is located in Brong-Afaho region and while somewhat competitive, is still relatively safe for the NPP. Tamale Central constituency in the Northern region is also relatively competitive but has been comfortably won by the NDC.

collective/public goods. In this way, we sought to generate the truest possible representation of people's actual views and thoughts that it is possible to capture in quantitative format while being interpretable in relevant theoretical terms.

5 Summary characteristics of ten constituencies in Ghana's 2008 elections

Our first aim is to look at the characteristics of the NDC victory across the constituencies in the 2008 pre-election survey. The selected constituencies vary in terms of electoral competitiveness which permits us to compare the performance of the political opposition over two elections. As shown in Table 1, the victory of the NDC across the ten constituencies is noteworthy. First, the NDC won over three constituencies held by the NPP while holding onto their own turf. Comparing the parties on the basis of the competitiveness of a constituency, we see that the NDC performed very well in close electoral contests and won all three of the competitive, 'battleground' areas. In Cape Coast, for example, this means that the NDC turned a 6.7% deficit in 2004 into a 4.9% victory margin in the 2008 elections, representing a gain of over 11% of the votes in the constituency.

Constituency Type	Name	Party	Turnover	Turnout	2008			2004		
					% of Votes	Margin of Victory	2nd Party	Winner	% of Votes	Margin of Victory
Competitive	Ablekuma South	NDC	Yes	68.5%	51.3%	4.8%	NPP	NPP	52.1%	7.7%
	Cape Coast	NDC	Yes	69.5%	48.8%	4.9%	NPP	NPP	51.2%	6.7%
	Bolgatanga	NDC	Yes	69.4%	57.7%	37.5%	NPP	PNC	38.6%	4.5%
Semi-Competitive	Tamale Central	NDC	No	73.9%	65.7%	34.2%	NPP	NDC	55.8%	17.2%
	Jaman South	NPP	No	64.2%	55.8%	55.4%	NDC	NPP	57.2%	18.5%
	Evalue-Gwira	NPP	Yes	64.4%	57.7%	26.8%	NDC	CPP	49.7%	20.3%
	Kpone Katamansu	NDC	No	65.7%	63.0%	30.5%	NPP	NDC	53.8%	20.8%
Safe Havens	Ho West	NDC	No	64.6%	87.5%	76.0%	NPP	NDC	82.5%	65.6%
	Kwabre East	NPP	No	75.1%	75.1%	55.3%	NDC	NPP	84.1%	68.2%
	Akim Swedru	NPP	No	74.7%	63.6%	27.9%	NDC	NPP	67.4%	36.4%
*This compares NPP to NDC directly, except for Bolgatanga, where the NDC second with 34% if the vote and Evalue-Gwira, where the NDC placed second with 29.4%										
Source: Electoral Commission of Ghana; <i>Know Your MPs (2009-2013)</i>										

Second, even in the NPP 'safe haven' constituencies Kwabre East and Akim Swedru, the NDC was able to pick off a number of the votes that the incumbents won in 2004. On the whole, Table 1 provides evidence that the NDC managed to overcome a number of obstacles facing opposition parties.

In the remaining discussions of our empirical results, we shift focus to the voters in order to determine the motivations for their choices to oust the incumbent party. In particular, we will ascertain reasons why voters choose one political party over another based on retrospective evaluation of incumbent performance or instead on prospective voting, based on future enticements for political support.

6 What voters can be won?

Table 2 reports findings from the 2008 survey regarding uncertainty in a citizen's vote choice and his or her willingness to swing vote over collective goods and services-related campaign issues. Here, there are several important elements to highlight. Prior to full-on electoral campaigns the NPP appeared to be in good standing, even in the most competitive constituencies. For example, in Ablekuma South, respondents' levels of support were over 15% greater than the number of projected NDC voters. What could explain then the eventual success of the NDC in winning this constituency? The answer is two-fold: we see in semi-competitive and competitive constituencies that a substantial portion of respondents reported being undecided about their selection in the 2008 elections, meaning that they were still 'up for grabs' for parties competing in the polls. In Ablekuma South, the number of reported undecided voters more than covered the margin between NPP and NDC voters.

