

Effective Opposition Strategies: Collective Goods or Clientelism?

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What makes opposition parties win elections in sub-Saharan Africa? The literature on voters in Africa tells us that ballots are won over by clientelism rather than economic development, thus undermining the quality of collective goods provision and democratic accountability. We challenge this notion drawing insight from the December 2008 Ghanaian elections in which the National Democratic Congress came back to power after eight years as an opposition party. Using two surveys carried out before and after the elections, we analyse voters' retrospective sanctioning and prospective selection of incumbent and opposition candidates for legislative office. Our findings show that vote-buying and purely clientelistic appeals are insufficient to win elections and that Ghanaian voters value development when choosing political leaders and hold influential retrospective evaluations of performance. The evidence suggests that clientelism as an electoral strategy may be ubiquitous in emerging democracies, but as voters gain greater experience in choosing political leaders and longer-term information about retrospective performance, its utility may diminish over time.

Keywords: democratization; elections; accountability; clientelism; economic development; Ghana; opposition parties; voting

Modern understandings of democracy typically encapsulate Dahl's dictum that democracy requires not only popular participation but also competition (or, 'contestation' as Dahl would have it).¹ Democracy is not only a 'regime in which those who govern are selected through contested elections'² but more fundamentally 'a system of government in which parties lose elections'.³ Multiparty elections grant citizens a powerful weapon to use against unresponsive elected officials – the ability to 'throw the rascals out'⁴ – and turnovers have been shown to reinforce the legitimacy of political institutions and deepen democratic consolidation.⁵ Yet, the mechanism of vertical accountability whereby the principal (the people) can hold the agent (elected politicians) responsible⁶ depends on political

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opposition providing voters choice.⁷ In other words, for elections to serve as 'instruments of democracy'⁸ they must include credible opposition parties.

Democratic vertical accountability also has a direct relationship with underdevelopment in Africa.⁹ If voters reward politicians with loyalty in exchange for private goods, politicians are incentivized to siphon off resources from the state in order to provide more clientelistic rents.¹⁰ Electoral citizen–politician linkages characterized by clientelism can then undermine rather than strengthen development.¹¹ Averting this suboptimal outcome requires pivotal voters to emphasize collective goods provision when making decisions at the polls. Over a series of successive elections, such emphasis could force politicians to become more like developmental agents and less like private goods providers *as long as* there exists a credible opposition. Consequently, we expect convincing opposition parties to be necessary not only for democracy to function but also for making politicians provide development rather than clientelism. It is therefore imperative that we gain more knowledge about what makes for opposition parties that can win elections in Africa's new and emerging democracies.

This contribution focuses on the preferences of the voters that parties seek to win over.¹² The question is: Are voters in Ghana continually beguiled by clientelism that undermines both democracy and development, or do they now reward politicians who focus on collective goods provision? Using two surveys carried out before and after the 7 December 2008 elections in Ghana, a new democracy in sub-Saharan Africa, we analyse voters' retrospective sanctioning and prospective selection of incumbent and opposition candidates. We use this case to explore one of the most important topics in contemporary African politics: What 'works' for opposition parties in Africa, clientelism or development? We find that the main opposition party National Democratic Congress (NDC) managed to collect a large share of the undecided voters but also won over some persuadable supporters of the incumbent New Patriotic Party (NPP).¹³ We show that these persuadable voters frequently cast their ballots for the NDC based on retrospective evaluation of how well (or badly) the incumbents delivered collective goods rather than based on clientelistic offers. This finding differs from Lindberg and Morrison's studies of the same constituencies prior to Ghana's 2004 elections, suggesting that clientelism may be a feature of emerging democracies in Africa that diminishes over time as voters gain more experience with elections, and where there is a longer performance track record which they can use to base their vote choice on.¹⁴

What we know about opposition in Africa

The small and weak opposition parties that characterize many African countries have made some observers see stunted democratic growth in Africa and a return of semi-authoritarianism,¹⁵ or 'big man' clientelistic politics even in the context of multiparty elections.¹⁶ Regarding the underdevelopment of political party systems, the literature suggests that opposition and incumbent dispositions vary

in several ways because political parties may reflect the structural cleavages of society;¹⁷ be impacted by incentives of electoral systems they face;¹⁸ or differ in their nature as office-, voter-, or policy-seeking parties.¹⁹ Many political parties in Africa allegedly lack clear political objectives, platforms, and 'brand names'²⁰ and few have succeeded in removing incumbents from office.²¹ Many opposition parties in sub-Saharan Africa are far from institutionalized²² and face serious barriers to establishing any consistently credible threat against incumbents in both post-conflict and peaceful transitions to electoral politics.²³

A prevalent explanation for this is structural: Africans are often assumed to vote ethnically and elections are thus viewed as little more than ethnic censuses propelling relevant cleavage structures of society into the public sphere.²⁴ Partisan identities are limited and seldom constitute 'cross-cutting cleavages' that diminish the role of ethnic divisions.²⁵ Thus, ethnic identities become a primary mechanism for mobilizing political support.²⁶ More than one incentive can provide the motivation to vote ethnically. Voters receive 'psychic benefits' for supporting candidates like themselves²⁷ and in lieu of clearly defined policy aims, can use ethnicity as a cognitive shortcut to estimate similar electoral preferences.²⁸ Responding to such incentives, citizens can be expected to vote along ethnic lines and thus elections in Africa's developing democracies sometimes merely reinforce salient ethnic identities.²⁹ Even if one accepts the argument that these ethnic identities are multifaceted and it has been demonstrated that their make-up and intensity can change over time,³⁰ ethnic patterns hardly explain dramatic changes in voting patterns such as between the 2004 and 2008 elections in Ghana.

