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Working Paper No. 106

**IS CLIENTELISM AT WORK IN
AFRICAN ELECTIONS? A STUDY OF
VOTING BEHAVIOR IN KENYA AND
ZAMBIA**

by Daniel J. Young

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Daniel J. Young is the Afrobarometer Post-doctoral Research Fellow at the Department of Political Science, Michigan State University.

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Is Clientelism at Work in African Elections? A Study of Voting Behavior in Kenya and Zambia

Abstract

In this study I challenge the notion that personalism and clientelism structure voting behavior in Africa. Using a unique combination of data sources --- survey responses from the Afrobarometer project merged with constituency-level election returns --- I test the relative power of two interpersonal, clientelistic interactions between voters and members of parliament (MPs), vs. how often MPs visit their constituency, in predicting election outcomes. Consistent with the argument that voters are more interested in local public goods than private goods, I find that neither being offered a gift in return for a vote, nor being in direct contact with an MP makes voters more likely to support their MP, but that visiting the constituency helps an incumbent's re-election bid. These results contribute to a burgeoning agenda on voting behavior in Africa that focuses on the agency of individual voters.

Clientelism and its Related Concepts in Africa

African politics is quite commonly characterized as clientelistic.¹ This characterization evolved from the concept of “neo-patrimonialism,” discussed widely during Africa's post-colonial authoritarian era.² As authoritarian rulers controlled access to office, neo-patrimonialism was a system where politicians are given jobs in exchange for service to the ruler (Young and Turner 1985).

When most African countries moved to multi-party democratic competition, it would now be the voters, rather than the ruler, who would provide office to politicians. Nevertheless, the central idea that political power would come from direct, personal exchanges continued. Van de Walle argued that “political authority in Africa is based on the giving and granting of favors, in an endless series of dyadic exchanges that go from the village level to the highest reaches of the central state” (van de Walle 2001: 51). Further clarifying clientelism in Africa's multi-party era, Lindberg says that “patron-client relations are primarily about providing material resources in exchange for personal loyalty,” and refers to African MPs as needing to employ such practices as “attending to individuals' school fees, electricity and water bills, funeral and wedding expenses; or distributing cutlasses and other tools for agriculture, or even handing of ‘chop-money’ (small cash sums) to constituents” (Lindberg 2003: 123-4). Similar arguments and accounts are echoed widely in the literature cited above.

There are several different variations of clientelism³, and all involve a mutually beneficial exchange between a patron and clients. In its loosest form, clientelism is what scholars of other regions simply refer to as constituency service. In this conception clientelism need not involve it personal exchanges, e.g. Robert Byrd has bridges built in West Virginia and is routinely re-elected. An intermediate form of clientelism would involve a hierarchy starting with elites who have access to government funds. These elites then filter the funds through more local intermediaries, and thus this form of clientelism would similarly not rely on direct, personal exchanges. What I wish to take issue with is clientelism in its personalistic form, particularly as involving the “dyadic exchanges” mentioned above, which in my estimation has been the most common type of clientelism alleged in Africa. Lindberg and Morrison state it clearly: “Clientelistic voting ... is dependent on non-public particularistic, often individualized, exchanges of private goods in return for political loyalty” (Lindberg and Morrison 2008: 101).

In this study I challenge two implications of this particular definition of clientelism for voting behavior: first, that voters expect personal benefits from their elected officials; and second, that personal interaction with politicians shapes decisions in the ballot booth. It is important to note that this study is not the first to challenge the reach of clientelism. If I find evidence that ordinary voters do not play their assumed role in clientelistic accounts of African politics, it will follow van de Walle's (2003, 2007a) arguments that clientelism in Africa happens largely at the elite level.

Voters' Expectations

The basic premise behind clientelistic networks is logical. Voters should certainly enjoy direct benefits, and upon receiving them, would plausibly feel indebted to the giving politician and should want to support him in the hopes of receiving future benefits. However, there are two major reasons to doubt that these personal networks would characterize electoral competition. First, the ability to connect personally with, and deliver benefits to, anything but a fraction of one's constituency is unlikely. Typically, there are at least 50,000 people living in a given electoral constituency, and sometimes well over 100,000. Both politicians, and more importantly for my claim, voters, understand that an MP cannot hope to reach most of his constituents with personal benefits, be it patronage in the form of a public sector job, school fees, or a direct handout of cash or food. Secondly, most “favors” are a one shot deal, and while practices such as paying school fees or buying

¹ The literature that either centers on, or addresses, clientelism is huge. See, for example Bayart (1989), Berman (1998), Bratton and van de Walle (1997), Callaghy (1984), Chabal and Daloz (1999), Fatton (1992), Jackson and Rosberg (1982), Le Vine (1980).