Type	Constituency	Party	Projected Vote %	N	Reported Vote, June 2009 %***	N	Project /Reported Vote Gap	% Policy Swing, by Projected Vote	MP Election Results, 2008	Project /2008 Result Gap	Reported /2008 Vote Gap
Competitive	Ablekuma S.	NPP	42.3%	55	28.4%	31	-13.9%	20.0%	46.5%	-4.2%	-18.1%
		NDC	24.6%	32	59.6%	65	35.0%	34.4%	51.2%	26.6%	8.4%
		CPP	3.8%	5	3.7%	4	-0.2%	40.0%	1.2%	-2.6%	2.5%
		PNC	--	--	0.9%	1	-	-	0.8%		
		Other*	29.2%	38	--			5.3%			
		Total		130	Total	101					
	Cape Coast	NPP	27.7%	39	51.7%	60	24.0%	12.8%	44.0%	-16.3%	7.7%
		NDC	45.4%	64	47.4%	55	2.0%	20.3%	54.1%	-8.7%	-6.7%
		CPP	7.8%	11	85.8%	1	78.0%	18.9%	1.3%	6.5%	84.5%
		PNC	1.4%	2	0.9%	1	-0.6%	0.0%	--		
		Other*	17.7%	25	0.9%			8.0%			
		Total		141	Total	117					
	Bolgatanga	NPP	18.3%	26	15.7%	18	-2.7%	42.3%	20.2%	-1.9%	-4.5%
		NDC	21.1%	30	76.5%	88	55.4%	36.7%	57.7%	-36.6%	18.8%
		CPP	1.4%	2	0.0%	0	-1.4%	0.0%	1.3%	0.1%	-1.3%
		PNC	23.9%	34	4.3%	5	-19.6%	11.8%	20.1%	3.8%	-15.8%
		Other*	33.1%	47				32.4%			
		Total		142	Total	142					
Semi-competitive	Tamale C.	NPP	29.6%	42	16.1%	19	-13.5%	33.3%	31.4%	-1.8%	-15.3%
		NDC	50.7%	72	75.0%	81	24.3%	26.4%	65.6%	-14.9%	9.4%
		CPP	3.5%	5	4.2%	1	0.7%	60.0%	1.5%	2.0%	2.7%
		PNC	0.7%	1	0.8%	1	0.1%	100.0%	0.6%	0.1%	0.2%
		Other*	15.5%	22				8.0%			
		Total		142	Total	102					
	Jaman S.	NPP	65.2%	88	59.7%	68	-5.5%	28.4%	55.8%	9.4%	3.9%
		NDC	20.7%	28	35.1%	40	14.3%	32.1%	34.3%	-13.6%	0.8%
		CPP	4.4%	6	0.9%	1	-3.6%	33.3%	0.4%	4.0%	0.5%
		PNC	2.2%	3	0.0%	0	-2.2%	33.3%	0.7%	1.5%	-0.7%
		Other*	7.4%	10				17.2%			
		Total		135	Total	109					
	Evalue-Gwira	NPP	42.5%	57	54.8%	63	12.2%	17.5%	57.6%	-15.1%	-2.8%
		NDC	16.4%	22	34.8%	40	18.4%	40.9%	30.8%	-14.4%	4.0%
		CPP	14.9%	20	5.0%	6	-9.9%	25.0%	11.5%	3.4%	-6.5%
		PNC	--	--	0.0%			--			
		Other*	26.1%	35				31.4%			
		Total		134	Total	109					
	Kpone Kat.	NPP	32.4%	44	16.3%	19	-16.0%	25.0%	32.5%	-0.1%	-16.2%
		NDC	36.8%	50	77.5%	90	40.7%	10.0%	63.0%	-26.2%	14.5%
		CPP	8.8%	12	3.4%	5	-5.4%	41.7%	4.6%	4.2%	-1.2%
		PNC	1.5%	2	0.9%	0	-0.6%	0.0%	--		
		Other*	20.6%	28				28.0%			
		Total		136	Total	114					