The typical account of why vote shifts *do* occur in Africa centres on distributive clientelism that benefits an incumbent elite³¹ using it to subvert the logic of democratic accountability.³² Alternatively, clientelism can be a means of gaining credibility where parties and records of accomplishments are lacking.³³ In several countries including Ghana, members of parliament (MPs) spend tremendous amounts of time and resources providing personal assistance to voters, paying health and educational expenses, attending funerals, distributing jobs and other benefits, as well as handing out 'small chops'.³⁴ A number of scholars attribute such patterns to poverty. For the poor, immediate improvements in their often precarious material conditions take priority. The cost of buying political loyalty from a poor person can be safely assumed to be much lower than that of capturing the rich.³⁵ Political competitiveness also affects the costs and benefits of clientelistic strategies since the value of the marginal voter, thus the acceptable price of a *quid pro quo*, is much higher in competitive districts than in safe havens.³⁶ Finally, candidates can use clientelistic goods not only to win votes, but also to mobilize supporters, i.e. turnout – rather than vote-buying.³⁷ Without seeking here to adjudicate between these arguments, it remains that if the most successful strategy for parties to win elections is providing and promising private-clientelistic goods, the supply of collective and public goods (i.e. development) will suffer.

In addition, a typical explanation of the lagging development in Africa is 'big man politics', a particular facet of clientelism. Politicians use state and private wealth to

reward supporters with private, clientelistic goods in order to maintain power.³⁸ With heightened political competition under multiparty electoral democracy, the pressure to increase both the scope and penetration of clientelistic distribution should increase. Development thus suffers in contexts found in Africa where there exists a history of prevalent clientelism and elections which enable political leaders to use the polls as vehicles for enhancing clientelism and further damaging developmental potential. The possible antidote is found among voters. If a sufficient number of pivotal voters demand a greater supply of collective and public goods, politicians presumably will have to follow suit in order to stay in power.

Using two rounds of original survey data from Ghana, the present contribution provides some insight on two critical issues in context. The first concerns what factors drive voters to support opposition parties at the polls, laying the foundation for alternations in power. Second, by comparing what voters said would make them switch their vote prior to the elections with evidence from a post-election survey on why they eventually voted the way they did, we demonstrate the extent to which voters are 'farming clientelism' or instead creating incentives for politicians to be agents of development.

Case selection and methodology

Ghana is a good case for exploring these questions. Since 1992, there have been two alternations in power across five national elections and both of the two main parties have now managed to return to office after previously losing. During this period, the NDC's share of legislative seats has changed from 96% in the first parliament down to 41% after the elections in 2004, and up again to 51% in the fifth parliament. The changes in the NPP's share of seats has almost mirrored this going from 0% in the first legislature to 56% in the fourth and down again to 46% in the fifth and current parliament. Volatility has been even higher than these party level figures suggest. The combination of competitive national elections and heated party primaries has yielded a 52% newcomer rate for the 2nd through 5th Parliaments.³⁹

Electoral volatility in the presidential elections has been less pronounced but nevertheless substantial. In the December 2008 elections, the two-term ruling party that lost a presidential election run-off by less than half of 1% of the vote gracefully accepted defeat.⁴⁰ After democratically ousting the NDC, led by former authoritarian ruler and president J.J. Rawlings in 2000, the NPP was in turn forced out of office by the ballot box. In other words, these events together meant that Ghana had finally passed the classical 'two turnover test'.⁴¹

While Ghana's experience may not appear typical for Africa, it can give us a first view of what makes opposition parties win and incumbent parties lose in Africa when democratic procedures prevail. Moreover, Ghana is not entirely unique, as Table 1 demonstrates. As of 2010, 33 of the countries in Africa have held at least three successive elections without a coup, civil war or other interruption. More than 20 countries have held four elections or more in a row and 12 have completed an uninterrupted sequence of five multiparty elections. Among countries that have held at least three successive elections, we find no less than 15 clearly democratic regimes

Table 1. Number of Multi-Party Elections held and political rights (Freedom House) as of 1 January 2010.