² Roughly demarcated by the early 1960s through the early 1990s

³ See van de Walle 2007a for a discussion of this.

coffins undoubtedly take place (we will see evidence of that below), I would argue that voters recognize the utility of development projects as better solutions to improving their living standards. These shortcomings are consistent with an underlying argument that I would like to offer --- it i.e. that voters will look for an MP that can deliver public goods, rather than private goods.⁴ Voters may indeed ask for personal favors when possible, but I argue that this will not drive voting behavior because voters do not expect favors. And thus, I expect that voting behavior will be shaped by voters' assessment of how dedicated an MP is to the constituency.

In the second round of Afrobarometer surveys, voters in 16 countries were asked an open-ended question: “In your opinion, what are the most important responsibilities of your member of parliament?” The responses shown in Table 1 make clear that very few African citizens expect their MP to do something it for them personally (responses below the dashed line), but rather expect general representation and the delivery of public goods (responses above the dashed line).⁵

Table 1: Public Opinion on MP Responsibilities in Africa

<u>Response:</u>	Raw Number	%
Represent the people	4067	17.53
Deliver Development	2575	11.1
Improve infrastructure	2173	9.37

Help the poor	494	2.13
Give loans/help poor people get loans	55	0.24
Assist communities or individuals w/fundraising	53	0.23
Provide food/ensures access to food	42	0.18
Help needy w/school fees	37	0.16
Spend their own money in the constituency	32	0.14
<hr/>		
N=23,197		

While the most common response was a basic expectation of the democratic process, i.e. to be represented, the next two most popular responses showed that a large portion of Africans view delivering development as the most important responsibility their MP. Development itself was the second most popular response, and nearly as many cited improving infrastructure as the MP's most important responsibility. It is also worth noting that the majority of responses that followed infrastructure in popularity also cited specific public goods like improving the water supply, and implementing health and education policies. Below that dashed line I report responses that could be interpreted as consistent with clientelistic networks defined in terms of individualistic (i.e. non-divisible) benefits. Even taking a liberal approach to what constitutes a clientelistic response, it is clear that very few Africans consider their MP's most important responsibility in terms of providing private goods. Combining such responses amounts to just over 3% of Africans polled.⁶

There are two main concerns with taking these data as a clear rejection of clientelism and personalism. First, a direct test of clientelism would call for a slightly re-worded question. Whereas the Afrobarometer survey question asks citizens their opinion about an MP's responsibilities, a more exact wording would ask about what citizens expect from their MP. Second, it's possible that respondents who would have otherwise

⁴ While many of that number will be under voting age, often times the favors that voting-age citizens would want is for the young, e.g. help with school fees.

⁵ There were 58 different responses given in total. The vast majority of these made up between 0 and 1% of the total, and referred to policies such as health, education, national security, electricity, and housing.

⁶ Note that 825 citizens (3.56%) offered the response “make laws,” which is probably the most accurate, constitutionally speaking.

answered in terms of individual benefits might censor themselves, feeling that such a response would be seen as inappropriate. These cautions noted, the results are suggestive that voters see their MPs as representatives, and agents who should deliver public, rather than private, goods.

Before moving on to the cases and data I use in this study, and more rigorous tests of clientelism, I should further clarify my conceptualization by referencing one of the most well-known studies of clientelism in Africa. Using data from a field experiment testing for clientelism in Benin, Wantchekon (2003) couches his findings in terms of African voters responding to clientelistic appeals more so than public policy appeals. However, he designs his experiment such that the clientelistic campaign appeal “would take the form of a specific promise to the village, for example, for government patronage jobs or local public goods, such as establishing a new local university or providing financial support for local fisherman or cotton producers” (Wantchekon 2003: 409). The public policy campaign appeal would stress the same issues as the clientelistic message, such as education, infrastructure development, and health care. But they would differ in that the former stressed the issue as part of a national program, while the latter stressed the issue as a specific project to transfer government resources to the region or village. That he found the “clientelistic” message more effective I take as supportive of the idea that voters seek local resource distribution in a context that lacks competing policy programs on the national level. Thus, clientelism as the provision of local public goods is something I do not challenge here. Rather I take issue with clientelism as system of dyadic exchanges between patrons and clients.

