

Credibility, clientelism and ethnicity in African politics: Can the “Big Man” make credible appeals to co-ethnics?

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PRELIMINARY

Abstract: A large literature concludes that ethnic polarization, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, is a significant cause of government policy failures and violence. The core assumption in this literature is that political competitors make credible commitments to pursue policies that favor their co-ethnics. This assumption is at odds with another literature that traces policy failure and conflict to the *inability* of competitors to make credible commitments and their consequent reliance on clientelist promises to narrow groups. This paper examines these conflicting positions using data on the partisan preferences of 24,000 individuals from 16 African countries. The analysis provides ample support for the claim that the political competition hinges on the “Big Man” and clientelist promises rather than on competing promises to pursue policies on behalf of co-ethnics.

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Two contrasting political explanations for a wide range of adverse development phenomena, including slow growth, the inadequate provision of public goods, and conflict are particularly prominent in the literature. One is the role of ethnic diversity or polarization (see Easterly and Levine 1997, Alesina and La Ferrara 2005, Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2005). This literature argues, explicitly or implicitly, that adverse effects of ethnic diversity emerge when politicians compete on the basis of their promises to serve the interests of one or another ethnic group. The assumption underlying this argument is that political promises to co-ethnics are credible – otherwise, they would be ineffective in mobilizing political support.

A different body of research, however, attributes these same adverse development phenomena to the *inability* of politicians to make credible commitments to most citizens (Keefer and Vlaicu 2008, Keefer 2007a,b), particularly in settings where the effects of ethnicity are thought to be most pernicious, such as sub-Saharan Africa. Keefer and Vlaicu (2008) argue that clientelism – where political actors have exceptionally strong incentives to deliver policy favors to narrow groups of citizens – is precisely a consequence of the lack of political credibility. This work suggests that the appearance of ethnically-driven political competition is an artifact of the underlying inability of politicians to make credible promises.

One way to distinguish empirically these two explanations of unfavorable development outcomes is to examine the determinants of the partisan preferences of citizens. Citizens should prefer parties that best reflect their interests. If, as the ethnicity

literature assumes, politicians can make credible promises to co-ethnics, then citizens from the major ethnic groups of a country should be more likely to express support for a party than for no party. Citizens from these same ethnic groups should also be more likely to favor the *same* party rather than no party. However, if, as the credibility and clientelism literature assumes, politicians cannot make credible promises to broad groups of citizens, then neither the respondent's ethnicity, nor the respondent's views on broad policy issues of any kind, should be associated with the partisan preferences of respondents.

This paper uses individual level data on partisan preferences in sub-Saharan Africa to explore the tension between these two contrasting explanations for adverse development outcomes. The data come from 16 of the 18 sub-Saharan African countries included in the third round of the Afrobarometer surveys (2005-06). The analysis shows that broad appeals of all kinds, including those associated with ethnicity, have little or no influence on whether citizens express a partisan preference rather than disaffection.¹ The partisan preferences of respondents seem to reflect better the inability of politicians to make broadly credible promises than the success of politicians in making broad, credible appeals to co-ethnics to serve ethnic interests.

Sub-Saharan Africa is an ideal setting to investigate these issues. Scholars such as Easterly and Levine attribute slow African growth to ethnicity, while Bratton and van de Walle (1997) emphasize the dominant role of the "big man" in African politics. Van de Walle (2001) concludes that in many African countries "democratization has had little impact on economic decision making, because the new democratic regimes remain

¹ Many relevant questions could not be asked in Zimbabwe, and respondents in Cape Verde did not generally self-identify themselves as belonging to distinctive ethnic groups.

governed by neopatrimonial logic (p. 18).” Nevertheless, there is little dispute that ethnicity matters for political competition in Africa. However, the importance of ethnicity is typically made by showing that members of many ethnic groups tend to favor the same party, as in African elections. This observation is insufficient to support the claim that politicians compete on the basis of credible promises to privilege one ethnic group above others.

Generally non-credible politicians make clientelist promises to those few voters who believe them. However, the members of their clientelist networks are likely to be disproportionately their co-ethnics. Co-ethnics who are inside a clientelist network express a preference for the party of the politician, leading to ethnic clustering of support for parties. Co-ethnics who are outside clientelist networks, though, express disaffection. A more accurate measure of whether parties can make credible promises to all members of an ethnic group is therefore whether respondents of a particular ethnic group are more likely to prefer any party rather than no party at all. This is the approach taken in the analysis here.

The arguments linking development outcomes to ethnic diversity and credibility are reviewed in the next section of the paper. This discussion describes partisan preferences when political competition is organized around ethnic polarization should differ from preferences when political promises are only credible to a narrow group of citizens. The following sections present the data and tests, and the paper concludes with the implications of the analysis for the study of ethnicity in politics. In general, the evidence is more supportive of the claim that lack of political credibility drives policy choices in Africa than the reliance of politicians on ethnic appeals. The data provide

micro evidence supportive of the argument in Keefer (2007) that clientelism drives the under-provision of public goods in young democracies, and in Keefer (2008), that conflict is more likely when political competitors are unable to make broadly credible promises to voters. Across the 16 countries examined here, in the continent most vulnerable to conflict, political parties are singularly unable to make broadly credible promises, programmatic or ethnic; Keefer (2008) argues that under these conditions, are robustly associated with conflict across poor countries, while ethnic fractionalization is not.²

Credibility, ethnic diversity and government performance

At the heart of arguments that ethnic diversity drives politicians to pursue socially costly policies is the assumption that ethnic groups act collectively – for example, through ethnic political parties – to defend their interests. One condition for successful collective action is the ability of leaders of the collective to credibly promise to its members that they will be rewarded if collective action succeeds. When this occurs, political support for public good provision drops. The adverse effects of ethnicity arise precisely *because* politicians credibly convey to co-ethnics that they will faithfully represent their interests.

Easterly and Levine (1997) summarize many ways in which ethnic diversity can lead to slow growth and low public good provision; all rely on the assumption that

² Easterly's (2001) results are consistent with the argument that ethnic diversity is more likely to be associated with conflict when political credibility is low. He argues that conflict is less likely in the presence of high-quality "institutions". His measure of institutions, however, is actually the composite measure of the rule of law, the security of contract rights, bureaucratic quality, etc., used in Knack and Keefer (1995). As Keefer (2007a) argues, these are precisely the outcomes one associated with countries in which political decision makers are better able to make broadly credible promises to citizens.

politicians can make broad-based promises to co-ethnics. Ethnic diversity can lead to a common pool problem in which each group predares on public resources without taking into account consequences for other group. It can also give rise to multiple veto players blocking reforms in the public interest. Alesina, Baqir and Easterly (1999) and Alesina and La Ferrara (2005) emphasize preference differences among ethnic groups and argue that diversity can therefore reduce public good provision.

One branch of the literature on ethnicity and conflict also makes the claim that the confrontation of ethnic blocs makes countries vulnerable to conflict. Montalvo and Reynal-Querol (2005) and others argue that the polarization of ethnic groups is a key contributor to conflict. Following Esteban and Rey (1994), as in Keefer and Knack (2002), Montalvo and Reynal-Querol (2005) emphasize the importance of polarized ethnic groups – groups that are approximately equally sized, large, and with opposing preferences. Bardhan (1997) argues, in addition, for the importance of institutions that allow credible inter-ethnic bargains to be struck. This research implies that ethnic groups act collectively to oppose each other, which in turn implies that ethnic elites can make credible promises to serve broad ethnic interests, the same assumption that is made in the ethnicity and economic policy literature. As before, then, vulnerability to conflict requires that members of an ethnic group be more likely to support a party that represents their interests than to express disaffection.

Like the analysis here, other research argues that the effects of ethnicity on policy outcomes or violence are contingent on other circumstances (though the lack of credibility of political actors is not one of these circumstances). This research emphasizes that ethnic conflict is not spontaneous, but flows from decisions of elites. For

example, researchers have argued that inter-ethnic conflict results from elite decision making, not from spontaneous uprisings by one ethnic group against another. Fearon and Laitin (2000, p. 874) summarize six studies of ethnic violence and conclude “The narratives under review give details on how ethnic boundaries and antagonisms *follow from* the political strategies of elites seeking to gain power or undermine challengers [emphasis added].”³ One circumstance in which elites are more likely to appeal to ethnicity is when they can use violence to control defection by non-elites. Brass (2003) emphasizes that ethnic conflict in India is driven by politicians who use violence or the threat of violence to maintain their hold on power; it does not emerge from the conflict of ethnic interests. The contingent circumstance is the ability to use violence, and it is this ability, rather than ethnic diversity, *per se*, that triggers ethnic conflict.