No Elections	PR	1 Election	PR	2 Elections	PR	3 Elections	PR	4 Elections	PR	5 or more Elections	PR
Eritrea	7	Angola	6	Burundi	4	Cameroon	6	Burkina F.	5	Benin*	2
Somalia	7	CAR*	5	RoC	6	Chad	7	Cape Verde*	1	Botswana	3
Swaziland	7	DRC	6	Guinea Biss*	4	Comoros*	3	Eq. Guinea	7	Gabon	6
		Guinea	7	Rwanda	6	Djibouti	5	Ethiopia	5	Ghana*	1
		Ivory Coast	6	Sierra Leone*	3	Gambia	5	Kenya*	4	Mali*	2
		Liberia	3			Lesotho*	3	Malawi*	3	Mauritius*	1
		Mauritania	6			Nigeria	5	Mozambique	4	Namibia	2
		Madagascar*	6			Niger*	5	Sao Tome*	2	Senegal*	3
						Sudan	7	South Africa	2	Seychelles	3
						Uganda	5	Tanzania	4	Togo	5
										Zambia*	3
										Zimbabwe*	6
Mean PR	7.0		5.6		4.6		5.1		3.7		3.1

Note: *Indicates a country who has experienced a executive and/or legislative turnover.

while another four or five countries are competitive electoral authoritarian regimes with relatively good prospects of becoming democratic in the future (Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, and perhaps Gambia). Moreover, that about one-third of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa have experienced legislative and/or executive turnovers of power makes the Ghanaian case less atypical than one might first think.⁴²

We use two unique surveys conducted by one of the authors in collaboration with the Centre for Democratic Development–Ghana (CDD-Ghana) in August 2008 and July 2009. The first survey was conducted almost four months before Ghana's concurrent presidential and legislative elections held 7 December. At this point, the primary elections for both legislative seats and presidential slots were over and the revision of the voters' registry had just been completed, but the campaigning had not really started yet. This provided a good time to collect data on performance-based evaluations of MPs independently of campaign influences. The second survey took place in July 2009, six months after the installation of the new government and legislature. We opted for this timing trying to find a balance between two main considerations. First, it was essential that respondents would have at least some minimum level of information on the behaviour of their MP after taking office in order to be able to provide meaningful evaluations of new MPs. From this perspective, a longer period between the election and the survey was desirable. Yet, it was important that post-election events did not overly influence respondents' memories of reasons for voting a particular way. Balancing these two concerns, we judged that the six months interval would present a reasonable middle ground between the two goals.

Each survey included 1600 or more subjects who were recruited through clustered, stratified, multi-stage area probability sampling. Rather than conducting a national probability sample, we opted to select constituencies strategically as a part of a decade long project tracing longitudinal change within these constituencies. This process ensured the sample included at least one constituency from nine of the 10 regions in Ghana and allowed us to stratify across the two most critical factors for our study – constituency competitiveness (from party strongholds to areas where an MP seat could go to either party) and economic development.⁴³ Each survey consisted of a number of questions that probed a subject's past voting behaviour, exposure to campaign activities, past and future evaluations and expectations of MPs, the nature of interaction with local and national political authorities, as well as a host of demographic variables, such as ethnic identity and religion. Open-ended questions also sought to comprehensively capture why an individual decided to vote for a particular party in the last election. These answers were post-coded informed by theories of clientelism and collective/public goods provision to generate the truest possible representation of people's self-reported behaviour while being interpretable in relevant theoretical terms.

Characteristics of 10 constituencies in Ghana's 2008 elections

The first task is to illustrate 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 in constituencies where political competition differs structurally. While we might expect opposition success to appear in winning its own strongholds, we can also analyse how the opposition performed in areas where the incumbent dominates and whether or not the opposition used different campaign strategies in these areas. Table 2 provides evidence that the NDC managed to overcome a number of obstacles facing opposition parties making this election a relevant case for studying factors that make opposition parties viable contenders for power. It shows that the NDC captured three constituencies previously held by the NPP while holding onto their own turf, performing particularly well in close electoral contests and winning all three of the competitive 'battleground' constituencies. In the southern city of 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. Even in the NPP 'safe havens' (Kwabre East and Akim Swedru), the NDC was able to pick up a number of voters.

Given this evidence of the NDC's performance in the 2008 elections, we seek to ascertain why voters choose one political party over another in Ghana and particularly, how opposition parties win over voters: Is vote choice based on retrospective evaluation of incumbent performance, prospective policy promises or instead on personalistic ties and private enticements for political support? In short, which strategies did the opposition party use that worked?

The opposition captured undecided and persuadable voters

Before electoral campaigns started, the incumbent government's party, the NPP, appeared to be in relatively good standing, even in the most competitive constituencies where they had as much or more support as the main opposition party. Eventually, the opposition captured an average of 54% of the votes in these areas whereas the ruling party got only 37%. Even in the ruling party's safe havens, the NPP lost a number of voters to the opposition. What could explain the success of the NDC in the 2008 elections? While it is possible that measurement error in the survey could be the source of some of the differences reported here, we believe the main answer rests on two related factors: as demonstrated by Table 3, a substantial portion of respondents reported being undecided in the August 2008 survey, meaning that they were still 'up for grabs' and a vast majority of these seem to have voted for the opposition.

The second factor is that a large portion of voters who reported an intention to vote for a particular party's candidate nevertheless had a substantial propensity to switch parties. The column labelled 'Persuadable' in Table 3 shows the share of each party's voters that claimed to be willing to vote for other party's candidate if such a candidate convincingly promises to deliver community development ('pork'), provide executive oversight, or voice constituency concerns on the floor of parliament. Given that projected NDC voters also consisted of a substantial

Table 2. Official 2008 election results, by constituency.