MP Activity and Voting Behavior in Kenya and Zambia

For some time, a major dilemma facing analysts of African electoral politics was the lack of systematic data on voter's opinions and observations. With the development of the Afrobarometer project, we now have such data from countries around the continent. To offer a more direct test of the clientelist's claim that direct contact MPs structures voting behavior, and of my alternative hypothesis that voters look for evidence of an MPs dedication to the constituency, I offer a novel combination of data sources. I map survey responses from the Afrobarometer onto electoral constituencies so as to determine which respondents are linked to a given MP. This allows me to test how voter's relationship with, or assessment of, MPs shapes their voting behavior. The third round of Afrobarometer surveys (carried out in 2005) was the first in which respondents were asked both about their personal contact with MPs, and about their MPs attention to the community. Kenya and Zambia are two countries included in Round 3 where an election followed closely after the survey, and this timing is important because, with the majority of the electoral term having passed voters can give a more informed answers about their MP's performance. Kenya convened its fourth multiparty election (in the current, post-Cold War era of democratization) in 2007, and Zambia its fourth in 2006. They are also countries where no one party dominates, and thus voters have a plausible set of alternatives. In a country with a dominant party (e.g. Tanzania), there is only one plausible winner, and this can hamstring voters who might otherwise vote against an incumbent. For these reasons, I draw on data from Kenya and Zambia.

In 1991, Frederick Chiluba and the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) ousted the former ruling party (UNIP) and its longtime leader (Kenneth Kaunda) by huge margins in both the presidential and legislative elections. Following that election, which was widely taken as a referendum on change, the MMD saw its control in parliament decrease, and by the third multiparty election in 2001 they no longer controlled a majority of legislative seats. In the lead up to 2006 the incumbent president Levy Mwanawasa (MMD) faced a heated race with Michael Sata of the Patriotic Front (PF), and several new parties had gained strength (and some coalesced) to challenge the MMD for control of parliament. While Kenya began its multiparty era with an election in 1992, major change came with the defeat of the Kenya African National Union party (KANU) at the hands of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) in 2002. However, it quickly became clear that the NARC was little more than an electoral alliance, and in the lead up to the 2006 election, many MPs from the NARC splintered off into new and existing parties. Most notable amongst these splits was the formation of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) party, whose leader, Raila Odinga (a NARC

defector), was in a heated race for the presidency with incumbent Mwai Kibaki.

Data and Tests

In this section I will discuss how I operationalize the two competing hypotheses, i.e. on the one hand that direct, interpersonal interaction with MPs causes voters to support them because of clientelistic exchange, or on the other hand that voters judge their MP based on the MP's attention to the constituency, and I will also describe the measurement of other variables in the model. Summary statistics for all of these variables are listed in the appendix. I use two separate dependent variables to measure support for an incumbent MP. The first is the change in the MP's vote share from the election preceding the Round 3 Afrobarometer survey to the election following the survey. The second, which contains less information but is nevertheless interesting for predictive purposes, is a dichotomous measure of whether or not the incumbent was re-elected (using the same two elections).

The dependent variable and central independent variables are drawn from separate data sources, and this helps overcome some common concerns surrounding survey data. While I am using voters' interactions with, and observations about, their MP to explain voting behavior, how they vote is measured by actual constituency-level election returns. This avoids two potential drawbacks. The first is that, should a study use survey responses to measure voting behavior (e.g. "if the election were held tomorrow, how would you vote?"),⁷ then the dependent variable is it speculative rather than it actual. Second, if both the dependent and explanatory variables are drawn from the same survey, there is a risk that they are not independent of one another. As far as I know, this is only the second study in Africa to use this combination of data sources, Moehler and Lindberg (forthcoming) being the first.