Incomplete information is the contingent circumstance in de Figuereido and Weingast (1999), who argue that poorly informed citizens may conclude that a burst of inter-ethnic violence is the conscious strategy of ethnic elites. As a consequence, they support retaliatory actions by their co-ethnic leaders. Even in the absence of ethnic diversity, however, information asymmetry would make countries more vulnerable to conflict and policy distortions. Chandra (2006) also argues that the effects of ethnicity are contingent on extrinsic characteristics of citizens other than their ethnicity that, themselves, also influence outcomes. For example, grievances over land rights in Africa have an ethnic character when ethnic groups are spatially clustered. However, spatial

³ Blimes (2006) asks the reverse question, under what conditions of ethnic diversity can politicians succeed in leading citizens into conflict?

clustering is not an intrinsic characteristic of ethnicity and would lead to grievances over land even if ethnic groups were not clustered.⁴

The credibility and clientelism arguments challenge the assumption that politicians can credibly promise to pursue the interests of the ethnic groups they represent. Ferejohn (1986) offered one of the first analyses of how voters behave in this setting. He showed that, confronted with non-credible politicians, voters could coordinate on performance thresholds (*ex post* voting rules). If incumbents fail to meet the threshold, voters replace them regardless of who the challenger is, since challengers are non-credible, anyway. When voters are successful in this effort, governments engage in less rent-seeking. Unfortunately, *ex post* voting rules hold politicians to low performance standards, so less rent-seeking does not imply low rent-seeking.

Ferejohn (1986) does not discuss one key issue in the research on ethnic diversity and political credibility, the incentives of politicians to provide public goods (with benefits flowing to all citizens) or narrowly targeted or private goods (with benefits flowing to the targeted group), or to engage in rent-seeking (benefitting the politician). Keefer and Vlaicu (2008) analyze the incentives of political credibility for political incentives to undertake these decisions. They observe that non-credible politicians can pursue either of two strategies to increase the share of the electorate that believes their promises, with significant implications for their incentives to supply public goods. They can invest in building up a network of voters who believe their promises (for example, by building a machine for distributing benefits, distributing money at funerals, etc.).

⁴ Her major point is that that because the definition of ethnicity is unsettled, efforts to establish the effects of ethnicity, *per se*, are inherently ambiguous. Scholars have not identified the intrinsic characteristic of ethnicity that are responsible for particular social, economic or political outcomes.

Alternatively, they can rely on the existing client networks of patrons, making promises to patrons who, in return, make promises to clients in exchange for their votes.

If politicians follow either of these strategies, corruption is higher, the provision of targetable goods (such as those associated with clientelist transfers) is higher, and the provision of non-targetable or public goods is lower. These are precisely the outcomes generally attributed to ethnic diversity and associated with poor development outcomes in African democracies. The lack of political credibility, therefore, appears to be another contingency that influences the role of ethnicity in political competition. Indirect support for this claim comes from the observation that younger democracies – those in which politicians are likely to struggle with credible commitment – exhibit the pattern of policy performance associated with non-credible politicians. However, controls for ethnolinguistic fractionalization do not account for this difference. On the contrary, they are usually insignificant in the presence of controls for the years of continuous competitive elections (Keefer 2007a).

Political incentives to engage in clientelist behavior are frequently based on assessments of vote-buying. Harding (2008) uses the vote-buying variable in Afrobarometer for this purpose, for example. Credibility issues also emerge in vote-buying, however, since politicians cannot be sure that “bought” voters will cast their ballot as agreed. When parties are well-organized, with deep grassroots organization (a party machine), they can target vote-buying according to partisan preferences of potential voters and monitor voter compliance (Stokes 2005). In Philippines municipal elections, party organization matters less because the purchase of votes is a self-enforcing spot

transaction: ballots are printed on carbon paper; voters can retain their carbon copies and present them for payment to the candidate whom they supported.⁵

More often, though, it is costly for politicians to verify how voters cast their ballots. In this case, vote-buying is better seen as a strategy for politicians to build up the credibility of their promises to provide targeted goods to narrow groups of citizens. Non-credible politicians may simply hand out money as a costly signal to voters that they will be responsive to their interests once in office, a pervasive practice in Africa (Lindberg 2003). Politicians should resort to these activities more intensively the less is their ability to make credible promises regarding their post-election conduct.

While ethnic groups are narrower constituencies than the entire population of a country, they are nevertheless far larger than the narrow groups typically targeted in clientelist political environments, where political promises focus on the individual, the family or the neighborhood or village. Where politicians have not invested in the ability to make broadly credible commitments, they are unlikely to be able to make credible promises to their co-ethnics. However, if politicians can only make credible commitments to *some* members of their ethnic group, then it is immediately the case that the political salience of ethnicity is not the only relevant distortion in political decision making: so also is the inability to make broadly credible promises.

Even this may be over-stating the role of ethnicity, because lack of credibility contributes directly to ethnic clustering of political support for politicians. Clientelist promises may lead to ethnic clustering simply because clientelist networks are more ethnically homogeneous. For example, the patrons whose support is sought by political

⁵ Stuti Khemani, personal communication.

parties, as in Keefer and Vlaicu (2008), are likely to have ethnically homogeneous client networks, giving the appearance that clientelism is ethnically-motivated, when the reverse is true. Robinson and Torvik (2005) assume that no politicians can make credible promises to voters. However, they argue that if incumbents have some exogenous affinity for some group of voters, they are able to make credible promises to that subset of voters, again giving rise to policy distortions.

Nothing in the credibility arguments *precludes* ethnic diversity from being politically relevant. On the contrary, parties can sometimes make credible appeals to co-ethnics. In these cases, as Wilkinson (2000) argues for India, the clash of ethnic interests, with the potential for violence, may be more likely. However, much of the literature on the effects of ethnicity on policy distortion and conflict focus especially on Africa, where policy distortions are greatest and conflict most frequent. The data examined here provide little support for the contention that ethnic groups across the region are permanently mobilized into polarized camps, however. Partisan disaffection even by co-ethnics with a supposedly “representative” party, is too rampant to support this claim.

Ethnic competition is often thought to take the form of one party promising to *oppose* another (perhaps dominant) ethnic group, rather than to defend the interests of a particular ethnic group. The promise of opposition has two aspects: the first is the credibility of the commitment to divert resources away from the “opposed” ethnic group; the other is the commitment to distribute those resources among all members of the “opposing” ethnic groups. If the first commitment is credible, members of the “opposed” ethnic group should be much less likely to express support for this party than to express disaffection. If both commitments are credible, members of the “opposing” ethnic groups

should be more likely to express support for the party than to express disaffection. It is the credibility of this second commitment that is the focus of the analysis below.

Predictions and Data

These arguments yield numerous predictions that allow ethnic and credibility to be examined and distinguished as explanations of partisan preferences. Each of these is detailed below, along with the corresponding Afrobarometer questions that allow the predictions to be assessed empirically.

Broadly summarized, the main ethnicity hypothesis is that if parties can make credible appeals to members of particular ethnic groups, then members of these ethnic groups should support that party and be unlikely to express no support for any party. The first credibility hypothesis is the opposite of this: ethnic parties cannot, in fact, make broadly credible appeals to co-ethnics and rates of disaffection among co-ethnics will be consequently high. In addition, the absence of broad credibility implies that other programmatic issues, such as a party's stance on the government's role in the economy, should not influence partisan preferences. In contrast, in non-credible settings, incumbent performance and targeted payments by politicians to voters should have a large impact on partisan preferences.

These predictions differ from the usual approaches to examining the influence of ethnicity on political competition. These rely on whether there is ethnic clustering in partisan support and public policy. Easterly and Levine (1997), following common practice, argue for ethnic mobilization in Kenyan elections based, first, on the fact that the Luo candidate won 75 percent of the vote in the Luo region and the Kalenjin candidate 71 percent of the vote in the Kalenjin region. Second, they cite Barkan and

Chege (1989), who report shifts of up to 30 percentage points in roads spending that followed ethnic-regional lines following the transition from the Kikuyu President Kenyatta to the Kalenjin President Moi. For two reasons, one cannot infer from these patterns that the ethnic candidates attracted the co-ethnic vote because of their ability to make broadly credible promises to the co-ethnics.

