Identity, Poverty, and Electoral Accountability in Africa's Democracies

A comparative Study

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Abstract

Do voters in Africa's new democracies hold leaders accountable for the results of their past actions? Are heads of state punished or rewarded in a fashion that credibly signals that stealing, poor policy choices, and bad leadership are not tolerated? Experts remain sceptical. While it is increasingly acknowledged that some African voters consider issues such as the national economy or the management of schools and roads, many scholars doubt that electoral reactions are strong enough to replace bad leaders and effectively incentivise good governance.

This book presents the most comprehensive investigation of the matter so far. Based on a sanctioning model of electoral accountability, the study revolves around two critical conditions for effective accountability. Voters should (1) form unbiased performance perceptions and (2) act upon their judgements by re-electing successful leaders and voting against bad performers. The book combines two in-depth case studies of Ghana and Uganda and a comparison across 16 countries, drawing on altogether 59 nationally representative surveys. The case studies trace performance perceptions and voting intentions of relevant ethnic and partisan groups over a period of more than ten years, on and off campaign times. The comparative perspective verifies the generalizability of findings and sheds light on the distribution of accountability pressures across Africa.

Important empirical and theoretical contributions accrue from the new perspectives. First, the country study of Ghana provides new persuasive evidence of effective accountability in Africa by demonstrating that all relevant ethnic and partisan constituencies contribute to the sanctioning signal, which creates strong incentives for leaders to pursue programmatic strategies to maximise the impact and the reach of developmental policies.

Secondly, the work underlines the growing relevance of partisan identities in the region's young systems. Partisanship is found to have a substantially stronger influence than ethnicity on performance perceptions and often overrides ethnic leanings. In some countries, most notably Ghana and Malawi, the study documents high levels of partisan polarization that cut across ethnic divisions. The observed patterns strongly indicate partisan-motivated reasoning and the emergence of affective partisan identities. By contrast, biases for coethnics are surprisingly rare across the 59 surveys. Only in three of 16 countries (Ghana, South Africa, and Malawi), ethnic identities have a robust and temporally stable influence on popular performance perceptions.

Thirdly, the study highlights daily experiences of poverty as an often-overlooked source of information. I present robust evidence that people confronted with shortages in basic necessities tend to evaluate office holders critically, even if these are copartisans or coethnics. The finding indicates that personal exposure to poverty directly informs perceptions of government performance. Accordingly, poor people should not be underestimated as a critical force on election day; their judgements seem less prone to identity biases than those of citizens in relative economic security. Other informational indicators, including news consumption and political interest, show no bias-reducing effect.

Last but not least, the comparative perspective illuminates the distribution of biases and the variation in the magnitude of performance voting across Africa. The results highlight that some conflicting findings in the literature are attributable to systematic cross-country differences. Performance voting is strongest in states with keenly contested elections. Interestingly, minor democratic deficits and low development show no adverse effect on electoral accountability within the 16-country sample.