Constituency type	Name	2004			2008			
		Winner	% of votes	Margin of victory*	Turn-over	Winner	% of votes	Margin of victory*
Competitive	Ablekuma South	NPP	52.1%	7.7%	Yes	NDC	51.3%	4.8%
	Cape Coast	NPP	51.2%	6.7%	Yes	NDC	48.8%	4.9%
	Bolgatanga	PNC	38.6%	4.5%	Yes	NDC	57.7%	37.5%
Semi-competitive	Tamale Central	NDC	55.8%	17.2%	No	NDC	65.7%	34.2%
	Jaman South	NPP	57.2%	18.5%	No	NPP	55.8%	55.4%
	Evalue-Gwira	CPP	49.7%	20.3%	Yes	NPP	57.7%	26.8%
	Kpone Katamansu	NDC	53.8%	20.8%	No	NDC	63.0%	30.5%
Safe havens	Ho West	NDC	82.5%	65.6%	No	NDC	87.5%	76.0%
	Kwabre East	NPP	84.1%	68.2%	No	NPP	75.1%	55.3%
	Akim Swedru	NPP	67.4%	36.4%	No	NPP	63.6%	27.9%

Note: *This compares NPP to NDC directly, except for Bolgatanga in 2004 where the NDC candidate came second with 34% of the vote and Evalue-Gwira in 2004, where the NDC placed second with 29.4%.

Source: Electoral Commission of Ghana.

Table 3. Projected legislative vote vs. 2008 results.

Type	Party	Declared vote, Aug.		'Persuadable' (% of total) Aug.		Election results, Dec.		Difference
		2008	N	2008	N	2008		
Competitive constituencies	NPP	29%	120	22%	27	37%	8%	
	NDC	31%	126	28%	35	54%	23%	
	Others*	40%	164	18%	30	9%	-31%	
	Total	100%	410	22%	92	100%		
Government (NPP) Semi/safe havens	NPP	65%	341	23%	79	63%	-2%	
	NDC	15%	78	32%	25	30%	15%	
	Others*	20%	107	26%	28	7%	-14%	
	Total	100%	526	25%	132	100%		
Opposition (NDC) Semi/safe havens	NPP	27%	111	30%	33	25%	-2%	
	NDC	50%	208	22%	45	72%	22%	
	Others*	23%	93	27%	25	3%	20%	
	Total	100%	412	25%	103	100%		

Note: *Include voters saying they were undecided, refused to disclose their vote intention, or intended to vote for one of the smaller parties.

Source: Lindberg Survey August 2008.

number of 'swing voters' this indicates that the NDC effectively won over many NPP swing voters, while minimizing their own losses to the NPP. The NDC's success in capturing these voters is evidenced by the difference between the actual results of the 7 December 2008 elections and projected vote choice from the pre-election survey. In competitive constituencies the main opposition party increased their share of voters from the projected vote by 23% while the ruling party only gained 8%. In the safe havens, the opposition increased its share of votes by 15–22% while the ruling party lost 2% across the board.

In short, these 10 constituencies provide an illustration of what happened in Ghana's 2008 election. The NDC's electoral success can be attributed to its ability to win over sets of undecided and swing voters. In the next section, we parse out the reasons why and analyse what motivated these voters to choose the NDC over the candidates of other political parties.

Table 4a. Retrospective evaluations of incumbent MPs, by declared vote in August 2008.

Personal assistance		NPP	NDC	Undecided	Other parties	Total	Sig.
Very/Bad		43%	46%	55%	48%	46%	$\chi^2 = 24.51$ $p = .002$ df = 8
	<i>N</i>	195	156	97	47	495	
Neither		19%	13%	16%	12%	16%	
	<i>N</i>	85	43	29	12	169	
Very/Good		38%	42%	29%	39%	38%	
	<i>N</i>	174	143	51	38	406	
Total		100%	101%	100%	100%	100%	
	<i>N</i>	454	342	177	97	1070	
<i>Constituency service</i>							
Very/Bad		40%	44%	51%	40%	43%	$\chi^2 = 26.80$ $p = .001$ df = 8
	<i>N</i>	218	171	111	43	543	
Neither		15%	8%	13%	16%	13%	
	<i>N</i>	84	33	29	17	163	
Very/Good		45%	48%	36%	44%	44%	
	<i>N</i>	250	188	80	47	565	
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
	<i>N</i>	552	392	220	107	1271	
<i>Law-making</i>							
Very/Bad		21%	26%	38%	25%	25%	$\chi^2 = 33.49$ $p < .001$ df = 8
	<i>N</i>	100	85	64	23	272	
Neither		11%	12%	11%	15%	12%	
	<i>N</i>	52	40	18	14	124	
Good/Very		68%	62%	52%	60%	63%	
	<i>N</i>	328	207	88	5	679	
Total		100%	100%	101%	100%	100%	
	<i>N</i>	480	332	170	93	1075	

Source: Lindberg's August 2008 Survey.