First, the data from the Afrobarometer survey in Kenya point to high rates of disaffection among co-ethnics: between 35 and 40 percent of Kikuyu, Kalenjin and Luo express support for no party, despite significant ethnic clustering. Clientelist promises made only to narrow groups that happen to be ethnically homogeneous can explain high disaffection, ethnically skewed voting, and the distribution of pork barrel projects. Second, fear of violence can lead co-ethnics to support their party even if they do not believe the party's promises to protect their interest: they have more confidence that their own elites will not launch attacks against them than will elites from other parties (Mueller 2008).⁶ Even when intrinsic inter-ethnic hostility is low, violence in the contest for leadership can lead to ethnic violence and, therefore, to ethnic clustering of partisan support (de Figuereido and Weingast 1999).

Measuring partisan preference

The empirical strategy below focuses on assessing the partisan preferences of respondents to the Afrobarometer survey. Expressions of partisan preference or disaffection capture better than voting records whether people feel a party representing their ethnic group is likely to make them better off; voting behavior can be driven by fear

⁶ Mueller describes Kenya as having non-programmatic clientelist parties based on ethnicity; the Afrobarometer data suggest a slightly different formulation: non-programmatic ethnic parties based on clientelism.

of violence, for example, which should have less of an effect on such questions as “what party do you feel close to?” The third round of the Afrobarometer surveys, undertaken in 2005-2006, yields data that can be used to examine the correlates of partisan preferences in 16 African countries. The surveys used a nationally-representative sample (generally, 1,200 respondents, but in larger countries 2,400) to probe a number of relevant respondent characteristics. This section describes all of the variables from the surveys used in the analysis below. The variables are summarized in Table 1, at the end of this section.

The dependent variables in the analysis below come from Questions 85 and 86 of the survey. The first is based on Question 85, asking whether respondents “feel close to any party”. All respondents who answered question 85 with “do not feel close to any party” are classified as “disaffected.” In addition, those who refused to answer or did not know were classified as disaffected, on the assumption that partisan supporters would be more likely to answer than to refuse to answer, and very unlikely not to know. The vast majority of respondents coded as “disaffected” answered “not close to any party,” however.⁷ The second is based on Question 86 asks, provided that they prefer a party, which party is it?⁸

The first dependent variable (any partisan preference?) is used to ask the question, employing the entire sample of survey responses across all 16 countries, whether factors more closely related to credibility or to ethnicity determine whether individuals have any

⁷ For example, in Kenya, 413 respondents out of the 472 coded as disaffected responded “not close to any party;” in Ghana all 403 respondents coded as disaffected responded that they were not close to any party; and in Benin, the figure was 793 out of 810.

⁸ Any party that attracted the support of at least five percent of the respondents is included in the country-specific analysis reported below. Respondents who expressed support for a small party were excluded since there were too few of them to estimate stable coefficients of the correlates of their preferences. Well

partisan preference. The second dependent variable (which partisan preference?) is used in country specific examples to examine the correlates of specific partisan preferences of respondents. As the discussion below describes in more detail, the regressions take the form $Partisan\ preference(yes, no) = X'\beta + \varepsilon$, where the vector X includes country dummies, and $Partisan\ preference(party\ i...j, no\ party) = X'\beta + \varepsilon$.

Measuring ethnicity

If a political party can make broadly credible commitments to favor an ethnic group, then all members of the ethnic group are better off supporting the party than supporting no party at all (expressing disaffection). The observation that many members of the ethnic group support no party at all is therefore evidence against the claim that the party can make broadly credible commitments to the ethnic group. The results from Afrobarometer suggest rampant disaffection, on the order of a third of the members of those ethnic groups that appear to have a party that is supposed to represent their interests.

While high rates of disaffection are strong evidence against the claim of credible party commitments to co-ethnics, there is no absolute standard for establishing the threshold at which rates of disaffection indicate the lack of party credibility. However, one can also compare the partisan preferences of members of ethnic groups that appear to have a party representing their interests with the preferences of ethnic groups that do not appear to have such a party. One can first ask, are members of the first group less likely to express disaffection than the second? If the ethnic party cannot make credible promises to large numbers of co-ethnics, the answer should be no.

One can also ask a more demanding question, comparing two odds ratios. One is the odds that members of an ethnic group favor a party supported by their co-ethnics compared to the odds that they express disaffection. The other is the odds that members of an ethnic group that lacks such a party express support for the other ethnic group's party, rather than disaffection. If the two odds ratios are similar, it is unlikely that the party of the first ethnic group can make credible commitments to all members of the ethnic group. In contrast to the first two tests, this test is the most likely to conclude, spuriously, that the ethnic party can make credible promises to co-ethnics, because even a clientelist party would prefer the members of one ethnic group over another.

The Afrobarometer survey is used to construct two ethnicity variables. The first is based on question 79, which asks respondents to self-identify their ethnic group with the open-ended question "What is your tribe?" and the prompt "You know, your ethnic or cultural group." Ethnic classifications are therefore generated by the self-perceptions of respondents and are not driven by external judgments; nor are they influenced by external classifications into which respondents are expected to fit themselves. In Cape Verde, no ethnic, tribal, religious or linguistic classification occurred to respondents; a plurality classified themselves as Cape Verdians, others as Africans, others according to their gender, etc.⁹ If parties make ethnic promises, then members of at least some large ethnic groups should express low rates of disaffection, and their odds of preferring those parties rather than expressing disaffection should be significantly greater than for non-members of these groups.

⁹ For precisely this reason, Cape Verde is excluded from the analysis here.

As Posner (2004) and others argue, ethnic identification can change depending on the salience of ethnicity in politics. This can give rise to bias in estimates of whether ethnicity drives partisan preferences. However, there is no reason to expect the direction of bias to be systematically *against* the hypothesis that ethnicity drives partisan preferences. On the contrary, if citizens believe a party's promises to defend the interests of a particular ethnic group, they should be more likely both to identify themselves with that ethnic group and to express a partisan preference for that party rather than disaffection. This gives rise to a bias in favor of the hypothesis that ethnicity drives partisan preference and against the hypothesis that politicians cannot make credible promises to most members of an ethnic group, leading many members to be disaffected.

Three other questions in the Afrobarometer surveys allow a different perspective on ethnicity to be examined. They capture feelings of ethnic grievance. Question 80a asks whether the respondent believes the economic condition of the respondent's ethnic group are worse or better than those of other groups. Question 81 asks whether the respondent believes the government treats the respondent's ethnic group unfairly. The measure of ethnic grievance used in the analysis below is a composite of these two, a dichotomous variable that equals one if, in response to question 81, respondents indicated that their group was often or always treated unfairly by the government *and* if, in response to question 80a, respondents indicated that their group was economically worse off or much worse off than other groups.

The analysis below examines the partisan preferences of respondents with ethnic grievances. Grievance can have two possible effects. If parties mobilize support around their credible stances on ethnic issues, one would expect them to target those voters for

whom ethnic issues are most salient. This is likely to be those who express ethnic resentments. That is, those who express ethnic resentments should be *more* likely to support a party than to express disaffection. Another possibility, however, is that in the scramble for ethnic votes, some ethnic groups might be ignored by all parties. These groups would then be excluded from the distribution of state resources and, for that reason, be *more* likely to express ethnic grievance. The evidence below shows that the latter effect dominates.

Measuring the credibility of programmatic political promises

If the earlier credibility arguments correctly describe African politics, then, following Keefer and Vlaicu (2008), it should not only be the case that broad appeals to ethnicity are not credible, but appeals based on other programmatic issues should also have little bearing on the partisan preferences of citizens. If political competitors could make broadly credible policy commitments to voters, then we would expect the respondents with a view on these policies, first, to be more likely to express a partisan preference and, second, to be more likely to cluster with like-minded respondents in their specific partisan preferences than to express disaffection.