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Map of Africa

Countries and Number of Surveys in this Study

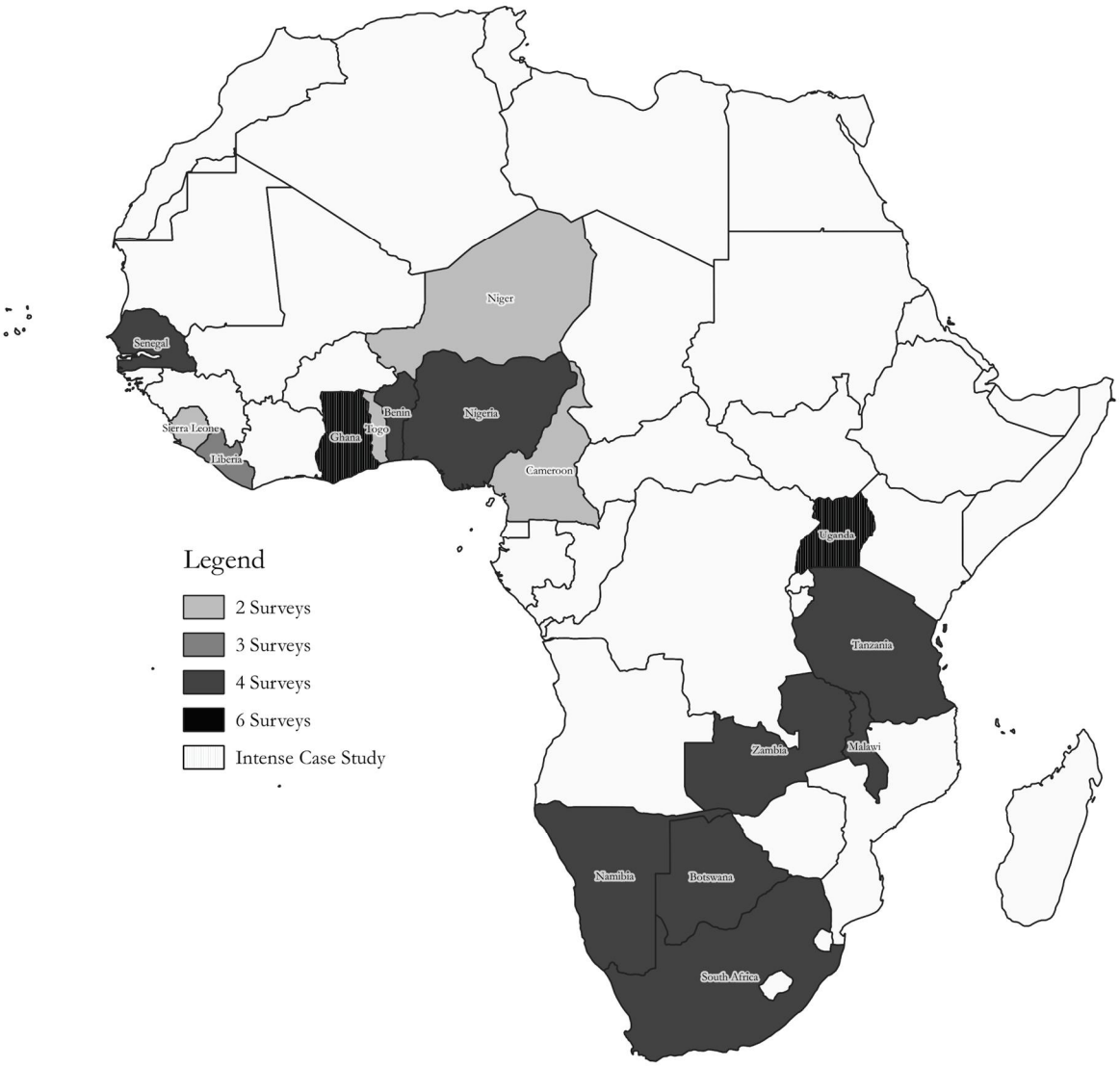

Figure 1-1: Map of Africa showing the Countries and the Number of Surveys considered in this Study. Data: Afrobarometer Rounds 3 – 6 and two Pre-Election Surveys from Ghana and Uganda each.

1 Introduction

Do voters in Africa's new democracies hold national leaders to account for their past developmental performance? Are heads of states punished or rewarded in a fashion that credibly signals that stealing, poor policy choices, and bad leadership are not tolerated? The present book offers a comprehensive investigation of retrospective performance voting in Africa to shed light on these questions. Through two case studies of Ghana and Uganda and a comparative analysis of 16 countries, I trace the voting behaviour of electorates and selected ethnic and partisan groups over more than ten years to establish whether the management of developmental key issues such as jobs, health, education, and infrastructure has consequences for the voting preferences of African citizens.

The region south of the Sahara experienced a radical political transformation in recent decades. Since 1989, more than 40 countries have introduced multiparty elections. Some observers view the process as a 'second liberation' after three disappointing decades of independent nation-states in Africa, characterised by authoritarian and personalised rule, violent takeovers, and developmental downturn (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997: 61-95). By the end of the 1980s, most of the continent's societies were poorer than at independence, and public services had collapsed in many countries (cf. Easterly and Levine 1997, Cheeseman 2015: 89). The situation led to rising pressure from citizens, civil societies, and international donors, forcing most regimes to concede democratic reforms and (re-)introduce multiparty elections.

But can electoral competition change Africa's inauspicious political trajectory for the better and stimulate developmental progress? Theories of electoral accountability suggest it can (Barro 1973, Fearon 1999, Besley 2006). Elections give citizens the power to dismiss poorly performing leaders. Repeated electoral punishment conveys to political elites that they need to dedicate themselves to furthering the public interest to get re-elected. Following this logic, political scientists link electoral competition to many positive outcomes, including good governance, economic growth, better public service, and inclusive development (Besley 2005, Besley, et al. 2010, Harding and Stasavage 2014, Dash and Mukherjee 2015, Rosenzweig 2015, Carbone, et al. 2016, Carbone and Pellegata 2020, Harding 2020b).