As the level of observation is the MP (and his or her electoral constituency), I operationalize the central hypotheses by averaging the responses across all voters who fall within a given constituency.⁸ I draw on two separate questions in an attempt to test for a clientelistic effect on voting. The first question reads: "And during the 20xx national election, how often (if ever) did a candidate or someone from a political party offer you something, like food or a gift, in return for your vote?" and the answer choices are "never," "once or twice," "a few times," or "often." The second question, which is slightly less direct though nevertheless useful, reads: "During the past year, how often have you contacted [a member of parliament] for help to solve a problem or to give them your views?" The answer choices are "never," "only once," "a few times," and "often." The Afrobarometer surveys then asked a follow up question about why respondents contacted their MP, and it is worth noting that the most common response (over 50%) was to tell their MP "about personal problems," which lends credibility to the use of this question as a test of clientelism. The next most common response was to tell their MP "about community or public problems." While I do not consider the seeking out, and provision, of public goods as clientelistic, by allowing responses from those who made contact to discuss public issues to count with those seeking private help, I am biasing the test it against my expectation (which is that clientelism will not structure voting patterns). These were the two questions on the Afrobarometer survey best suited to test for an effect of personal, clientelistic networks on voting behavior.

To capture voters' perceptions about their MP's attention to the district I draw on this question: "How much time does your Member of Parliament spend in this constituency?" The answer choices here are "never," "at least once a year," "at least once a month," "at least weekly," and "here almost all of the time." This question is less than ideal in that it does not capture how successful voters perceive an MP to be in actually

⁷ Examples of studies of voting behavior in Africa that measure voting with survey responses to this type of question, see Battle and Seely (2007), or Bratton and Kimenyi (2008).

⁸ While the Afrobarometer provides researchers with a previously unavailable opportunity to test the effect of public opinion on voting behavior, the number of citizens sampled in any given electoral constituency is sometimes small. In the two countries included here, the range is between 8 and 48 respondents, and this brings up the issue of reliability. While there are potential ways of dealing with this problem --- for instance resampling to generate new standard errors for otherwise unreliable estimates, or establishing a cutoff for reliability wherein constituencies with too small an N are dropped --- for now I simply note the concern.

delivering development. Nevertheless, should variation in answers to this question account for variation in voting patterns, the most logical inference is that voters reward an MP's attention to the constituency, which says something about an MP's effort bring development. It is important to note that, while logically related, responses to the questions about personal interaction with MPs and MPs visiting the constituency are only modestly correlated.⁹

In addition to the central variables of interest I control for a common predictor of voting behavior, that is changes in citizens' livelihoods. This is typically measured by national-level changes in the economy, but as the Afrobarometer asked respondents how their living conditions compared to one year ago, I use this as a more direct test.¹⁰ Another potentially relevant factor affecting electoral support is the strength of voters' partisan identification (party ID). It is often the case that in certain areas of the country, voters closely identify themselves with a political party, or put another way, political parties have stronghold areas. Relative to the test at hand, the difference between stronghold constituencies and non-stronghold constituencies is that voters in the former may be less swayed by incumbent's actions (be they clientelistic or otherwise), as party ID trumps candidate particulars. Fortunately the Afrobarometer surveys asked voters if they feel close to a political party, measured 1 if they say yes, and 0 otherwise. Again needing to average responses across all those who fall within an electoral constituency (as my dependent variable is measured at the level of the MP), this measure should capture differences between stronghold areas and non-stronghold areas.¹¹ I also control for the (change in) number of candidates running, as more candidates in a race will bring down an MP's vote share, *ceteris paribus*. Finally, I include a country dummy as various country-level factors (e.g. the overall climate of public opinion towards an incumbent government) could affect voting behavior differently in Kenya and Zambia.

Table 2 shows the results with respect to the change in an incumbent's vote share from one election to the next. Model 1 shows that the offering of gifts for votes does not determine voting behavior, at least in terms of support for an MP's re-election bid. The estimate is positive, but does not approach any conventional level of statistical significance. Similarly, contact with an MP (shown in Model 2) is not significantly related to voter support, and the sign is even negative (such that more contact with an MP would lead to lower support). Looking at the summary statistics (Table 4 in the appendix), these variables are skewed (highly skewed in the case of the contact variable) towards respondents never being offered a gift by, and never being in contact with, their MP, and so the lack of predictive power here should not be surprising.