The Afrobarometer survey asks for respondent preferences in two very broad policy areas, one related to democracy and the other to the appropriate role of government in the economy. Democracy in Africa is new and fragile, so it is possible that party positions relative to democracy would be salient to voters if parties could credibly commit to them. However, responses to the democracy question are also likely to reflect unobserved respondent attitudes towards participation in the electoral process generally. The analysis below examines the democracy results, but the role of

government questions are likely to be more reliable in indicating the degree of programmatic appeal of parties.

Question 37 asks for respondent attitudes towards democracy – whether it is preferable to any other kind of government, whether non-democratic governments might be preferable, or whether the type of government does not matter or the respondent simply doesn't know. Two variables are formulated from this question. The first tracks whether respondents have any opinion on democracy, positive or negative. It is coded zero for respondents who are indifferent to democracy or do not know their preference and one for respondents who either believe democracy is preferable or believe that non-democratic systems are sometimes better. The second captures preferences for democracy. It is coded zero for respondents who believe non-democratic systems are sometimes better; one for respondents who do not know or are indifferent; and two for respondents who believe democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.

Attitudes to government intervention are reflected in Question 19, which asks whether the respondent believes that people should look after themselves and be responsible for their own success, whether the government should bear the main responsibility for their well-being, whether neither reflects their opinion, or whether they do not know. This question relates to policy areas, ranging from the creation of a safety net to the privatization of state-owned enterprises, that are prominent in government policy making in Africa.

As with the democracy question, two variables are coded based on this question. The first again looks at whether respondents have any opinion on government intervention and is coded zero for respondents who agree with neither statement or do not

know, and one for respondents who agree with either one or the other statement. The second tracks respondent opinions on government intervention and is coded zero for respondents who believe government is responsible; one for respondents who believe neither statement is correct or who do not know; and two for respondents who believe that individuals are responsible for their own success.

The first of each pair of these variables (do respondents have an opinion or not) should be a correlate of whether individuals express any partisan preference or disaffection. The second of each pair of variables (describing their opinion) allows us to examine whether like-minded respondents cluster in their partisan preferences. However, in both cases a significant effect of these variables has two possible explanations. One is that parties have made credible commitments regarding their support or lack of support for democracy or a stronger role of government in promoting individual welfare. In this cases, those who have any opinion should be more likely to express a partisan preference; and those who have particular opinions should identify with the same party as others with similar opinions.

The second interpretation, however, is that those who care about these issues, or are particularly supportive of democracy or a greater role for government, are also inherently more engaged in the political process and more likely to exert effort to identify a favored party, independent of whether the party can make credible claims about democracy or the role of government. In this case, though, the significance of the programmatic variables says nothing about the credibility of political promises. As a consequence, the use of these variables is a strong test of the credibility hypothesis. In particular, partisan preferences may emerge in the data not because parties are credible,

but because of the unobserved correlation of respondents desire to participate in the political system and their policy preferences.

One might also be concerned that the government role in promoting individual welfare and democracy are not issues that people are concerned with and therefore are not useful for identifying whether parties can make programmatic promises. If this were the case, one would expect a large fraction of respondents to reply that they are indifferent when asked about the appropriate role of government; in fact, only four percent of respondents answer in this way. Indifference is also low for the democracy variable.

Measuring the credibility of political promises –politician gifts and politician credibility

If ethnicity and programmatic promises are not significant determinants of partisan preference in non-credible settings, what are? The theory suggests that one of the factors that should sway voters is incumbent performance, discussed below. In addition, voters should be swayed by narrow transfers (e.g., pre-election gifts) that they have received from politicians.

Two questions capture the extent to which politicians make private payoffs to voters. Question 57f asks how often, if ever, during the last election, a candidate or someone from a party offered something like food or a gift in return for the respondent's vote. Across all the Afrobarometer surveys used here, 19 percent of respondents report having been offered a gift, but there is substantial variation. Fewer than two percent of respondents report being offered gifts in Botswana (and offers of gifts to respondents have correspondingly little effect on partisan preferences in the analysis below); 33 percent report being offered gifts in Benin, where its effects on partisan preference are

significant. This likely reflects unobserved country variation in the ability of parties and candidates to target gifts to core supporters or swing voters.¹⁰ To the extent that gift-giving is effective, though, it should be significantly associated with partisan preference in a low-credibility political setting.

Question 78f asks respondents how often politicians offer gifts to voters during campaigns. More than 70 percent of respondents across all surveys report that politicians do this often or always. In contrast to actually receiving a gift, respondents' *observations* of gift giving should make them *less* likely to express a partisan preference. In environments where gift-giving is the primary currency of electoral competition, those who observe gift-giving, but receive no gifts themselves, should therefore be more likely to express disaffection.¹¹

Afrobarometer allows the question of credibility to be directly addressed with question 78c, "In your opinion, how often do politicians keep their campaign promises after elections?" The dichotomous variable created from this question was coded one if respondents answered always or often and zero if they answered rarely or never. Respondents who believe that politicians keep their promises should be more susceptible to partisan appeals and more likely to express a partisan preference than those who do not believe this.

¹⁰ Holding constant the ability of politicians to make credible promises, they are still more likely to give gifts where they can target better.

¹¹ Candidates may be competing against other candidates from the same party, as in countries with a single dominant party. In this case, the credibility of party commitments is irrelevant and no prediction about the relationship between gift-giving and disaffection can be made.

Measuring the credibility of political promises – incumbent performance

Finally, in non-credible political settings, the analysis of Ferejohn (1986) and others indicate that voters will rely on *ex post* voting rules based only on incumbent performance. Voters who believe that the incumbent has surpassed the performance threshold that they have set will support the incumbent. The remainder will oppose him, but be indifferent as to which challenger they support instead. The first group should therefore favor the incumbent's party, but the second group should be indifferent between expressing no partisan preference and preferring any of the challengers to the incumbent.

Questions 65a and 65b in the Afrobarometer survey permit this hypothesis to be examined. They gauge respondent perceptions of the incumbent with the questions, "How well or badly is government managing the economy?" and, "How well or badly is the government creating jobs?" Similar to the democracy and role of government questions, two dichotomous variables are created from each of these two questions. The first two variables equal one if respondents express any opinion, good or bad, about incumbent performance on managing the economy or on jobs creation and zero if they do not. The other two variables equal two if respondents answered "fairly well" or "very well", one if they express no opinion or are indifferent, and zero if they answered "fairly badly" or "very badly".

Voters who have any opinion about incumbent performance will therefore include some with a positive opinion and an incentive to support the incumbent's party. This group should be more likely to express a partisan preference than those voters who express no opinion, and more likely to cluster their support on the incumbent's party.

Control variables

The key comparisons made in the analysis below are between those who express support for parties and those who express disaffection. Disaffection has explanations other than party characteristics, however. These alternative explanations are taken into account in the analysis here. Poor, uneducated or rural voters may be less interested in politics or more difficult for political parties to reach. Afrobarometer surveys have questions on each of these. The survey asks households to list whether they own particular assets, from a book to a motorcycle or car. Ownership of these assets is controlled for in the analysis below. Respondents' answers to the Afrobarometer question on their level of educational attainment are also taken into account.

Table 1: Variable summary

	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Any partisan preference (0=disaffection)?	23075	.59	.49	0	1
Prefers democracy?	23085	1.52	.68	0	2
Any opinion about democracy?	23085	.72	.45	0	1
Prefers self-reliance?	23083	.97	.98	0	2
Any opinion about self reliance?	23083	.96	.19	0	1
Approves of incumbent performance on jobs?	23093	.59	.89	0	2
Any opinion about incumbent jobs performance?	23093	.96	.20	0	1
Approves of incumbent performance on the economy?	23093	1.05	.97	0	2
Any opinion about incumbent economy performance?	23093	.94	.24	0	1
Respondent offered gifts by candidates?	22822	.19	.39	0	1
Frequency of candidate gift giving	21951	2.00	1.04	0	3
Politicians keep their promises?	22488	.78	.85	0	3
Ethnic grievance?	23093	.11	.32	0	1
Access to public services	23058	.43	.29	0	1
Household assets	23076	.30	.22	0	1
Respondent education	23022	3.10	2.01	0	9

Harding (2008) uses citizen access to services as a proxy for whether respondents are urban residents or not, a status that is not captured directly in the Afrobarometer survey. Here, the services variable is the average of dichotomous variables that respectively indicate whether respondents have easy access to a post office, school, police station, electricity, water, sewage and health clinic.