However, regarding African politics, it remains highly contentious whether voters set the right incentives to reap the benefits of electoral competition. Although there is growing evidence that certain shares of the electorate consider the economy and the supply of developmental public goods in their voting decisions (Weghorst and Lindberg 2013, Long and Gibson 2015, Harding 2020a), many experts doubt that the electoral feedback is sufficiently strong to effectively incentivise leaders to pursue the common interest and choose development-enhancing policies.

Sceptics contend that electoral competition may rather reinforce inefficient geographic targeting along ethnic lines (Ejdemyr, et al. 2018, Nathan 2019a). Others point to informational deficits

and expect political evaluations to reflect ethnic and partisan identities instead of critical performance perceptions (Conroy-Krutz 2012, Carlson 2015, 2016a, Adida, et al. 2017, Platas and Raffler 2021). Analysts, moreover, fear that voters prefer private clientelist goods over developmental progress so that electoral competition exacerbates the misappropriation of public funds for personal gifts and cash handouts (Lindberg 2010, Ferree and Long 2016, Kramon 2018).

This book sets out to reassess accountability pressures in Africa's new democracies and address open questions in a new analysis of 59 representative public opinion surveys from 16 countries. The study departs from earlier works in several important ways. Firstly, it disaggregates electorates and calculates group-level effects to unravel the make-up of the national sanctioning signal and offer fresh insights into the behaviour of ethnic and partisan identity groups. Secondly, the work presents the first large-scale empirical investigation of identity biases in Africa, illuminating to what extent ethnic and partisan allegiances undermine a critical review of government performance. Thirdly, the study adds a comparative cross-country perspective to the existing literature, revealing previously unknown differences across Africa that explain seemingly contradictory findings of previous works.

Remarkable insights accrue from the new perspectives. I find persuasive evidence of effective accountability in Ghana but extremely weak performance voting in Uganda. I find astonishingly impactful individual alignments with national political parties but surprisingly few signs of ethnic biases in performance perceptions. Most remarkably, I find that poor people are more inclined to form critical performance perceptions than voters in relative economic security. Poverty trumps identity bias because vulnerable classes are invariably confronted with the repercussions of public (mis-)management in their everyday lives.

The findings are overall encouraging regarding prospects for accountability in Africa. For several countries, the results strongly indicate that citizens vote for development. Especially among poor people, urgent desires for better schools, hospitals, infrastructure, and more jobs seem to be a key factor in the voting decision, often valued higher than ethnic allegiances, partisan loyalties, and vote-buying offers.

However, there are grave differences across countries. In uncompetitive systems, most notably Uganda, links between performance perceptions and vote choice seem too weak to expect a relevant impact on election outcomes. A concern is, moreover, the rise of powerful partisan allegiances. The study indicates that partisanship can quickly become a dominant category of identification that strongly influences political beliefs and prevents a critical evaluation of government performance. Contrastingly, ethnicity seems not to be as much of an impediment to accountability as the literature suggests. Robust and consistent biases in favour of coethnics are surprisingly rare across the 16 countries under scrutiny.

The study's theoretical foundation is a retrospective sanctioning model of electoral accountability

(Barro 1973, Ferejohn 1986). Following this perspective, the core question is whether African electorates punish and reward national executive leaders for their past performance in developmental core areas. If they do so, the recurring sanctioning signal should credibly communicate to political elites that shirking and rent-seeking are not tolerated and effectively incentivise leaders to pursue common interest and development-enhancing policies (Fearon 1999, Besley 2006).

Based on the sanctioning model, the study investigates two critical conditions for effective accountability: Voters should (1) form unbiased performance perceptions and (2) act upon their judgements by re-electing successful leaders and voting against bad performers. An independent investigation is dedicated to both conditions. After laying down the study's general framework in *Chapters 2-4*, *Chapter 5* examines how identities and information interact in the formation of performance perceptions. Subsequently, *Chapter 6* tests whether performance perceptions translate into voting preferences and if politicised ethnic and partisan identity groups contribute to the performance signal. Finally, *Chapter 7* investigates contextual explanations for the variation between countries.

The research design combines two intensive country studies of Ghana and Uganda with a comparative perspective across 16 African states. The case studies follow relevant identity groups over more than ten years, providing unprecedented insights into the political behaviour of ethnic and partisan constituencies. The comparative perspective verifies the generalizability of findings and sheds light on the distribution of identity bias and accountability pressures across Africa.