Unlike the clientelism variables, the more frequently an MP visits his or her constituency, the more likely s/he is to be re-elected.¹² The estimate in Model 1 narrowly misses statistical significance at the .05 level, and in Model 2 the estimate is significant below the .05 level. By way of interpretation, the difference between MPs whose voters report them as never visiting the constituency and MPs whose voters, on average, say that they visit at least once a year, is between 7 and 8 percentage points increase in vote share. These results from Kenya and Zambia reflect that a common grievance that field researchers hear in Africa --- "our

⁹ They are correlated at .34. And when modeled separately, the results are similar to those shown below. I interpret the lack of a stronger correlation to the infrequency of direct interaction between citizens and MPs. So while an MP may visit his constituency, he will not have personal contact with most of his constituents on any given visit.

¹⁰ Responses to this question and to the question of how respondents viewed national economic conditions are strongly correlated (.77) and lead to similar results when substituted for one another in the models below.

¹¹ The summary statistics reflect that Party ID spans the full range, where in some constituencies no respondents feel close to a political party, while in others all voters all voters feel close to a party.

¹² The Afrobarometer surveys also asked respondents, immediately preceding this question, how often it should an MP visit the constituency. This allows us to test for a gap in expectation, where those who expect more should be more dissatisfied than those who expect less, holding constant how often the MP actually visits. While taking on the appropriate sign, positive (such that when there is little or no gap MPs gain greater electoral support than when they do not meet expectations), the estimate fails to achieve any conventional level of statistical significance. This is surprising, and the only plausible explanations I can offer is that respondents inaccurately report their expectation (likely overstating) of how often an MP should visit, and/or voters are most impressed by what the MP actually does (regardless of their stated normative priors).

MP never visits us, he is too busy with his own affairs in the capital” --- is relevant at the polls. The results also parallel a recent set of findings in Malawi (Afrobarometer 2006). And finally they gel with what Lindberg and Morrison (2008) found in Ghana, namely that voters are much more apt to use it evaluative reasoning when making their choices than they are to look for direct, personal linkages.

Table 2: MP Behavior and Voter Support in Kenya and Zambia

	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>
Gift for Vote	5.341 [-4.416] p=.229	
Contact w/ MP		-5.413 [8.197] p=.510
Frequency of MP Visit	7.407 [3.783] p=.053	7.81 [3.992] p=.047
Living Conditions	2.914 [4.601] p=.528	0.765 [4.938] p=.877
Party ID	-6.424 [10.011] p=.522	-6.055 [10.175] p=.553
Change in # of Candidates	-1.114 [.431] p=.011	-1.021 [.412] p=.004
Kenya dummy	-13.631 [6.648] p=.042	-10.198 [5.885] p=.086
	N=129	N=129

Dependent variable is the change in an incumbents vote share;
Robust standard errors in brackets;
Method of estimation is ordinary least squares (OLS) regression

Surprisingly, voters' change in living conditions is not statistically related to support for an incumbent MP. The sign on the variable is positive, as expected, however the estimate is not distinguishable from zero. While surprising, this certainly does not dismiss the possibility of economic voting, as voters may reward or punish the incumbent president and/or governing party, rather than their MP (what is being tested here), for the economy. On this point, Bratton and Bhavnani (2008) found that, among other (ethnic and strategic) considerations, Africans do engage in economic voting with respect to presidential elections. Also surprising was the result on party ID. The estimate was negative, such that those feeling attached to a party were more

likely than those unattached to punish an incumbent. However the standard error is nearly twice the estimate, and thus the confidence interval around this estimate includes both positive and negative values (and is statistically indistinguishable from zero). An unsurprising result is that an incumbent's vote share decreases as the number of candidates contesting in the constituency increases. Finally, Kenyan voters punished incumbents much more heavily than Zambian voters. The models estimate between a 10 and 14 percentage point drop for Kenyan MPs relative to Zambian MPs, and this is likely due several different factors. The governing Rainbow Coalition broke apart between the 2002 and 2007 elections, and the government-proposed Constitutional Referendum was defeated, both events coming with significant infighting among governing incumbents. Importantly, these events followed an election in which Kenyans voted out the longtime dominant KANU party, and ushered in a new coalition with high hopes for positive change. When the Rainbow Coalition showed itself to be little more than an electoral vehicle and largely failed to deliver on major campaign promises such as reducing corruption (Afrobarometer 2006) and economic improvement (Afrobarometer 2006), these high hopes seem to have been unmet.