Safe Havens	Ho W.	NPP	18.7%	25	11.2%	13	-7.5%	32.0%	11.4%	7.3%	-0.2%
		NDC	64.2%	86	88.7%	103	24.5%	24.4%	87.5%	-23.3%	1.2%
		CPP	1.5%	2	2.6%	0	1.1%	50.0%	1.1%	0.4%	1.5%
		PNC	--	--	0.0%	0	--	--	--	--	--
		Other*	15.7%	21				25.0%			0.0%
		Total		134	Total	116					
	Kwabre E.	NPP	78.8%	115	83.5%	97	4.8%	21.7%	76.0%	2.8%	7.5%
		NDC	7.5%	11	15.5%	18	8.0%	36.7%	19.8%	-12.3%	-4.3%
		CPP	2.1%	3	2.6%	3	0.5%	33.3%	3.1%	-1.0%	-0.5%
		PNC	--	--	0.0%		--	--	--	--	--
		Other*	11.6%	17				14.3%			0.0%
		Total		146	Total	118					
	Akim Sw.	NPP	73.0%	81	68.4%	78	-4.6%	24.0%	63.6%	9.4%	4.8%
		NDC	15.3%	17	21.1%	24	5.7%	16.3%	35.7%	-20.4%	-14.6%
		CPP	1.8%	2	2.6%	3	0.8%	50.0%	0.7%	1.1%	1.9%
		PNC	--	--	0.0%		--	--	--	--	--
		Other*	9.9%	11				25.0%			0.0%
		Total		111	Total	105					
*Undecided, don't know, and smaller parties											
***These values correspond with the percentage of project voters for party X who indicate a propensity to vote that is "high" to "very high"											

Another factor in play is that a large portion of voters who reported a projected vote for a particular party's candidate nevertheless had a high propensity to 'vote one way or the other.' The column labeled '% Policy Swing, by Projected Vote' shows the extent to which a voter can be induced, on the basis of policy issues, to be 'picked off' by another party. Returning to the example of Ablekuma South, we see that of the respondents who indicated they would vote for the NPP candidate in the 2008 elections, 20% of them could have been persuaded by promises from other candidates to deliver community development, provide executive oversight, or voice constituency concerns on the floor of parliament. Given that projected NDC voters also had high levels of volatility in their vote choice – 34.4% of NDC voters also reported high levels of vote 'swingness' in Ablekuma South – this means that the NDC effectively won over many of these NPP swing voters, while minimizing their own losses to the NPP on policy enticements.

In Table 2, the success of the NDC in winning undecided and swing voters is captured by comparing the actual election results of the December 7th elections with the projected vote choices collected in the pre-election survey. In a competitive constituency like Ablekuma South, the NDC won 51.2% of the vote, in spite of the fact that in August, only 20% of respondents indicated they would vote for the NDC candidate. Table 2 has shown that the more than 30% shift in NDC support in this constituency is a result of the NDC's ability to collect a number of undecided voters and bringing into the fold voters who supported a different party, but were won by appeals of the NDC. While this discussion has used Ablekuma South as an exemplar of this dynamic, readers will find this holds even more strongly in some competitive and semi-competitive constituencies.

This section has demonstrated that NDC's electoral success can at least in part be attributed to their ability to win over sets of undecided and swing voters in the constituencies that were most competitive. In our next step, we look to the reasons that these voters might have chosen the NDC over the candidates of other political parties. Tables 3(A) and 3(B) test two basic claims about voters' rationale in making choices. Table 3(A) presents a test of whether performance evaluations of MPs in terms of distributing public and private goods has an impact on vote choice. This falls in line with idea that elections serve as referenda on incumbent performance and that voters can punish politicians for poor performance by not voting for them in the next elections.

7 Prospective vs. retrospective voting

Table 3(A) demonstrates that there are significant differences between projected vote selection and evaluation of the incumbent. Most importantly, projected NDC voters held a more negative evaluation of incumbents' performance in terms of public goods compared to NPP supporters. At first it might seem that these differences are rather small; for example, 44% of NDC supporters see incumbent performance in constituency service as bad or very bad, compared to 39.5% of NDC supporters. Reflecting back on Table 1, we know that the elections were quite close in a number of these constituencies – 4 percent differences in performance evaluation may have heavily impacted election results. Table 3(A) also shows that undecided voters have far more negative assessments of MP performance in providing public goods, compared to respondents who indicate support for a political party. Reflecting on this point and the findings of Table 2, we know then that the voters who contributed to the success of the NDC in the December elections were unsatisfied with the performance of the incumbent regime. This is the

case across parliamentary performance and lawmaking, constituency service and development, and service as a check on the executive.