Both country studies employ a series of 6 nationally representative surveys, consisting of Afrobarometer rounds 3-6 and two pre-election polls gathered before the 2011' Ugandan and the 2016' Ghanaian elections, respectively. The comparative perspective adds 47 Afrobarometer surveys from 14 more countries with regular ordered multiparty elections, bringing the total number of surveys to 59. The map on page VI gives an overview of countries and the number of surveys. Methodologically, the study uses various regression techniques, including OLS, Logistic, and Multilevel Mixed-Effects Models. To model conditional relationships and group-specific results, I use interaction effects and conditional predictions for sub-populations.

Interestingly, the two countries under in-depth scrutiny differ sharply regarding the overall state of accountability. Ghana's story provides a persuasive testimony of effective electoral control in Africa. Vote choices are closely tied to performance perceptions, and all relevant groups of the electorate contribute to the sanctioning signal. Ghanaian governments have little choice but to pursue at least partly programmatic strategies. To win elections, they need to maximise the reach and the impact of developmental policies.

Since the reintroduction of multiparty politics in 1992, Ghana has seen three turnovers. The last one occurred in 2016 when President John Mahama was voted out amid a dissatisfying term

marked by high inflation, severe problems in public service delivery, the loss of many jobs, and the first increase of poverty in Ghana's democratic history. The case study illustrates how support among the president's coethnics and copartisans crumbles during the crisis, which eventually leads to the removal of Mahama from office. Thanks to the pre-election surveys gathered by the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD), the external validity of findings is confirmed by an accurate prediction of the official election result at the national and the regional level.

Particularly remarkable is that poor people seem to be a decisive force in making accountability work in Ghana. People exposed to developmental shortages are more inclined to evaluate governments critically, even if the president is a copartisan or a coethnic. And often, they act upon their judgements by voting against incumbent governments. Poor people are clearly overrepresented among those who defect from ethnic and partisan allegiances to punish an incumbent. Against conventional expectations (Lipset 1959, Moore 1966, Inglehart and Welzel 2005), it is not the middle-class but citizens in more precarious conditions who hold leaders to account when they fail to deliver development.

Partisan identities, however, are a concern in Ghana. About 50% of the electorate identify with one of two major parties. And the opposing camps live in separate worlds at the dawn of the 2016 election with extremely polarised performance perceptions. It becomes clear that partisanship has grown to a powerful social identity in Ghana that cuts across ethno-regional lines. When ethnic and partisan identities are in conflict, partisanship consistently overrides ethnic leanings. Currently, the fact that at least poorer partisans remain critical ensures that electoral sanctioning remains effective. However, if partisan camps continue to grow and become even more polarised, Ghana's positive accountability record may be at stake.

The picture in the second focus country, Uganda, deviates sharply. The developmental performance of long-term incumbent Museveni seems to have little influence on citizens' voting preferences. Statistically significant effects in the national sample turn out to be negligible under deeper scrutiny. As in Ghana, more impoverished Ugandans also disregard ethnic and partisan allegiances in their performance evaluations and rate Museveni negatively. However, the weak linkage between performance perceptions and vote choices indicates that they hardly act upon their judgements in the ballot booth.

In comparative perspective, both states are not fully representative but represent the range of variation across Africa. The strength of performance voting in Ghana is unparalleled in the sample. Yet, the effects in several other countries, especially Malawi, Senegal and Zambia, are consistent and robust enough to expect a credible sanctioning signal. Uganda, by contrast, falls into a cluster of countries with weak voter reactions, which also includes Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Tanzania. The best predictor of performance voting across the 59 surveys is

competitiveness. A reasonable chance to vote out an incumbent seems to draw voter attention toward a government's developmental record. The analysis also finds some indication of a grievance asymmetry (Nannestad and Paldam 1997), i.e. stronger performance voting in times of crisis.

1.1 Key Contributions

The book makes four main contributions. First, it adds crucial new pieces of evidence to the literature on performance voting in Africa (Posner and Simon 2002, Bratton, et al. 2012, Weghorst and Lindberg 2013, Harding 2015, Long and Gibson 2015, Rhee 2021) by demonstrating that relevant ethnic and partisan groups contribute to electoral sanctioning, at least in more competitive systems. Previous analyses raised concerns of endogeneity and could not fully establish whether the performance signal is sufficient to disincentivise clientelist targeting (Carlson 2015, 2018a, Nathan 2019a). The group-level perspective removes such doubts. In the country study of Ghana, it becomes evident that performance voting in national executive elections cuts across ethnic and regional alignments. Especially during bad times, members of all relevant groups defect from ethnic and partisan allegiances to punish presidents for substandard management of developmental key areas.