Table 3: MP Behavior and Voter Support in Kenya and Zambia

	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Change in Predicted Probability</u>
Contact w/ MP	-1.694 [.847] p=.046	- 30%
Frequency of MP Visit	0.598 [.36] p=.097	34%
Living Conditions	0.26 [.473] p=.582	
Party ID	0.632 [.999] p=.527	
Change in # of Candidates	-0.044 [.054] p=.414	
Kenya dummy	0.05 [.659] p=.939	
N=129		

Dependent variable is the change in an incumbents vote share;
 Robust standard errors in brackets;
 Method of estimation is ordinary least squares (OLS) regression

Table 3 shows estimates of Model 2 from above tested now on a dichotomous dependent variable --- whether or not an incumbent is re-elected. The first column shows the results of a logistic regression model, but

because of the awkwardness of interpreting coefficients in log-odds form, the final column shows predicted probabilities¹³ for variables that achieve any level of conventional statistical significance. With a collapsed dependent variable, the patterns of significance are slightly different from above. While the negative sign remains, the contact that voters have with an MP here actually makes re-election for that incumbent significantly less likely. When voters (on average) contacted their MP once in the last year,¹⁴ incumbents are 30% less likely to be re-elected than when voters never contacted their MP. This surprising result may be due to one or more of several factors. First, there may be a selection effect where it is the already dissatisfied voters who are most likely to seek out their MP, and thus the contact variable is just a proxy for existing dissatisfaction. Second, it may be that the quality of these (relatively new) politicians is low, and so the more contact voters have with an MP the more they realize their representative's shortcomings. As a final and related explanation, it may be that MPs are failing to deliver on campaign promises, and those who are in contact with their MP are the most likely to be aware of this failure.

As in the OLS tests of Table 2, the frequency of MPs visits to the constituency was a positive and significant determinant of support for an incumbent, though now the level of significance has dropped to just below the .10 level. In this case, MPs who visited their constituency at least once a year were 37% more likely than those who never visited to be re-elected. Party ID was again an insignificant predictor, and the change in number of candidates was again negative, but in this test is not significant. Looking back at the OLS estimate for this variable, while it was statistically significant, the effect was not substantively large. For each extra candidate, an incumbent's vote share only decreased by 1%, which is not big enough to make re-election significantly less probable. That the Kenya variable, which estimated Kenyan MPs to lose between 10 and 14% more in vote share compared to Zambian MPs, is insignificant can be explained by the large difference in previous election margins. Kenyan MPs elected in 2002 averaged 62% of the vote, while Zambian MPs elected in 2001 averaged just 39% of the vote. So while Kenyan MPs lost more of their vote share, they had a larger cushion and were thus no more likely to be voted out than Zambian MPs.

Conclusions

In reference to Africa's recent era of multi-party electoral competition, van de Walle notes that a regular claim is that democratization increases clientelism, wherein "greater competition around elections fuels the buying and selling of votes..." (van de Walle 2007b). He then states his own skepticism about this claim. The study I have offered here gives concrete support for such skepticism. A crucial distinction that I have tried to draw in this study is between voters' expectations for public vs. private goods. I have shown evidence that direct contact between voters and MPs --- the means by which many conceptions of clientelism are supposed to work --- does not help an incumbent. This is true both when voters were offered a gift in exchange for their support, and when there was simply a meeting between voters and MPs (in this latter case, the interactions even seem to hurt the MP's re-election bid). However I did find evidence that an MP's behavior matters for continued electoral support. In particular, I found suggestive, though not overwhelming, evidence that an MP's presence in their electoral constituencies impresses voters. Quite apart from what the MP does for them personally, voters seem to reward a representative who appears committed to look out for those who put them in office. And while I cannot make the direct link that MPs who spend more time in their constituency do better to deliver development projects, voters are at least rewarding the attention an MP pays to their constituency. Broadly speaking, this study is among the first to argue (at least in explicit terms) that voters in Africa are more interested public goods than private goods. Both the survey responses detailed above and the statistical results lend support of this claim, particularly in terms of the factors that will structure voting behavior.