The presence of these controls makes it more difficult to examine issues of credibility and clientelism. For example, variables that influence the costs to parties of reaching voters also affect the costs to them of making broadly credible versus narrowly clientelist appeals to voters. The votes of poor voters are cheaper to buy, so controls for voter assets capture the likelihood that those voters will be subject to clientelist appeals.

Specifications

Two sets of tests are reported below. One takes all countries and responses in the sample (around 21,000), to ask whether ethnic resentment or credibility drive the decision to express a partisan preference rather than to express no preference at all. Since the dependent variable is dichotomous, a probit specification is used to estimate:

Eq. 1

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Partisan preference (yes, no)} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{democracy_opinion} + \beta_2 \text{self - reliance_opinion} \\ & + \beta_3 \text{incumbent performance_economy_opinion} + \beta_4 \text{incumbent performance_jobs_opinion} \\ & + \beta_5 \text{vote buying} + \beta_6 \text{gift giving} + \beta_7 \text{promises kept} + \beta_8 \text{ethnic grievance} + \beta_9 \text{social services} \\ & + \beta_{10} \text{household assets} + \beta_{11} \text{education} + \text{country dummies}' \beta_{12} + \varepsilon \end{aligned}$$

Both versions of the democracy and self-reliance variables are used: those coded as “expressing an opinion or not expressing an opinion” about democracy and personal responsibility for individual welfare, and those coded as “supportive of, indifferent to, or not supportive of” these concepts. Coefficients on the first set of variables indicate whether respondents who have any preferences regarding democracy or the role of government in promoting individual welfare are also more likely to express a partisan preference. If they are, for any of the reasons discussed above in the description of these two variables, β_1 and β_2 should be greater than zero. In the case of the second set of variables, β_1 and β_2 will be significantly positive if individuals supportive of democracy

or self-reliance are inherently more likely to identify favored parties, independent of the credibility of their policy commitments.¹² The second set of regressions is a check on whether the effects of programmatic parties are driven by the ability of parties to make credible promises, or by the unobserved variation in the desire of voters to participate in the democratic process.

The other broad appeals that parties can make are to co-ethnics. If parties mobilize around ethnic appeals, then those expressing an ethnic grievance should be more likely to express a partisan preference, $\beta_6 > 0$. It is not particularly meaningful to examine clustering by ethnic group in the “all-country” sample, since this would require the inclusion of dummy variables for a large number of ethnic groups, whose significance depends largely on within-country conditions that are better explored in country-by-country regressions.

The less that political competitors can make credible commitments regarding future policies, *ex post* evaluation of incumbents should matter more in the determination of partisan preferences. There are two versions of the incumbent performance variables. One asks whether the respondent has any opinion, positive or negative, regarding incumbent performance. Those with an opinion should be less likely to be disaffected, and β_3 and β_4 should be greater than zero. The other version asks whether the respondent has a positive opinion or a negative opinion. Those with a positive opinion should be more likely to express a partisan preference if those with a negative opinion are less likely to have been targeted with credible promises by political competitors, so again, β_3 and β_4 should be greater than zero. By the same token, respondents who believe that

¹² They would also be positive if it were the case that *only* political parties in favor of democracy or self-reliance were systematically able to make credible commitments on these issues, but this seems

politicians keep their promises should be less likely to express disaffection than those who do not, in which case β_7 is greater than zero.

If clientelist appeals are important and if politicians can target swing voters or core supporters with any accuracy (evidently not the case in all of the countries surveyed), then respondents who were offered a gift by a candidate should be more likely to prefer the party of that candidate, so that β_5 would be positive. However, most respondents do not receive gifts. Respondents who report frequent gift-giving activity by candidates are more likely to regard the content of partisan competition as rooted in clientelism. Such respondents should be more likely to express disaffection and β_6 should be *less* than zero.

The cross-country analysis that is the focus of equation 1 cannot inform the question of whether ethnicity, or something else, is the basis of respondent preferences for a *particular* political party. The less demanding way to examine this question is simply to ask whether members of ethnic groups with parties that appear to defend their interests are less likely to express disaffection than members of other ethnic groups. The more demanding approach, which is the focus here and was described earlier, is to compare the odds of preferring a supposedly ethnic-based party relative to expressing disaffection of co-ethnics of the party and of non-co-ethnics. If they are similar, parties cannot make credible promises to co-ethnics. If co-ethnics are significantly more likely to prefer their ethnic party than are non-co-ethnics, however, this does not necessarily mean that the party can make credible commitments to all members of the ethnic group. Even clientelist parties, able to make promises only to some members of an ethnic group, might trigger the same pattern of partisan preference.

Following this second, more demanding approach, for each of the sixteen countries examined here equation 2 is analyzed.

Eq. 2

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Partisan preference (party } i \dots j, \text{ no party)} &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{democracy preferences} + \beta_2 \text{self - reliance} \\ &+ \beta_3 \text{incumbent performance_economy} + \beta_4 \text{incumbent performance_jobs} \\ &+ \beta_5 \text{vote buying} + \beta_6 \text{gift giving} + \beta_7 \text{promises kept} + \beta_8 \text{ethnic grievance} + \beta_9 \text{social services} \\ &+ \beta_{10} \text{household assets} + \beta_{11} \text{education} + \text{ethnic dummies}' \beta_{12} + \varepsilon \end{aligned}$$

There are several differences between the equations 1 and 2. First, ethnic dummies are present in equation 2, to assess whether respondents from any ethnic groups are more likely to express a preference for a particular party rather than disaffection. If they are, β_{12} will be greater than zero. If a particular party is dedicated to opposing a particular ethnic group, then, for that ethnic group, β_{12} should be less than zero.

Second, attention is confined to the policy variables that indicate the opinions, positive or negative of respondents regarding democracy and self-reliance (government responsibility for individual welfare), rather than whether they have an opinion. If a party offers a credible stance on either of these issues, respondents who share that stance should be more likely to express a preference for the party than to be disaffected and β_1 or β_2 should be greater than zero. Similarly, the investigation of incumbent performance will be confined to respondent feelings about the incumbent (satisfied, indifferent to or unhappy), not whether they have an opinion. For any party representing the incumbent, β_3 and β_4 should therefore be greater than zero.

Third, partisan preference is a more disaggregated variable that indicates not only whether a respondent is disaffected, but also, if not, which party the respondent prefers. In general, then, respondents can fall into at least three categories and usually more (e.g.,

in Ghana they choose between either of two political parties or are disaffected). In such a model of discrete choice, the use of probit is no longer appropriate. Several estimation strategies are available instead. Conditional logits and multinomial probits, for example, allow analysts to take into account the positions of the political party (e.g., moderately or extremely left-wing) relative to the preferences of the respondent (Alvarez and Nagler 1998). These are computationally demanding; for many of the countries in the sample here, conditional logit estimates simply do not converge.

Fortunately, for the current study it is less important to model the positions of political parties. On the one hand, party position matters only when parties can make credible commitments to policies and when they can modulate those commitments as required by electoral circumstances. In the countries examined here, parties cannot generally make credible policy commitments and party characteristics that are of potentially greatest electoral importance, such as ethnicity, are not easy to modify. On the other hand, more practically, Afrobarometer surveys do not ask respondents to assess the positions of political parties on the issues. They only provide data on individual characteristics.

For purposes of looking at the individual correlates of partisan affiliation, therefore, the simpler and most frequently employed discrete choice model, the multinomial logit, is appropriate. The multinomial logit estimation assumes that the consumer (of autos or political parties) has $J+1$ choices, and the utility of the j th choice is given, with error, by $U_{ij} = \beta' z_i + \varepsilon_{ij}$. Note that utility in the analysis here depends only on the characteristics of the individual i , not the party j . For $z = z_{ij}$, choices would depend on both individual and choice (party) characteristics, but we have no data on

party characteristics from Afrobarometer data. On the contrary, individual characteristics are being used to infer party characteristics. If the consumer is observed to prefer the j th alternative, we conclude that this choice offers the maximum utility among all possible choices. As is well-known (e.g., in Greene 1993), if the $J+1$ disturbances $\varepsilon_{i0\dots j}$ are independent and identically distributed with Weibull distribution $F(\varepsilon_{ij}) = \exp(e^{-\varepsilon_i})$, then

$$\text{Prob}(Y_i = j) = \frac{e^{\beta_j z_i}}{1 + \sum_{k=1}^J e^{\beta_k z_i}} \text{ and } \text{Prob}(Y_i = 0) = \frac{1}{1 + \sum_{k=1}^J e^{\beta_k z_i}}, \text{ where } Y_i \text{ is the individual's}$$

choice.