Prospective vs. retrospective voting

Table 4a presents evidence that retrospective performance evaluations of incumbent MPs' being patrons in clientelistic networks ('Personal assistance'), providers of small-scale collective or 'club' goods ('Constituency service'), and representatives producing broader collective goods ('Law-making'), is associated with projected vote choice in August 2008.⁴⁴ The table shows, most importantly, that projected opposition voters held more negative evaluations of incumbents' performance compared to those who intended to vote for the incumbent government's candidates. 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 40% of NPP supporters. However, the differences are not only significant in the statistical sense, given that the presidency was won with a margin of only 0.5%, a 4% difference in performance evaluation may have meaningfully impinged on election results. Table 4a also shows that undecided voters are more critical of incumbents'

Table 4b. In NPP constituencies: retrospective evaluations of incumbent MPs, by declared vote in August 2008.

Personal assistance		NPP	NDC	Undecided	Other parties	Total	Sig.
Very/Bad		40%	64%	72%	59%	51%	$\chi^2 = 40.55$ $p < .001$ df = 8
	<i>N</i>	117	84	49	17	267	
Neither		23%	14%	18%	24%	20%	
	<i>N</i>	66	18	12	7	103	
Good/Very		37%	23%	10%	17%	29%	
	<i>N</i>	108	30	7	5	150	
Total		100%	101%	100%	100%	100%	
	<i>N</i>	291	342	68	29	520	
<i>Constituency service</i>							
Very/Bad		34%	67%	59%	56%	47%	$\chi^2 = 64.81$ $p < .001$ df = 8
	<i>N</i>	126	99	54	18	297	
Neither		17%	10%	16%	19%	15%	
	<i>N</i>	62	15	15	6	98	
Good/Very		49%	23%	25%	25%	38%	
	<i>N</i>	178	34	23	8	243	
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
	<i>N</i>	366	148	92	32	638	
<i>Law-making</i>							
Very/Bad		16%	38%	47%	44%	27%	$\chi^2 = 59.15$ $p < .001$ df = 8
	<i>N</i>	53	50	35	14	153	
Neither		11%	19%	9%	16%	13%	
	<i>N</i>	37	25	7	5	74	
Good/Very		73%	43%	44%	41%	60%	
	<i>N</i>	239	57	33	13	342	
Total		100.0%	100%	100%	101%	100%	
	<i>N</i>	330	132	75	32	569	

Source: Lindberg's August 2008 Survey.

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provision of both clientelistic and collective goods, compared to respondents who said they would vote for the incumbent party. Voters who contributed to the success of the NDC in the December 2008 elections were dissatisfied with the performance of the incumbent regime across a wide range of the duties of MPs. Table 4b illustrates that this is directly linked to the performance of the ruling party's MPs – and not a more general anti-incumbency sentiment. In this table, we replicate the previous Table 4a but now only include subjects who were in constituencies with an MP from the ruling party from 2004 to 2008. Across the board, we again see that undecided voters were far more critical of the performance of the incumbent government's MPs in terms of both clientelistic and collective goods provision.

In elections, voters must choose between supporting the ruling government and voting for an opposition party. Our evidence shows that, in a new democracy like Ghana, substantial shares of voters make this decision by assessing the performance of an incumbent in terms of both collective and private goods provision. Contrary to many of the established notions in the literature on African politics, a significant portion of citizens in our survey are retrospective voters ready to punish the incumbent for poor performance. Space does not allow us to adequately enter the debate the link between ethnicity and elections, but we are confident that the findings here are not a product of omitted variable bias and illustrate elsewhere the relative (un)importance of ethnicity in performance evaluations and making voters 'persuadable' in Ghana.⁴⁵

Table 5 looks at the importance of prospective considerations. Subjects were asked to consider reasons for which they might be willing to change their vote in the future. Unlike in Tables 4a and 4b, there is very little variation across supporters of the ruling party, opposition, and undecided voters. The differences in Table 5 are far from achieving statistical significance.⁴⁶ While some Ghanaians are indeed prospective voters in the sense that they consider future gains in collective and/or private goods when choosing their candidate, these voters are not systematically associated with one particular party. The tables above taken together show that the success of the NDC in ousting the incumbent NPP was based on two primary factors: the NDC's collecting a substantial number of undecided voters while also picking off some from the NPP camp and these voters choosing the NDC because of negative evaluations of past performance of the incumbent regime.

Interestingly, these voters did not differ in their consideration of prospective promises when selecting their preferred candidate. This stands in contrast to Lindberg and Morrison's earlier findings that the then opposition (NPP supporters) and swing voters were more prospectively oriented.⁴⁷ The party systems literature suggests that supporters of opposition parties, especially ones which have yet to break into the government, are typically forced to be prospective with a longer time horizon than their incumbent counter-parts.⁴⁸ A plausible interpretation of our findings is that in developing democracies with successive elections and meaningful interparty competition, voters over time begin to evaluate

Table 5. Share of voters that would switch party for offers* (by projected vote choice August 2008).