Table 3(A): Retrospective Voters in Ghana, By Projected Vote Choice								
Personal Assistance		NPP	NDC	Undecided	CPP	PNC	Total	Sign.
	Very/Bad	43.0%	45.6%	54.8%	59.3%	31.6%	46.3%	Chi-square= 24.5117 P =.002 df=8
	N	195	156	97	35	12	495	
	Neither	18.7%	12.6%	16.4%	13.6%	10.5%	15.8%	
	N	85	43	29	8	4	169	
	Good/Very	38.2%	41.8%	28.8%	27.1%	57.9%	37.9%	
	N	174	143	51	16	22	406	
	Total	99.9%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	N	454	342	177	59	38	1,070	
Constituency Service Performance								
	Very/Bad	39.5%	43.6%	50.5%	50.8%	22.5%	42.7%	Chi-square= 26.8019 P =.001 df=8
	N	218	171	111	34	9	543	
	Neither	15.2%	8.4%	13.2%	14.9%	17.5%	12.8%	
	N	84	33	29	10	7	163	
	Good/Very	45.3%	48.0%	36.4%	34.3%	60.0%	44.5%	
	N	250	188	80	23	24	565	
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	N	552	392	220	67	40	1,271	
Law Performance								
	Very/Bad	20.8%	25.6%	37.7%	32.8%	9.4%	25.4%	Chi-square= 33.487 P <.001 df=8
	N	100	85	64	20	3	272	
	Neither	10.8%	12.1%	10.6%	19.7%	6.3%	11.5%	
	N	52	40	18	12	2	124	
	Good/Very	68.3%	62.4%	51.8%	47.5%	84.4%	63.2%	
	N	328	207	88	29	27	679	
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	N	480	332	170	61	32	1,075	
Executive Oversight								
	Very/Bad	19.8%	32.1%	33.6%	26.1%	8.3%	25.8%	Chi-square= 25.9249 P =.001 df=8
	N	82	89	47	12	2	232	
	Neither	18.4%	14.4%	20.0%	23.9%	25.0%	17.9%	
	N	76	40	28	11	6	161	
	Good/Very	61.8%	53.4%	46.4%	50.0%	66.7%	56.4%	
	N	256	148	65	23	16	508	
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	N	414	277	140	46	24	901	
Source: Lindberg's 2008 Ghana Survey								

This finding holds for evaluations of private goods provision for incumbent MPs, illustrated by the final component of Table 3(A). NDC supporters, undecided voters, and voters from peripheral parties find that incumbents have performed poorly in delivering goods like schools fees and jobs. These voters then punish the incumbent regime by uniting against it and, as we saw in Ghana's 2008 elections, voting the incumbent out of power. The only potentially divergent element in these tables is that a smaller percentage of individuals who project voting for an NPP candidate think the incumbent has provided private goods well. However, we find that this might be due simply to the higher expectations individuals have of incumbent regimes in terms of distributing clientelistic rents. To sum up, Table 3(A) presents strong evidence that projected vote choice is statistically related to how one assesses the performance of an

incumbent on the basis of public and private goods provision. We find that individuals who will not vote for the NPP are retrospective voters, punishing the incumbent for poor performance in the previous term.