The key challenge in estimating choices using multinomial logit (conditional or not) is the validity of the assumption that the probabilities of consumer choice are independent of irrelevant alternatives. Specifically, the estimation assumes that the error terms associated with each choice j are independent and, therefore, the odds ratios P_j / P_k , are independent of the remaining probabilities. A central argument here is that the African democracies analyzed here lack programmatic parties, including parties that make credible, broad-based ethnic appeals. This is precisely the setting in which the IIA assumption is most likely to hold, however, since the emergence of additional parties that are not programmatic and can make no credible commitments to voters should have no influence on their choices. Hausman tests of the IIA assumption indicate that the assumption is valid and, indirectly, therefore provide additional support for the central conclusions of the paper.

Results – All countries

Results from equation 1, displayed in Table 2, use information from all respondents in the 16 Afrobarometer surveys. They provide the first evidence that credibility and clientelism, rather than ethnicity *per se*, are the main factors conditioning partisan preferences. The four specifications in Table 2 differ in two respects: the presence or absence of country fixed effects, and the use of the two versions of democracy, self-reliance, and incumbent performance variables.

Equation 1 offers one direct test of the ethnicity hypothesis. If parties mobilize voters by making promises to co-ethnics, then *ethnic grievance* should be significantly associated with having a partisan preference. However, in no specification in Table 2 is this the case. Respondents with an ethnic grievance are no less likely to be disaffected than other respondents. The most plausible explanation for this is that political parties do not make credible commitments to respond to ethnic grievances. The ethnic grievance variable remains insignificant in Table 2, if one removes all other control variables, all variables except country dummies, or removes only the three variables correlated with income (services, education and household assets).

It is possible that the respondents who feel ethnic grievances are precisely those who belong to ethnic groups that lack a party that represents their group. However, the vast majority of those with grievances belong to large ethnic groups and, in most cases, members of those ethnic groups who support any party tend to cluster around one party. In Ghana, 67 of 140 aggrieved respondents were Akan or Ewe, each of which dominates a political party in Ghana. Among the aggrieved Akan and Ewe, about one-third express disaffection, about the same as the non-aggrieved. In Kenya, 60 of 154 Luo claimed an ethnic grievance, of whom 27 percent expressed partisan disaffection, compared to 35

percent of those who did not claim an ethnic grievance. The rate of disaffection among the aggrieved, 27 percent, is high, and the difference with the rate among the non-aggrieved is not large. These patterns of grievance challenge the assumption that parties are able to make broadly credible appeals to improve the condition of their ethnic groups.

In contrast, the Table 2 results support the contention that clientelist appeals drive partisan preference. Eighty-one percent of respondents believe that politicians rarely or never keep their promises; sixteen percent believe that they do. This, in itself, is consistent with the argument that political credibility is scarce in the sample countries. In addition, though, the former are significantly more likely to express disaffection than are respondents who do not.

Respondents who have received gifts (controlling for country fixed effects that capture the unobserved capacity of politicians within countries to target voters), are significantly more likely to express a partisan preference than respondents who have not. Respondents who indicate that candidates generally give gifts are significantly less likely to express a partisan preference. That is, parties can attract support from individuals with gifts, but the perception that political competition is largely about clientelism is significantly associated with disaffection. The two effects nearly cancel out: more than 50 percent of respondents who receive gifts also report that candidates always give gifts; such respondents are not significantly less likely to express disaffection. These findings are consistent with the Keefer and Vlaicu (2008) argument that when parties cannot make policy commitments that are broadly credible, they focus on narrow, targeted commitments that exclude most of the population, leaving most of the population disaffected.

Table 2: Correlates of partisan disaffection across 16 African countries
(Dependent variable: 1 if respondent has any partisan preferences, 0 if none; p-statistics from robust standard errors reported in parentheses)

	Type of <i>democracy, self-reliance, incumbent performance</i> variable:			
	(0,1,2: favor, indifferent, oppose)		(0,1: have an opinion, don't have an opinion)	
	(1) No country fixed effects	(2) Country fixed effects	(3) No country fixed effects	(4) Country fixed effects
Democracy	.039 (0.00)	.045 (0.00)	.10 (0.00)	.10 (0.00)
Self-reliance	-.001 (.84)	-.006 (.10)	.05 (.01)	.05 (.01)
Incumbent performance-jobs	.02 (0.00)	.03 (0.00)	.09 (0.00)	.07 (0.00)
Incumbent performance-economy	.04 (0.00)	.02 (0.00)	.10 (0.00)	.13 (0.00)
Respondent offered gifts by candidates? (0-1)	.01 (0.36)	.07 (0.00)	-.002 (.78)	.07 (0.00)
Frequency of candidate gift giving (0-3)	-.039 (0.00)	-.019 (0.00)	-.05 (0.00)	-.02 (0.00)
Politicians keep their promises? (0-3)	.03 (0.00)	.03 (0.00)	.04 (0.00)	.03 (0.00)
Ethnic grievance? (0-1)	.02 (.15)	.01 (.42)	-.01 (.22)	-.01 (.49)
Access to public services (0-1)	-.12 (0.00)	-.07 (0.00)	-.13 (0.00)	-.08 (0.00)
Household assets (0-1)	.12 (0.00)	.18 (0.00)	.10 (0.00)	.16 (0.00)
Respondent education (0-9)	.007 (0.00)	.002 (.38)	.003 (.09)	-.002 (0.30)
<i>N</i>	21,350	21,350	21,350	21,350
<i>Pseudo-R</i> ²	0.03	.08	.02	.09

Note: Probit estimates, coefficients are the change in probabilities associated with unit changes in independent variables. Respondents are from Benin, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.

The estimates of the democracy and self-reliance coefficients are meant to capture whether parties can make credible programmatic appeals, but do so only weakly, since they are likely to be related to unobserved respondent eagerness to participate in the democratic process. Fewer than 10 percent of all respondents agree with the statement that in some circumstances, democracy is not the best form of government; more than 60 percent agree that it is the best form of government; the remainder are indifferent. Those who have an opinion are 10 percent more likely to have a partisan preference than those who are not (columns 3 and 4). However, columns 1 and 2 show that those who favor democracy are also 8-9 percent more likely to express a partisan preference (recalling that for those who favor democracy, the variable takes a value of two, and the coefficient estimates are .039 and .045). This supports the conclusion that the partisanship – democracy association is driven by unobserved enthusiasm of respondents for participating in the democratic process. The specific country regressions offer further support for this, showing that the odds that pro-democracy respondents will favor any particular party rather than remain disaffected is no greater than the odds that other respondents will favor that party rather than remain disaffected.

Approximately 47 percent of all respondents believe that individuals are responsible for their own welfare, while 49 percent believe that government has an important role to play. The self-reliance coefficients are large and significant in specifications 3 and 4 (those who have an opinion about self-reliance are more likely to express a partisan preference), but insignificant in specifications 1 and 2 (those who are more in favor of self-reliance are no more likely to express a partisan preference than those who are not). The optimistic interpretation of these results is that respondents who

have an opinion are more likely to have a partisan preference than respondents who do not, because there are parties that credibly promise policies that either promote or restrict the role of the government. Since there are parties on both sides of the issue, the coefficients in specifications 1 and 2 are insignificant (those opposed to greater government involvement are as likely to have a party that credibly promotes this point of view as are those in favor of it). However, it is more likely that these results are driven by the fact that only four percent of respondents are indifferent, and these are likely to differ in unobserved ways from other respondents. In particular, the 4 percent of respondents who are indifference are less likely to make the effort to identify a preferred party than other respondents. The country-specific regressions support this latter interpretation, since the partisan preferences of individuals with similar views on this issue do not cluster around particular parties.

Respondents are nearly split (approximately 45 percent – 45 percent) in their evaluations of incumbent performance. The two incumbent performance variables are large and positive in all specifications. These results are consistent with the hypothesis that, confronted with non-credible political competitors, voters establish a performance threshold for the incumbent and, if the incumbent meets or exceeds the threshold, they support him. Otherwise, they are indifferent between the incumbent and challengers.