	NPP	NDC	Undecided	Other parties	Total	Sig.
Small handouts	7%	9%	14%	7%	8%	$\chi^2 = 3.29$ $p = .553$ df = 4
	<i>Total N</i>	<i>569</i>	<i>410</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>1,117</i>
Job offer	23%	22%	28%	25%	23%	$\chi^2 = 1.25$ $p = .870$ df = 4
	<i>Total N</i>	<i>569</i>	<i>411</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>1118</i>
Better constituency development	30%	31%	41%	33%	31%	$\chi^2 = 4.92$ $p = .295$ df = 4
	<i>Total N</i>	<i>570</i>	<i>412</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>108</i>	<i>1119</i>
Good law-making	25%	24%	29%	25%	24%	$\chi^2 = 2.98$ $p = .573$ df = 4
	<i>Total N</i>	<i>566</i>	<i>410</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>107</i>	<i>1111</i>
Vigilant executive oversight	20%	21%	18%	13%	20%	$\chi^2 = 6.23$ $p = .182$ df = 4
	<i>Total N</i>	<i>562</i>	<i>410</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>104</i>	<i>1104</i>

* Percentage answering 'Maybe' or 'Yes, probably'.

Source: Lindberg's 2008 Ghana Survey.

incumbent regimes retrospectively. This coheres with literature on party systems in Western democracies and would suggest that the differences between African voting behaviour and that found in the West are in part due to democratic duration.

The road to opposition victory: collective, *not* clientelistic, goods

We now move on to introduce the second dataset, which was collected six months after the 2008 elections. The second round of data collection was conducted in the same constituencies as the first round. The study does not utilize the same respondents as in the first round, and thus we cannot make comparisons of individual respondents across the two periods. We can, however, study differences over time within these constituencies and compare what voters reported as motivating their ballots before and after the elections.

We presented evidence above that voters saw their ballots as a means of punishing or rewarding past performance of political incumbents. Using data from the post-election survey, we now explore the differences between actual incumbent and opposition voters in terms of *how* they evaluated the MP on private and collective goods provision and how these evaluations directly affected vote choice.

In Tables 6a and 6b, we present results from the 2009 post-election survey where respondents were asked to provide the reason they think a particular MP was elected for office, in terms of private and collective (primarily 'club') goods provision. Items are arranged to reflect levels of the 'collectiveness' of a good, ranging from the most private to the most public.

Table 6a analyses the entire sample of 1433 valid responses. There are statistically significant differences between those who ended up voting for the then ruling NPP and opposition NDC voters. Supporters of the incumbent NPP regime more readily point to private goods provision as the primary means of being elected. This finding accords with the literature that addresses incumbency advantage, including the difficulty facing opposition parties to meet the needs of individuals and thus being seen as supporting members of the constituency. Interestingly, we also marginally greater portion of NDC and undecided voters who feel attending private events like funerals is the most important strategy MPs use to be elected, in comparison to NPP voters. This finding runs contrary to much of the clientelistic literature which assumes any form of private good that private goods provision is a strategy available

Table 6a. Reason for actual 2008 vote choice.

Type of goods		NPP	NDC	Others*	Total
Private	Personal financial assistance	27%	23%	34%	25%
	<i>N</i>	157	185	15	357
	Attending weddings, meetings, etc.	4%	5%	7%	4%
	<i>N</i>	21	39	3	63
Narrow collective	Donations to vulnerable groups	2%	2%	2%	2%
	<i>N</i>	13	14	1	28
	Party loyalty	9%	4%	9%	6%
	<i>N</i>	49	36	4	89
Collective	Constituency development	54%	58%	40%	56%
	<i>N</i>	309	476	17	802
	Parliamentary representation	2%	3%	0%	3%
	<i>N</i>	10	28	0	38
Public	Making goods laws	>0%	>0%	0%	>0%
	<i>N</i>	1	3	0	4
	Government oversight	0%	<1%	0%	>0%
	<i>N</i>	0	3	0	3
	Other	2%	4%	7%	4%
	<i>N</i>	14	32	3	49
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
	<i>N</i>	574	816	43	1433

Note: * Includes other parties and independents.

$\chi^2 = 31.64P = 0.011$ $df = 16$

Source: Lindberg's June 2009 Survey.

Table 6b. Reason for 2008 vote choice, constituencies won by NDC.

Type of goods		NPP	NDC	Other*	Total
Private	Personal financial assistance	32%	20%	37%	24%
	<i>N</i>	91	140	11	171
	Attending weddings, meetings, etc.	5%	5%	7%	5%
	<i>N</i>	13	38	2	53
Narrow collective	Donations to vulnerable groups	2%	2%	3%	2%
	<i>N</i>	7	12	1	20
	Party loyalty	5%	4%	10%	5%
	<i>N</i>	14	29	3	46
Collective	Constituency development	50%	60%	33%	56%
	<i>N</i>	142	418	10	570
	Parliamentary representation	2%	4%	0%	3%
	<i>N</i>	5	26	0	31
Public	Making goods laws	<1%	<1%	0%	<1%
	<i>N</i>	1	3	0	4
	Government oversight	0%	<1%	0%	<1%
	<i>N</i>	0	2	0	2
	Other	4%	5%	10%	4%
	<i>N</i>	10	32	3	45
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
	<i>N</i>	283	700	30	1013

Notes: *Includes other parties and independents.