Table 3(B): Prospective Voters in Ghana, By Projected Vote Choice								
Switch for "Small Chops"		NPP	NDC	Undecided	CPP	PNC	Total	Sign.
No		92.6%	90.7%	86.1%	91.0%	95.2%	91.8%	Chi-square=3.294 P =.553 df=4
	N	527	372	25	61	40	1,025	
Maybe/Yes		7.4%	9.3%	13.8%	9.0%	4.8%	8.2%	
	N	42	38	4	6	2	92	
Total		100.0%	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	N	569	410	29	67	42	1,117	
Switch for Job								
No		77.0%	78.1%	72.4%	73.1%	78.6%	77.1%	Chi-square= 1.2477 P =.870 df=4
	N	438	321	21	49	33	862	
Maybe/Yes		23.0%	21.9%	27.6%	26.9%	21.4%	22.9%	
	N	131	90	8	18	9	256	
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	N	569	411	29	67	42	1118	
Switch for Constituency Development								
No		70.0%	68.7%	58.6%	60.6%	76.2%	68.9%	Chi-square= 4.9211 P =.295 df=4
	N	399	283	17	40	32	771	
Maybe/Yes		30.0%	31.3%	41.4%	39.4%	23.8%	31.1%	
	N	171	129	12	26	10	348	
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	N	570	412	29	66	42	1,119	
Switch for Good Lawmaking								
No		75.3%	76.3%	71.4%	71.6%	85.0%	75.7%	Chi-square= 2.980 P =.573 df=4
	N	426	313	20	48	34	841	
Maybe/Yes		24.7%	23.7%	28.6%	28.4%	15.0%	24.3%	
	N	140	97	8	19	6	270	
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	N	566	410	28	67	40	1,111	
Switch for Vigilant Executive Oversight								
No		80.4%	78.8%	82.1%	83.1%	94.9%	80.5%	Chi-square= 6.2346 P =.182 df=4
	N	452	323	23	54	37	889	
Maybe/Yes		19.6%	21.2%	17.9%	16.9%	5.1%	19.5%	
	N	110	87	5	11	2	215	
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	N	562	410	28	65	39	1,104	
Source: Lindberg's 2008 Ghana Survey								

Table 3(B) tests whether these voters might also be prospective insofar as their vote choice is dependent on considerations of possible future gains of public and private goods. The table presents a set of hypothetical criteria that survey subjects considered as reasons they might be willing to change their vote. Interestingly, there appears to be very little difference between indicated party choice and the willingness of a respondent to change his or her vote based on an assessment of the future. Unlike the 3(A), where differences were sometimes large between two groups, there is extremely little variation across reported NPP voters, NDC voters, independents, and so on. Moreover, none of the findings presented in Table 3(B) are anywhere

near statistical significance.³ Thus, while Table 2 might tell us that some Ghanaians are prospective voters in the sense that they consider future gains in public and private goods when choosing their candidate, it also tells us that voters are no different on the basis of which political party they end up supporting.

Considering the data presented in the first three of tables together, we have evidence that the success of the NDC in ousting the incumbent NPP was based on making substantial gains across almost all of the constituencies in which our survey was conducted, and this reflects national trends across the 2008 polls. Moreover, we show that the NDC was able to collect a number of voters who had yet to decide on their candidate prior to the election. For some Ghanaians who had decided to vote for the NPP, the NDC was also successful in picking them off, because the vote of these individuals was available to be ‘swung,’ on collective goods rather than on clientelistic distribution. Tables 3(A) and 3(B) further illustrated that many Ghanaians – especially undecided voters and those who pledge support for the NDC – are quite unhappy with how the incumbent regime has performed in providing collective goods. In this sense, they are retrospective voters who evaluate the past performance of a candidate. These voters, however, did not differ in their consideration of the future when selecting their preferred candidate. NPP voters are just as prospective (or not) as voters for NDC, independents, and other political parties in Ghana. These results are significantly different from Lindberg & Morrison’s (2005, 2008) earlier findings, where many more voters were prospectively oriented. A reasonable interpretation seems to be that a longer track record makes it possible for voters to evaluate politicians and parties retrospectively. African voting behavior may after all be more similar to Western democracies than we once thought.

8 Looking back at the elections

In this second portion of the analysis, we introduce the second set of data collected in July 2009 (six months after the 2008 elections) where individuals were asked to look back and reflect on the polls. While the two surveys do not produce pure panel data, they approximate it by drawing samples from the same constituencies with the same random selection procedure. This allows us to make direct comparisons between voters in these constituencies before and after the elections.

8.1 Do voters punish MPs by ballot?

Recall first that in the previous section, we presented evidence that voters used their ballots as a means of punishing or rewarding performance of political incumbents. Using the data collected from the post-election survey, we first want to see whether or not voters themselves see that their ballots served this purpose.

³ We also tested this using a 3 valued variable, which separated ‘Maybe’ and ‘Yes’ responses, and found results that were virtually the same: in no instance does our measure of prospective voting near statistical significance.