Two of the three control variables are entirely intuitive: more educated and wealthier voters are significantly more likely to express a partisan preference. The *services* coefficient is puzzling. It says that respondents who have access to police, sewage, water, schools, etc. are substantially less likely to express a partisan preference. One possible explanation is that for households where these services are available, the

marginal utility of clientelist promises is lower. Absent parties able to make credible commitments to a broad base of voters, such respondents have no reason to express a party preference.

Results – country-by-country

Individual country level regressions allow more precise tests of both the ethnicity and credibility/clientelism hypotheses. In particular, they allow us to ask such questions as whether respondents from any ethnic group are more likely to support a particular party than to be disaffected; or whether respondents with similar views on democracy or self-reliance are more likely to support a particular party rather than express disaffection.

The correlates of a party's support base are not estimable when the number of respondents who profess support for the party is too small. The parties analyzed below are therefore those that attract the support of at least five percent of respondents. It is similarly not possible to ask whether every ethnic group in a country is the subject of appeals, since many have few respondents. Moreover, the hypothesis at issue is whether ethnic groups that are less likely to have an ethnic party representing them are as likely to prefer the party of a different ethnic group (relative to expressing disaffection) as members of that ethnic group. Smaller ethnic groups are less likely to have parties, and so it is appropriate that they be the comparator group against which the partisan preferences of other ethnic groups are compared. In the analysis below, dummy variables are therefore created for any ethnic group that includes more than five percent of respondents in a country.

Table 3 illustrates the approach with the results from Ghana and Kenya. The table reports the odds ratios: how does the presence or absence of a particular respondent

characteristic (e.g., ethnicity or views on democracy) affect the odds that a respondent would support the party rather than express disaffection? Coefficients greater than one indicate that the odds would increase; coefficients less than one indicate that they would fall.

The two main parties in Ghana are the NPP and NDC. The NDC is the party created by Jerry Rawlings, who was the unelected leader of Ghana through the 1980s and 1990s and is traditionally viewed as a party of the Upper Volta region, particularly attractive to the Ewe, who are the predominant group in that region. The NPP is traditionally viewed as the party of the Akan. If one looked only at the party preference of different ethnic groups, one would indeed conclude that parties make broad-based ethnic appeals and that politics is heavily polarized on ethnic lines. Of Akan respondents, 54 percent favor the NPP versus 11 percent that favor the NDC. Forty-one percent of Ewe respondents favor the NDC, versus 27 percent who favor the NPP. The Dagaati are the second largest ethnic group among the respondents to the Ghana survey, but are not viewed as having a party that is focused on their interests. They are more evenly split in the support, 33 percent for the NPP and 24 percent for the NDC.

To use such comparisons to conclude that political competition is based on broad ethnic appeals misses the fact that rates of disaffection are high: 35 percent of the Akan, 31 percent of the Ewe and 38 percent of the Dagaati do not feel close to any political party. In addition, as the results in Table 3 indicate, the odds that members of these groups prefer some party rather than no party are no greater than the odds that respondents who are members of smaller ethnic groups which are less likely to be represented by a political party, will prefer some party rather than no party. Both indicate that the parties are not able to promise credibly to improve the welfare of co-ethnics.

Table 3: Correlates of Partisan Preference, Ghana and Kenya

	Ghana		Kenya			
	NPP	NDC	NARC	LDP	KANU	
Democracy (0-2)	1.25 (.08)	.90 (.46)	Democracy (0-2)	1.28 (.10)	2.17 (.002)	1.08 (.66)
Self-reliance (0-2)	.97 (.67)	.88 (.18)	Self-reliance (0-2)	.90 (.19)	.99 (.90)	1.09 (.46)
Incumbent_jobs (0-2)	1.28 (.004)	.85 (.18)	Incumbent_jobs (0-2)	.96 (.72)	.89 (.49)	.89 (.48)
Incumbent_economy (0-2)	1.33 (.002)	.66 (0.00)	Incumbent_economy (0-2)	1.45 (0.00)	.90 (.43)	.75 (.03)
Respondent offered gifts by candidates? (0-1)	2.19 (.002)	1.96 (.02)	Respondent offered gifts by candidates? (0-1)	1.03 (.86)	1.48 (.09)	.86 (.33)
Frequency of candidate gift giving (0-3)	1.04 (.60)	1.31 (.002)	Frequency of candidate gift giving (0-3)	.95 (.63)	1.05 (.81)	.86 (.32)
Politicians keep their promises? (0-3)	1.21 (.04)	1.31 (.013)	Politicians keep their promises? (0-3)	1.02 (.14)	1.17 (.36)	1.16 (.32)
Ethnic grievance? (0-1)	.90 (.66)	1.20 (.46)	Ethnic grievance? (0-1)	.96 (.84)	2.13 (.002)	1.01 (.96)
Access to public services (0-1)	.61 (.06)	.37 (.001)	Access to public services (0-1)	.33 (.001)	.71 (.47)	1.47 (.37)
Household assets (0-1)	2.27 (.03)	1.87 (.16)	Household assets (0-1)	2.80 (.02)	6.68 (.001)	.88 (.81)
Respondent education (0-9)	1.04 (.29)	1.02 (.66)	Respondent education (0-9)	1.02 (.66)	1.23 (.001)	1.11 (.13)
Akan	.94 (.25)	.27 (0.00)	Kikuyu	1.58 (.06)	.13 (.008)	.34 (.004)
Ewe	.62 (.12)	.79 (.44)	Luo	.77 (.39)	6.54 (0.00)	.08 (.001)
Dagaati	.62 (.08)	.45 (.006)	Luhya	.83 (.49)	.99 (.98)	.18 (.00)
			Kamba	1.46 (.14)	1.20 (.65)	.51 (.03)
			Meru	30.22 (0.00)	5.71 (.10)	5.58 (.061)
			Kisii	.55 (.09)	.83 (.69)	.33 (.02)
			Kalenjin	.48 (.02)	.94 (.87)	1.61 (.11)
<i>N</i>	1,067		<i>N</i>	1,159		
<i>Pseudo-R</i> ²	.13		<i>Pseudo-R</i> ²	.19		

Note: Results from multinomial logit estimations for Ghana and Kenya. The base/omitted/comparator category is “disaffected”. Coefficients are odds ratios: the probability that a respondent with given

characteristics will prefer the particular party divided by the probability that the respondent will prefer to be disaffected. Odds ratios less than one are “negative”, meaning that the probability of preferring the party is lower than the probability of being disaffected.

Table 3 indicates, first, that respondents who express an ethnic grievance are not significantly more likely to express a partisan preference than to express disaffection, as in the Table 2, all-country regressions. Second, the table indicates that the NPP is no more attractive to Akans than to members of smaller ethnic groups, nor is the NDC more attractive to Ewes. The coefficients on Akan, Ewe and Dagaati compare partisan preferences of members of these groups to the 160 respondents who do not belong to these other ethnic groups. Compared to these, Akan respondents are slightly *less* likely to favor the NPP than to express disaffection. Similarly, compared to these, Ewe respondents are more likely to express disaffection than to support the NDC.

The only significant ethnic coefficients are negative. Compared to members of smaller ethnic groups, the odds that an Akan respondent will favor the NDC are 73 percent *less* than the odds of the respondent being disaffected (the Akan coefficient in the NDC column is .27). Dagaati respondents are significantly less likely to favor either party than to express disaffection. This may indicate that the NDC can credibly commit to oppose Akan interests and that both parties can credibly commit to oppose Dagaati interests. However, in neither case can the parties make credible commitments to distribute benefits to any of the ethnic groups that they do not oppose.

The ethnic coefficients change if the comparator parties change. Relative only to the Ewe, the Akan are far more likely to be members of the NPP than to be disaffected and, relative only to the Akan, the Ewe are far more likely to be members of the NDC. This is not a clean test of whether the NPP can make credible appeals to all Akan,

though, or the NDC to all Ewe. Instead, it could be evidence that both parties specialize in clientelist promises to select members of each ethnic group. Only the latter interpretation is compatible with the high rates of disaffection shown by the Akan and Ewe. It is also consistent with the fact that neither the NPP nor the NDC is more attractive to the Akan and Ewe, respectively, than to members of small ethnic groups. Finally, the Akan and Ewe are at least as likely to express partisan disaffection as any other ethnic groups in the population.