$\chi^2 = 31.43$ $P = 0.0012$ $df = 16$

Source: Lindberg's 2009 Ghana Survey.

almost exclusively to incumbents. It suggests that an opposition party can provide certain private goods to gain supporters, but that the goods are symbolic like making appearances private events like funerals and weddings, rather than material ones.

Table 6a also demonstrates that voters who put the NDC back in power place a higher value on collective goods, like delivering development to the constituency and representing the constituency on the floor of the parliament. While some of these differences may appear small, they are statistically significant trivial and substantively important. As before, the differences across groups are larger than the margin by which the NDC defeated the NPP in 2008. As a robustness check, we conducted the same analysis restricted to constituencies that the NDC won (Table 6b). The findings hold within NDC winning constituencies. We cannot resolve the exact nature of causality – whether the patterns we find are due to voters demanding collective goods that the opposition subsequently decided to promise in order to win the election, or if parties chose electoral strategies exogenously and then shape demand. At the minimum, the analysis shows that among opposition voters an emphasis on collective goods trumped clientelistic goods provision and this provided an avenue to power for the party in opposition.

Conclusion

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. From Nigeria to Togo, Equatorial Guinea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, and notably Zimbabwe, opposition parties have simply been prevented from winning elections. Even in many emerging democracies, such as Liberia, Zambia, South Africa, and Namibia, opposition parties have so far been unable to persuade voters to back them instead of the incumbent party in government. Notwithstanding these examples, in almost a dozen countries from Kenya and Lesotho to Senegal, Benin, and Ghana the opposition has triumphed in either legislative or executive elections, or in both. This testifies to the fact that real political competition is becoming more common on the continent. Citizens priorities should have started to translate into imperatives for politicians who wish to get (re-)elected.

We started with one overall concern: Do elections in Africa's new democracies induce politicians to invest in collective and developmental goods or do they contribute to the erosion of development by rewarding the use of political clientelism? This motivated the research question guiding this contribution: What makes opposition parties win elections? We analysed two original surveys conducted in Ghana prior to and after the decisive December 2008 election in which the NDC came back to power after eight years as opposition party. We have illustrated that pivotal voters in Ghana rewarded politicians who had performed well on constituency development and representation, while punishing those who had acted more as patrons trying to buy votes.

While we are acutely aware of the tentative nature of our findings, they nonetheless provide an encouraging image of Ghanaian citizens who are motivated at the polls by public goods delivery. 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 direction of a future as a consolidated democracy. Political clientelism may be continuing to consume resources in Ghana and the country's development record still leaves much to be desired.⁴⁹ However, it is also clear that for citizens of Ghana, vote-buying and purely clientelistic appeals are insufficient to win elections. Voters in Ghana care about development when voting for political leaders and are increasingly weighing retrospective evaluations of performance. Thus, even when distribution of clientelistic goods is pervasive, MPs must accomplish developmental goals and failure to do so by at least some of the incumbent NPP candidates seems to have driven them out of office. Politicians tend to do what they have to in order to stay in power and, in Ghana, the message that clientelism is insufficient should be clear.

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Notes

1. Dahl, *Polyarchy*.
2. Przeworski and Modernization, 'Modernization', 173; Przeworski et al., *Democracy and Development*, 20.
3. Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market*.
4. Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 174.
5. Moehler and Lindberg, 'Narrowing the Legitimacy Gap', 1448–66. See also Anderson et al., *Losers' Consent*.
6. Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin, *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*.
7. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*; Dahl, *Polyarchy*.
8. Powell, *Elections as Instruments of Democracy*.
9. Bates, *Markets and States in Tropical Africa*; Hyden, *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*; van de Walle, *African Economies and The Politics of Permanent Crisis*.
10. See, for example, Lyne, 'Rethinking Economics and Institutions'; and Warner, 'Mass Parties and Clientelism in France and Italy'.
11. Walle, 'Meet the New Boss'.
12. Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*.
13. For the remaining article, we use NDC and NPP to in reference to these parties, PNC to designate the People's National Convention, and CPP to designate the Convention People's Party.
14. Lindberg and Morrison, 'Are African Voters Really Ethnic or Clientelistic?'.
15. Carothers, 'Democracy without Illusions', 85–9.
16. Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa*; Bratton, 'Second Elections in Africa', 51–66; Mbembe, 'Complex Transformations in the Late Twentieth Century', 28–30; Rakner and van de Walle, 'Opposition Parties and Incumbent Presidents'; van de Walle 'Meet the New Boss'; Wantchekon, 'Clientelism and Voting Behavior', 399–422.
17. Lipset and Rokkan, 'Cleavage Structures', 1–64.
18. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*; Lijphart, *Democracies*.
19. Strøm, 'A Behavioral Theory of Competitive Political Parties', 565–98.
20. Bleck and van de Walle, 'Political Issues in French West African Electoral Democracies'; van de Walle, 'Presidentialism and Clientelism in Africa's Emerging Party Systems', 297–321.
21. Van de Walle, 'Presidentialism and Clientelism in Africa's Emerging Party Systems'.
22. See Kuenzi and Lambright, 'Party System Institutionalization in 30 African Countries', 437–68.
23. Manning, 'Constructing Opposition in Mozambique', 161–89; and Manning, *The Making of Democrats*.
24. For an argument along these lines regarding our case Ghana, see Fridy, 'The Elephant, Umbrella, and Quarrelling Cocks', 281–305.