Table 4(1): Means of Holding MPs Accountable		
	%	N
Elections	29.3	470
Personal Contact	10.6	169
At Public Forums	11.9	191
Through Traditional/Religious Leader	5.3	85
Through Local Party Leaders	13.0	208
By Letter/Petition	3.1	50
Over Radio/Other Media	11.1	177
Through Local Assembly Representa	15.7	252
Total	100.0	1602
Source: Lindberg's 2009 Ghana Survey		
Table 4(2): Means of Holding MPs Accountable, Constituencies Won By NDC		
	%	N
Elections	35.7	305
Personal Contact	10.5	90
At Public Forums	10.8	92
Through Traditional/Religious Leaders	5.3	45
Through Local Party Leaders	10.5	90
By Letter/Petition	3.2	27
Over Radio/Other Media	11.6	99
Through Local Assembly Representatives	12.4	106
Total	100.0	854
Source: Lindberg's 2009 Ghana Survey		

Table 4(1) presents the responses to a question that asks how they can hold a member of parliament accountable between elections. This is a very 'tough' test in the sense that individuals responding something like 'no, only elections can do that' are going against the expectation of the question. In this table, we find general support for our claim that Ghanaian voters punish incumbents for poor performance in office. 30% of respondents find elections as the only means of holding an MP accountable. In Table 4(2), which captures only constituencies the NDC won, we see an even greater percentage of voters who see their ballots as the only means of holding an MP accountable. Tying in these findings with the previous sections, then, we have support for the argument that Ghanaian voters (1) are evaluative retrospectively, and (2) punished the incumbent regime for poor performance through the 2008 elections.

8.2 Why do Ghanaians vote for opposition parties?

It remains for us to explore differences between those who voted for the incumbent party and those who supported the opposition, in terms of *how* they evaluate the MP on private and collective goods provision. In Table 3(A) we highlighted

how there were some interesting differences between NDC, NPP, and Undecided voters in terms of their evaluation of an incumbent on public and private goods. However, this table could not tell us how those evaluations directly impacted their vote choice.

In Table 5, we present results from the 2009 post-election survey where respondents were asked to provide the reason they think a particular MP was selected for office, in terms of private and collective goods (club and public) provision. In this table, items are arranged (roughly) to reflect increasing levels of the collectiveness of a good, ranging from the most private – personal financial assistance – to the most public – executive oversight. In this table we find that there are significant differences between what NPP and NDC voters assess as the reasons for a candidate being selected. By looking at NPP voters, we can see that supporters of the incumbent regime more readily point to private goods provision as a means of being elected. This finding accords with the literature that addresses incumbency advantage in politics and notes the difficulty facing opposition parties to respond to pressures to meet the needs of individuals and to be seen as supporting members of the constituency. Interestingly, we also see

a slightly higher portion of NDC voters who feel that attending private events like funerals is the most important strategy MPs use to get elected. This might suggest that an opposition party can better provide private goods like appearances at events and that this, while not as effective as direct funds transfers, might help enhance their ability to provide public goods. Moving further down Table 5, we again see that NDC voters place higher value on collective goods, like delivering development to the constituency, and representing the constituency on the floor of the parliament.

Table 5: Reason for 2008 Vote Choice					
Type of Goods		NDC	NPP	Other*	Total
Private	Personal Financial Assistance	22.7%	27.4%	34.0%	25.2%
	<i>N</i>	185	157	34	376
	Attending Weddings, Meetings, etc.	4.8%	3.7%	5.0%	4.4%
	<i>N</i>	39	21	5	65
Narrow Collective	Dontations to Vulnerable Groups	1.7%	2.3%	2.0%	2.0%
	<i>N</i>	14	13	2	29
	Party Loyalty	4.4%	8.5%	5.0%	6.0%
	<i>N</i>	36	49	5	90
Collective	Constituency Development	58.3%	53.8%	46.0%	55.8%
	<i>N</i>	476	309	46	831
	Parliamentary Represenation	3.4%	1.7%	1.0%	2.6%
	<i>N</i>	28	10	1	39
Public	Making Goods Laws	0.4%	0.2%	0.0%	0.3%
	<i>N</i>	3	1	0	4
	Government Oversight	0.4%	0.0%	1.0%	0.3%
	<i>N</i>	3	0	1	4
Unknown	Other	3.9%	2.4%	6.0%	3.5%
	<i>N</i>	32	14	6	52
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	<i>N</i>	816	574	100	1490
*Includes other parties and independents					
Chi-square= 48.8574 P = 0.029 df=32					
Source: Lindberg's 2009 Ghana Survey					

As in Table 3(A), some of these differences may appear small. However, they are by no means statistically trivial or substantively unimportant. Indeed, the differences in vote selection across the groups are highly significant and capture variation that encapsulates the voting shifts leading to the NDC's victory in 2008. Table 6 helps illustrate this by presenting the same data in Table 5, but only for constituencies that the NDC won. We find that these results hold within NDC winning constituencies and that these differences are significant.