Given the sanctioning signal's diverse make-up, Ghanaian governments are likely to resort to technocratic criteria of distribution to maximise the impact and reach of its developmental investments (De Mesquita, et al. 2003, Stokes, et al. 2013). Electoral accountability is effective in incentivising the pursuit of national development. However, scholars need to be cautious not to falsely overgeneralise Ghana, which represents one of the most commonly studied countries in the literature. The second case study of Uganda exemplifies a case of low accountability, and the comparison between the two is indicative of the range of variation across Africa.

A second core contribution is the disclosure of powerful partisan identities, adding new solid evidence to a growing literature hinting at independent partisan identities in Africa's young democracies (Michelitch 2015, Carlson 2016a, Harding and Michelitch 2019, Mattes and Krönke 2020). The present study's results indicate that partisan ties are not only relevant but supersede the influence of ethnicity in several countries.

In both focus cases, Ghana and Uganda, partisan biases in performance perceptions are stronger, more persistent, and prevail over ethnic loyalties in cases of competing identity configurations. Ahead of elections, partisan biases skyrocket in some countries, most notably Ghana and Malawi, whereas ethnic biases do not change compared with earlier surveys. Partisans are also more loyal at the ballot box, whereas members of supposedly biased ethnic groups often defect from ethnopolitical allegiances because of performance perceptions. It is essential to mention that the partisan groups in the focus countries are ethnically and regionally diverse. Consequently, partisan identification is neither merely a reflection of underlying ethnic divisions nor a product

of geographically targeted patronage.

The observations are more consistent with psychological (Campbell, et al. 1960, Greene 1999, Huddy, et al. 2015) than instrumental theories (Fiorina 1981, Garzia 2013) of party identification. In other words, partisanship is not a short-term attitude driven by party promises and performance but a long-term social identity. The observed intensity of partisan biases and the rise of polarisation ahead of elections in countries such as Ghana and Malawi are only explicable by psychological processes of partisan-motivated reasoning that colour people's perceptions of the political world. Although the environment lacks some of the historical forces behind the emergence of partisan division in advanced democracies (ideological polarisation, social stratification, occupational identities), there seem to be similar affective ties between voters and parties in some of Africa's new democracies.

A third core contribution regards the informational environment. The study highlights daily experiences of poverty as an often-overlooked source of information, adding a new aspect to a growing literature on informational conditions in developing settings (Conroy-Krutz 2012, Gottlieb 2016, Adida, et al. 2017, 2020, Bidwell, et al. 2020, Borzyskowski and Kuhn 2020, Brierley, et al. 2020, Platas and Raffler 2021). Researchers usually focus on news media and political campaigns as sources of knowledge about government performance. However, this study's results indicate that information from related sources is often disregarded or misinterpreted due to identity-motivated reasoning. The only factor that is found to lower biases among members of highly politicised identity groups is exposure to poverty. Voters who experience shortages in basic necessities in their lives rate presidents critically, even if the incumbent is a coethnic or a copartisan.

I theorise that low-income settings inevitably confront people with consequences of public management as part of everyday experiences, providing, first of all, vulnerable people with valid no-cost information on how well a government handles developmental key issues. With rising income, the informational content of daily experiences decreases. Africans who enjoy relative economic security are less vulnerable and evade unreliable public service by choosing private solutions (e.g. electricity generators, private schools and clinics). Poor people should accordingly not be underestimated as a force in African elections. Their vulnerability to short-term consequences of public management makes them potentially better informed than voters out of poverty. The finding challenges modernisation views, which expect accountability pressures primarily from middle classes (Lipset 1959, Moore 1966, Inglehart and Welzel 2005). It falls in line with other recent publications hinting at relatively low participation and weak pressures for programmatic policies among Africa's economically more fortunate citizens (Mattes 2015, Nathan 2019a).

The fourth and final complement to existing knowledge is the comparative cross-country

perspective. The field of African politics draws predominantly on single-country studies and small-scale experiments, making it sometimes hard to assess the representativeness and the external validity of findings (Briggs 2017, Pepinsky 2019, Basedau 2020, Davis 2020). By comparing identity biases and retrospective voting across 16 countries, this book illuminates patterns of cross-country variation and helps to contextualise some contradictory findings of previous publications.