Table 3 is also informative about the absence of credibility in Ghanaian politics. Based on the historical record, some observers have concluded that there are programmatic differences between the NPP and NDC. They note that the NPP is a part of the anti-Nkrumah tradition of J.B. Danquah and President Kofi Busia, typically viewed as the party of business (or at least, of successful businessmen, or “big men”) (Nugent 1999, 290). The NDC, on the other hand, began as a revolutionary, socialist party that rapidly became more populist and “developmental” (oriented towards public works).¹³ *The Economist Intelligence Unit* (2006, p. 10-12) describes the NPP as the party of the market and of business, opposed to interventionist policies of Ghana’s post-independence leader, Kwame Nkrumah, and virulently opposed to the aggressive anti-business policies followed by the Rawlings government immediately after taking power in 1981. The NDC, in contrast, traditionally favored more significant government intervention in the economy, but lost a definite policy identity as a result of major liberalizations that began under the Economic Recovery Program (ERP) around 1983.

¹³ Parties in the tradition of Kwame Nkrumah, also with a more left-leaning ideology, persist as well, but none approaches the two main parties as a political force; in the 2000 elections, the two main parties won 93 percent of the presidential votes and all but eight parliamentary seats (Nugent 2001, 422).

Based on their survey of 690 voters in 2003, Lindberg and Morrison (2005) argue that partisan preferences differ by education, the rural-urban divide, income and occupation, the same dividing lines that one observes in mature democracies. They also conclude that Ghanaian parties convey programmatic messages to voters. The NPP is perceived as the party more in favor of business.

The results in Table 3 suggests that the programmatic basis of partisan appeal in Ghana is much weaker than observers have suggested. If the NPP were the party of business and the NDC the party of redistribution, then one might expect that those who advocate individual responsibility for personal welfare would be more likely to prefer the NPP and less likely to prefer the NDC. However, respondents who are more “self-reliant” or less “self-reliant” are not significantly more or less likely to prefer the NPP or the NDC rather than to express disaffection. Similarly, respondents with more assets are more likely to favor the NPP than the NDC, but the difference is not significant. The more striking result is that respondents with more assets are more likely to support either party than to express disaffection.

In the absence of successful programmatic and ethnic appeals, we should expect clientelist appeals to have a strong effect on partisan preferences. This seems to be the case. Respondents offered gifts by candidates were twice as likely to support either party as to express disaffection. These results suggest that ethnic clustering of partisan support is most likely due to the homogeneity of clientelist networks rather than to broad policy appeals to ethnic interests by competing parties.

Ample qualitative evidence from Ghana supports the argument that emerges from Table 3 that clientelist appeals rather than programmatic or ethnic appeals are at the core

of political competition. Lindberg (2003) provides one indication of the demand for funds for elections, based on extensive interaction with Ghanaian MPs around the 2000 elections. “All interviewees expressed great concern that the amounts they were forced to spend on personal patronage to constituents had increased dramatically as compared to previous election campaigns” (p. 130). The sums devoted to this are also relatively large. Of 73 MP candidates interviewed, 46 percent reported spending at least 2 years salary on their campaigns. Only 10 percent of those candidates who also ran in the 1996 elections reported spending as much. 57 percent reported that they devoted at least 25 percent of their total spending to personal patronage in 2000, compared to 50 percent in 1996.

In electoral campaigns at the individual parliamentary level in Ghana, candidates seem to derive little or no electoral benefit from the policy reputations of their parties, as we would expect when those policy reputations are fragile or non-existent. The Center for the Development of Democracy-Ghana (CDD-Ghana) held debates for parliamentary candidates in 24 constituencies across the country in 2004 and recorded the proceedings of 15 of them in detail (Center for Democratic Development, no date). Of 14 NPP candidates who appeared in the 15 debates, eight made no mention at all of the national party, either its program or its past performance, despite the generally recognized success of the NPP’s first four years in government. Only five of all the NPP candidates mentioned policy issues that extended beyond the constituency; the remainder confined themselves exclusively to constituency-level policy interventions. Candidates focused instead on their individual past performance, generally their contribution to local public works projects and to targeted transfers, such as student scholarships, many funded out of their own pockets or out of the MPs’ Common Fund.

It is not unusual for local issues to loom large in parliamentary elections, even in mature democracies. What is unusual in mature democracies, but much less so in younger democracies, is for the positions of the candidates' parties on key national issues to be of practically no relevance to electoral decision making. It is especially unusual for non-incumbents, with no track record of personal accomplishment, to ignore the party. However, of 12 non-incumbents from the NPP, only half mentioned the accomplishments of the NPP government. The NDC candidates were even more emphatic in underplaying the national party, with only three of 12 candidates mentioning the national party's accomplishments, and only two of 12 mentioning policy issues that transcended constituency borders.

The odds that respondents who express support for democracy also support the NPP are 25 percent greater than the odds for respondents who express less support for democracy. This is a significant difference that might imply that the NPP is able to make credible, pro-democracy commitments. The alternative interpretation, however, is that respondents who support democracy are both more likely to support *some* party, and to support any party other than the one associated with the Rawlings dictatorship (the NDC). The NPP benefits from their support regardless of its pro-democracy commitments. The latter is a more likely interpretation, since 32 percent of respondents who favor democracy express disaffection, approximately the same as the overall fraction of Ghanaian respondents who express disaffection (35 percent).

Kenya provides a useful contrast to Ghana. On the one hand, scholars such as Miguel and Gugerty (2005) argue that at the local level, ethnicity is responsible for low public goods provision. On the other hand, violence plays a greater role in political

competition than in Kenya, political leaders have used ethnic identity to target violence, and long-standing policy grievances, particularly related to land, divide key ethnic groups. Ethnicity is widely recognized to play an overt role in politics in Kenya, moreso than in Ghana. The results in Table 3 are consistent with this view. As with Ghana, membership in the largest ethnic groups is controlled for in the estimation; 314 respondents from smaller ethnic groups are the comparator group.

Even in the midst of complex ethnic cleavages in Kenya, conflict between the Luo and the Kikuyu stands out. Consistent with this, relative to the comparator group of respondents from smaller ethnic groups, the Kikuyu are significantly more likely to express closeness to the NARC than to express disaffection, and the Luo are much more likely to express closeness to the LDP than to express disaffection. Kikuyu are highly unlikely to support the LDP. Respondents expressing ethnic grievance are also significantly more likely to support the LDP than to express disaffection. All of this is consistent with what we observe in Kenyan politics.

However, this is incomplete evidence of the ability of parties to make broadly credible appeals to co-ethnics. Compared to all other groups, only the Luo are significantly more likely to express support for some party rather than disaffection. Even so, thirty-three percent of Luo respondents expressed disaffection, only slightly fewer than the thirty-seven percent of all Kenyan respondents who did. The Kikuyu are as likely to be disaffected as members of any other ethnic group.

What explains these results? In the presence of threats of violence, research such as that by de Figuereido and Weingast (1999) suggests that ethnicity may become politically salient; citizens may then favor co-ethnic parties that they otherwise would

ignore, if only to protect themselves from attack by their own co-ethnics who suspect them of disloyalty. Even if they do not feel close to the co-ethnic party, because they expect nothing from it, an atmosphere of conflict and latent violence could lead respondents to surveys such as Afrobarometer to express support for that party.

However, the prospect of ethnically-centered violence does not imply that ethnic parties can make credible commitments to make co-ethnics better off. Co-ethnic disaffection would then still be substantial. The Kenya evidence indicates that this is the case and provides an alternative explanation for the underprovision of public goods identified by Miguel and Gugerty (2005).

Consistent with the inability of parties to make broadly credible commitments, no party exhibits clustering of supporters who express similar preferences with regard to self-reliance. Those who support democracy are also more likely to support the LDP. Again, however, this is most likely not because the LDP credibly projects pro-democracy positions: 35 percent of respondents who support democracy express disaffection, which is inconsistent with the existence of a party that credibly promotes democracy. Instead, it is likely that those who favor democracy and desire to participate in the political process refrain from voting either the party associated with one-party rule in Kenya (KANU) or the incumbent party that they perceive to pursue corrupt or unfair (Kikuyu-biased) policies, NARC, and choose instead to support the LDP.