Table 6: Reason for 2008 Vote Choice, Constituencies Won By NDC					
Type of Goods		NDC	NPP	Other*	Total
Private	Personal Financial Assistance	19.1%	23.7%	36.0%	21.3%
	N	105	48	18	171
	Attending Weddings, Meetings, etc.	6.2%	5.9%	4.0%	6.0%
Narrow Collective	N	34	12	2	48
	Dontations to Vulnerable Groups	1.6%	3.0%	4.0%	2.1%
	N	9	6	2	17
Collective	Party Loyalty	3.8%	6.4%	6.0%	4.6%
	N	21	13	3	37
	Constituency Development	59.4%	55.2%	42.0%	57.2%
Public	N	327	112	21	460
	Parliamentary Represenation	4.4%	1.5%	0.0%	3.4%
	N	24	3	0	27
Unknown	Making Goods Laws	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%	0.5%
	N	3	1	0	4
	Government Oversight	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	0.4%
Other	N	2	0	1	3
	Other	4.7%	3.9%	6.0%	4.6%
	N	26	8	3	37
Total	Total	99.7%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	N	551	203	50	804
* Includes other parties and independents					
Chi-square= 48.8574 P = 0.029 df=32					
Source: Lindberg's 2009 Ghana Survey					

In summary, Tables 5 and 6 show how supporters of incumbent regimes and opposition parties view the reasons for selecting on different grounds. While opposition voters tended to see collective goods as drivers of candidate selection, those who voted for the incumbent regime emphasized private good provision, especially personal assistance like educational fees and other direct funds transfers.

9 Conclusions

In many new democracies opposition parties find it hard to win elections. In some countries in Africa this is mainly due to fraudulent electoral processes. In Nigeria, Togo, Equatorial Guinea, DRC, possibly Uganda, and notably Zimbabwe, opposition parties have simply been prevented from winning elections. In many other countries, democracy is taking hold albeit slowly. Yet, even in many emerging democracies, such as Zambia, South Africa, and Namibia, opposition parties have been unable to persuade voters. Notwithstanding these examples, almost a dozen countries from Kenya to Senegal and Benin have seen the opposition triumph at the polls. We are moving to a position where we can assess the dynamics of democratic processes in new democracies on the continent. Given that about a quarter of the states in the world are located in Africa, this is no insignificant phenomenon.

We asked two questions. On the one hand, are voters who decide close elections ‘instruments of democracy’ or ‘farmers of clientelism in harvesting season’? On the other, do electoral processes in Africa’s new democracies funnel politicians into investing in collective goods furthering development, or do they contribute to the erosion of democratic accountability by rewarding the use of political clientelism? This paper analyzes data from two unique data collection exercises conducted in Ghana as pre- and post-election surveys to the decisive

December 2008 election in which NDC came back to power after eight years as the main opposition party.

We find that the voters who decided the elections in December 2008 in Ghana, are more instruments of democracy and provide more rewards to politicians who perform well on constituency development and representation, than to those who act decisively as patrons trying to buy votes. While we are acutely aware of the tentative nature of our findings, they are nonetheless encouraging. Ghana's voters had the privilege of an uninterrupted sequence of four consecutive general elections when they went to the polls. Comparing our results to earlier findings from the same country, the changes are indeed in the right direction. Political clientelism may be consuming more resources than ever before (Lindberg *forthcoming* 2010), and the development record still leaves much to be desired but it is also clear that the citizens of Ghana are no longer easily lured by cheap vote buying tricks and empty promises about the future. Voting is becoming based on retrospective evaluation of developmental track records, and it was on that basis that many of the incumbent NPP candidates suffered defeat in the last election. Politicians tend to do what they have to in order to stay in power and the message on that should now be clear.

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