The results shed light on systematic differences between countries. Regarding the influence of identity on performance perceptions, the cross-country perspective yields interesting findings. Consistent ethnicity biases are surprisingly rare. Only in three of 16 countries, coethnics of the incumbent stand out with consistently more positive ratings. In several instances, the performance ratings of groups in power contradict expectations or turn around under the same administration. Partisan biases are more consistent across the 59 surveys, but the intensity varies: Extremely strong biases in Ghana and Malawi indicate the emergence of affective psychological attachments psychological (Campbell, et al. 1960, Greene 1999, Huddy, et al. 2015). In other countries, partisan camps are less polarised and less homogenous in their views, which speaks for a mix of psychological and instrumental types of partisan identification.

In terms of the extent of performance voting, the stark contrast between Ghana and Uganda reveals how different the state of accountability is across the continent. Ghana is unparalleled in terms of links between performance perceptions and vote choice, while Uganda is at the lower end of the sample. The comparison suggests that some conflicting findings on performance voting in the literature are owed to systematic differences between countries (e.g. Carlson 2015, Harding 2015). Keenly contested elections seem to be an important driver of performance voting. The margin of victory in the most recent executive election turns out to be a good predictor of the magnitude of performance voting across surveys. By contrast, GDP per capita and the overall quality of democracy show no influence. Indeed, some robust links between performance and vote choice stem from the least developed countries in the sample.

Beyond the core contributions, the study sheds light on some challenges for researchers working with Afrobarometer survey data. Afrobarometer based publications often present country-level statistics and rank orders However, the variation in the incidence and intensity of identity biases may distort such rankings. A way to avoid this problem is to exclude biased groups and calculate summary statistics based on 'independent' respondents. Unobserved biases may, moreover, produce spurious individual-level correlations. Beyond ethnicity, it is crucial to always control partisanship. In Ghana, the partisan divide is visible across all evaluative survey items, so that seemingly robust links between two questions may sometimes just reflect partisan preferences (e.g. Ferree and Long 2016). A strategy to mitigate this problem used in this book is to keep ethnicity and partisanship constant by explaining within group variation instead of calculating

sample effects.

At the same time, the book highlights exciting new ways to leverage the power of the Afrobarometer. Some observations in the comparative perspective in *Chapter 6* suggest that statistical performance reactions among coethnics and copartisans of the incumbent may be a harbinger of electoral turnovers. Analysing the performance effects of groups in power may accordingly have a special value in predicting election outcomes. A second potential application is the use of bias statistics in the measurement of ethnic divisions. The comparative bias analysis in *Chapter 5* discloses ethnic politicisation among some groups, for whom direct questions on ethnic identity, discrimination, and political fear fail to reveal a politicisation of ethnicity. Bias statistics may accordingly help to inform the operationalisation of ethnic politicization (cf. Fearon 2003, Posner 2004a, Vogt, et al. 2015, Houle, et al. 2019).

1.2 Organisation of the Book

The book is divided into a general part which outlines the overarching framework and three analysis chapters. Each analysis chapter features a distinct theory section with specific hypotheses and a research design section presenting the corresponding statistical methods. For the general framework, *Chapters 2 – 4* situate the study within broader academic debates, develop the concept of retrospective accountability, and present the research design's core decisions. C*hapters 5 - 7* contain the empirical analyses. *Chapter 5* examines how identities and information interact in the formation of performance perceptions. *Chapter 6* studies links between performance and vote choice. *Chapter 7* looks into macro-level correlates of cross-country differences regarding biases and performance voting. *Chapter 8* provides an overview of results and discusses implications for electoral accountability in Africa.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on voting behaviour in African elections, gives an overview of contending arguments and highlights issues that complicate a well-grounded assessment of electoral accountability. First, I collate the state of knowledge on ethnic voting, vote-buying performance voting, and the role of information. The review shows that the literature agrees about which factors are relevant but arrives at decidedly different verdicts regarding the effectiveness of accountability, often backed by seemingly diametrically opposing empirical evidence. In a meta-analysis of the literature, I highlight problems regarding the scalability and generalizability of findings. The final section of the chapter outlines how this study seeks to address limitations of previous evidence towards a better foundation to assess prospects for effective accountability in Africa.