25. At its core, ethnicity captures a multi-faceted identity defined as a shared myth of common ancestry, encompassing clan, language, religion, region, and even nation. Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed*; Chazan, *An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics*; Fearon and Laitin, 'Explaining Interethnic Cooperation', 715–35; Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*; Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism*.
26. Barkan 1979; Fridy, 'The Elephant, Umbrella, and Quarrelling Cocks'; Lipset, *Political Man*; McLaughlin, 'Beyond the Racial Census', 435–56; Posner, 'Regime Change and Ethnic Cleavages in Africa', 1302–27.
27. Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed*.
28. Ferree, 'Explaining South Africa's Racial Census', 803–15; Habyarimana et al., 'Why Does Ethnic Diversity Undermine Public Goods Provision?', 709–25.
29. Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy*; Snyder, *From Voting to Violence*.
30. Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa*.
31. Hyden, *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*; Lindberg, 'It's Our Time to "Chop"', 121–40; van de Walle, 'Meet the New Boss'.
32. Cox and McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan*; Stokes, 'Perverse Accountability', 315–25.
33. Keefer and Vlaicu, 'Does Social Capital Have an Economic Payoff?'
34. Lindberg, 'It's Our Time to "Chop"', 121–40; Lindberg, 'What Accountability Pressures Do MPs in Africa Face', 117–42; Wantchekon, 'Clientelism and Voting Behavior'; Dixit and Londregan, 'The Determinants of Success of Special Interests in Redistributive Politics', 1132–55; Piattoni, *Clientelism, Interests, and Democratic Representation*.
35. Stokes, 'Perverse Accountability'.
36. See, for example, Kitschelt and Wilkinson, *Patrons, Clients and Policies*.
37. Nichter 'Vote-Buying or Turnout Buying?', 19–31; Stokes and Dunning, 'Clientelism as Persuasion'; Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros, and Estevez, 'Clientelism and Portfolio Diversification'.
38. Barkan, 'Legislators, Elections, and Political Linkage', 64–92; Bayart, *The State in Africa*; Hyden, *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*; Jackson and Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa*; Joseph, *Prebendalism and Democracy in Nigeria*; Joseph, 'Democratization in Africa after 1989', 363–82; Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*; van de Walle, *African Economies and The Politics of Permanent Crisis*.
39. Lindberg with Zhou, 'Co-optation Despite Democratization in Ghana', 147–76.
40. The presidential election was decided in a second round and a subsequent rerun in one constituency (Tain) after the first round on 7 December failed to produce a winner. The NDC won the presidential race with 50.23% of the votes translating to a margin of 40, 586 votes. The total number of rejected votes was almost twice the size of the margin of victory (92,886) illustrating how close and potentially contested the outcome was.
41. Huntington, *The Third Wave*.
42. Lindberg 'The Power of Elections', 37.
43. Three constituencies reflect safe-havens for the two dominant parties in their geographical strongholds. Kwabre, in the heartland of the Ashanti region for the NPP and Ho West in the Volta region for the NDC respectively. Akim Swedru in the Eastern Region is another 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; Lindberg and Morrison 'Exploring Voter Alignments in Africa'. Three competitive districts 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

Ablekumah 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 is 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 occupants who often work in the capital but live outside. Evalue-Gwira is located in the Western Region and a traditional strong-hold 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, has been held by the NPP since 1997. Tamale Central constituency in the Northern Region is also relatively competitive but has been held by the NDC since 1993.

44. We understand clientelism in the original sense of the word defined as a patron–client, unequal power-relationship based on a system of particularistic and private reciprocity sustained by face-to-face exchanges. The delivery of ‘pork’ to a constituency thus is not clientelism but the provision of small-scale collective goods. See Powell, ‘Peasant Society and Clientelist Politics’, 412. See also Scott, ‘Patron–Client Politics and Political Change’, 91–113; Lande, ‘Political Clientelism in Political Studies’, 441; Kaufman, ‘The Patron–Client Concept’, 284–308.
45. For a detailed analysis of ‘persuadable voters’ that does include an analysis of ethnicity, see Weghorst and Lindberg, ‘Are Swing Voters Instruments of Democracy’.
46. 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.
47. Lindberg and Morrison, ‘Exploring Voter Alignments in Africa’; Lindberg and Morrison, ‘Are African Voters Really Ethnic or Clientelistic?’
48. Shefter, *Political Parties and the State*.
49. Lindberg, ‘It’s Our Time to “Chop”’; Lindberg, ‘What Accountability Pressures Do MPs in Africa Face’.

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