¹³ Predicted probabilities show the change in predicted outcome given some change in the independent variable in question, holding all other independent variables from the model at their mean. In the case of Table 3 I use minimum to maximum changes in the independent variables.

¹⁴ While some voters reported contacting their MP a few times, or often, the overwhelming majority reported never contacting their MP, which resulted in an average of once in the last year being the maximum value.

Some who have written about the prevalence of clientelistic networks might read these results as consistent with their theories. Returning to a point mentioned above, I must concede that for those who view clientelism as equivalent to constituency service, this study provides no challenge. Indeed it provides support of that notion, and in this way, the results are not shocking. Part of the contribution here was to further clarify what is meant by clientelism, and then as a result, move forward with a clearer set of tests. And as there was a clear sense in which many scholars of African politics viewed clientelism in terms of interpersonal interactions. My goal was to challenge the assumption that personalistic networks were underlying support for politicians in multiparty electoral regimes. At least in the tests offered here, which were of course limited by the wording of survey questions and the number of observations, I found that assumption to be unsafe. So while politicians undoubtedly at times engage in clientelistic behaviors like giving personal gifts and favors, and voters accept these offerings, such interactions do not determine patterns of electoral support.¹⁵

It is worth one additional note of caution, that in this study I did not deal with the possibility that clientelism happens through intermediaries. It is possible that mass clientelism is at work, but rather than being characterized by interactions between voters and politicians seeking office, some intermediaries such as political parties drum up support for their candidates by delivering goods. I am aware of some anecdotal evidence where parties do act as intermediaries, handing out items like t-shirts at campaign rallies. Nevertheless, one of my fundamental objections remains, i.e. these practices can hardly reach enough constituents to be the primary determinant of election outcomes.

In terms of the broader research agenda on voting behavior in Africa, which is quite thin, Bratton and Bhavnani argue that “voting by Africans is best understood with reference to the agency of individual voters” (Bratton and Bhavnani 2008: 35). I echo this argument, and along with Bratton and Bhavnani, and Lindberg and Morrison (2008), I have used localized data in a search of broader lessons. My findings dovetail with both studies in offering the broader lesson that African voters are strategic. This study hinged on the combining of individual-level survey data with actual election returns --- a fairly novel approach in studies of African politics --- and this allowed me to operationalize and test claims that were previously left to assumption. And while future research will need to expand the scope of cases given the size and diversity of the region we seek to generalize about, the breadth of the Afrobarometer Project has paved the way for combining localized analyses with cross-national research.

¹⁵ See Bratton (2008) for an exceptional pattern wherein vote buying was related to partisan voting in Nigeria.

Appendix

Table 4: Summary Statistics

	Obs	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
<u>Dependent Variables</u>					
Change in Vote Share	129	-22.152	25.948	-82.59	50.08
Re-elected	129	0.333	0.473	0	1
<u>Independent Variables</u>					
Gift for Vote	168	0.624	0.501	0	1.875
Contact w/ MP	168	0.209	0.2188	0	1
Frequency of MP Visit	168	1.126	0.544	0	2.625
Living Conditions	168	2.833	0.425	1.75	3.688
Party ID	168	0.6	0.197	0	1
Change in # of Candidates	153	2.621	7.008	-7	25

* Note that the statistics listed for the first four independent variables are averages taken across all respondents in a particular electoral constituency.

The answers for respondents having direct contact with an MP are coded: 0=Never, 1=Only once, 2=A few times, 3=Often, and thus the mean response is between never and only once;

The answers for respondents being offered a gift in return for a vote are coded 0=Never, 1=Only once, 2=A few times, 3=Often, and thus the mean response is between never and only once;

The answers for how often an MP visits his/her constituency are coded: 0=Never, 1=At Least Once a Year, 2=At Least Once a Month, 3=At Least Weekly, 4=She/ He is Here Almost All the Time, and thus the mean response is slightly greater than once a year;

The answers for respondents' change in living conditions (compared to 12 months ago) are coded: 1=Much worse, 2=Worse, 3=Same, 4=Better, 5=Much better, and thus the mean response is slightly worse than the same;

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