Chapter 3 develops the concept of electoral accountability, which guides the study. In the first section, I discuss how elections can discipline politicians. Accountability theories distinguish two mechanisms – selection and sanctioning. I argue that sanctioning is more suitable to conceive of electoral accountability in Africa's developing states. The second part investigates the

mechanism's viability within the context and discusses popular policy demands, information availability, and responsibility attribution. A clear-cut and salient agenda of developmental valence issues and high clarity of responsibility make retrospective voting likely in African executive elections. However, politicised identities may weaken or mute the performance signal by triggering psychological processes of motivated-reasoning and expectations of favouritism. The last part of the chapter gives an overview of the model, derives the two core hypotheses guiding the analysis, and discusses how retrospective voting will affect the distributive strategies of national executives.

Chapter 4 presents the research strategy, outlining general decisions regarding design, case selection, data, and the measurement of performance perceptions. In terms of design, the analysis is split into two parts. One investigates the strength of performance voting, the other the formation of performance perceptions. Both follow a joint strategy that revolves around group-level effects and combines two intensive country studies and a comparative perspective. After laying down the basic design, I introduce the survey datasets, discuss strengths and weaknesses, and the operationalisation of performance perceptions. Specifically, I present a count index, which counts the number of favourable ratings for the government across four developmental core topics (Jobs, Health, Education, Infrastructure). Advantages over other commonly used performance measures include the precise targeting of salient issues and an explicit attribution of responsibility to the national government. The final section is dedicated to the case selection and introduces the focus cases and my strategy to identify relevant ethnic groups.

Chapter 5 investigates the formation of performance perceptions with respect to identity and information. The chapter represents one of the first analyses of identity bias in representative national polls. The first part looks at the incidence of biases in Ghana and Uganda. By predicting performance perceptions based on a set of different identity configurations, the analyses allows to distinguish the influence of ethnicity and partisanship on performance perceptions. In Ghana partisan identity is found to have a substantially stronger influence than ethnicity, often overriding ethnic leanings in cases of competing identities. In Uganda, biases are generally less pronounced but partisan biases are also more consistent compared to the influence of ethnicity. After shedding light on the prevalence of biases, the chapter tests whether media consumption, political interest, and poverty experiences reduce such predispositions in Ghana and Uganda. News and political interest show no impact at all but exposure to developmental shortages leads voters to express dissatisfaction with the government, irrespective of ethnic or partisan alignments. The finding suggests that everyday experiences are an important source of information about how well or poorly a government handles developmental affairs. The final section of chapter 5 assumes a broader comparative perspective, calculating bias statistics for major ethnic and partisan groups in 16 countries across multiple surveys. In only three societies (Ghana, Sierra Leone, South Africa), I find clear-cut and temporally consistent ethno-political

division in popular performance ratings. In the other 13 societies, ethnicity biases are weak, unstable, and in several cases contradict expectations of coethnic support. Partisan bias are visible in most surveys, but the intensity varies. Ghana and Malawi stand out with unexpected levels of partisan polarization.

Chapter 6 is dedicated to the link between performance perceptions and vote choice. The chapter is built around group-level effects and traces the behaviour of relevant ethnic and partisan constituencies' over more than ten years. Methodologically, I draw on binary logistic regression models predicting the likelihood of casting a vote for the incumbent. Group-level effects are calculated based on interaction effects between performance and identity. The results on Ghana illustrate in detail that all relevant groups contribute to the performance signal, putting Ghanaian governments under pressure to maximise the reach and the impact of policies. The second focus case Uganda represents a stark contrast to Ghana with very weak performance voting. As the results are put in a broader comparative picture using a multilevel mixed-effects model, it becomes evident that Ghana is an outlier. Still, in some other countries, most notably Senegal, Malawi, and Zambia, the link between performance perceptions and vote choice is sufficiently strong and widespread to expect a relevant influence on election outcomes. However, there is also a group where the fragility of effects renders it highly unlikely that performance perceptions translate into an electoral sanctioning signal. Uganda, Namibia, South Africa, and Tanzania can be mentioned in this regard. The final section of chapter 6 investigates whether the level of democracy and the economy explain the magnitude of performance voting across surveys by adding cross-level interactions to the multi-level model. Especially electoral competitiveness is a robust predictor of performance voting within the sample. The results also support the hypothesis that economic downturns make voters more responsive to performance.

Chapter 7 provides an overview of findings and discusses implications for electoral accountability. Several results nurture hopes that - in many places - electoral competition will effectively incentivise African political elites to pursue national development. Encouraging findings include strong performance voting across ethnic and partisan lines in several countries, weak ethnicity biases, and poor people's critical performance evaluations. On the other hand, a lack of competition seems to discourage electoral sanctioning. Another concern is the impact of partisanship. The intensity of partisan reasoning in some countries poses a risk of misinformation and polarisation along party lines. The chapter's final section highlights topics for future research. Especially partisanship needs further attention. Scholars may also focus on behavioural differences between lower and middle classes, as the study indicates, alongside other papers (Mattes 2015, Resnick 2015a, Nathan 2019a), that socio-economic advancement may be associated with lower pressure for good governance and accountability.

2 Critical Citizens or Strategists of Patrimonialism? Current Perspectives on Voting Behaviour in Africa

Africa's rapid democratisation since the early 1990s nurtured great hopes to put an end to corruption and mismanagement in executive offices. Electoral control can generate powerful incentives for leaders to choose growth- and welfare-enhancing policies (Barro 1973, Ferejohn 1986, Fearon 1999). However, it remains contentious among analysts of African politics whether elections in the region punish or reward incumbents in a fashion that signals costs and consequences of poor governance. Ethnic allegiances, vote-buying, and informational deficits are seen as major obstacles to critical performance-based voting that induce voters to focus on patrimonial utility in the form of ethnic favouritism and personal patronage. Some studies, however, find evidence to argue that African voters nonetheless condition their vote choice on progress in core developmental areas and the supply of public goods.

This chapter reviews the literature on voting behaviour in African elections and gives an overview of contending arguments. I collate the state of knowledge on ethnic voting (section 2.1), vote-buying (2.2), performance voting (2.3), and information (2.4). The subsequent summary (2.5) notes that the literature largely agrees about relevant factors but arrives at decidedly different verdicts regarding the effectiveness of accountability, often backed by diametrically opposing empirical evidence.

The opposing conclusions generally bespeak the coexistence of patrimonial and civic registers of virtue in the moral economy of African elections (Cheeseman, et al. 2021). However, certain limitations in the state of our knowledge should be addressed to build a better basis for an assessment of potentials for electoral accountability in specific countries and the continent in general. One problem are competing explanations around survey-based evidence of retrospective voting. Another likely source of ambiguities is a focus on micro-perspectives, which creates an urgent need for broader comparative perspectives. In a meta-analysis of the literature, I highlight problems regarding the scalability and generalizability of findings. The final section (2.6) outlines my strategies to improve our knowledge base.

Before turning to electoral motives, it is worth highlighting that the electoral process is highly valued by African citizens (Gyimah-Boadi 2019). Large majorities across countries view democracy as the preferable system and firmly reject authoritarian regime types. More than 80% of citizens say that leaders should be selected through elections (Bratton, et al. 2005, Mattes and Bratton 2016). The strong democratic commitment is apparently not just motivated by economic expectations. As Bratton and Mattes (2001) demonstrate, support for democracy remains robust even when citizens are dissatisfied with economic outcomes. They conclude: "African citizens seem to weigh the availability of political goods more heavily than the contents of the economic basket." (Bratton and Mattes 2001: 474). And the constant practice of democracy seems to

further raise commitment to and understanding of democratic procedures among citizens (Lindberg 2006, Mattes and Bratton 2007, Conroy-Krutz 2016).

The high commitment to democracy is not a surprise from a historical perspective. The rise of multiparty elections in Africa since the 1990s is a direct consequence of a continent-wide crisis of the state in the 1980s that exposed a widespread failure of post-independence leadership. Africa's one-party and military regimes had proven unable to translate the colonial legacy into a functioning state. Thirty years after independence, most sub-Saharan countries were marked by instability, economic decline, and the collapse of key public services, such as clinics and schools (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997: 66-68, Cheeseman 2015: 87-93). Poverty, malnutrition, and a lack of perspectives induced citizens and civil society organisations to take to the streets to make their grievances heard. As protests were spilling over the continent, democratic reform increasingly became the central demand of the movements. Protesters from different backgrounds were unified in the conviction that only pluralist multiparty politics could ensure that political elites would become responsive to citizens' needs (Ake 1993, Bratton and Van de Walle 1997: 97-107).

The protests were the onset of an unprecedented wave of political reforms. By the end of the 1980s, as few as 5 of 47 sub-Saharan states chose their leaders through multiparty elections. As of 2021, only three of now 48 states do not – at least formally - select the chief executive in pluralistic elections (cf. Cheeseman 2015: 234). Many analysts, including some African intellectuals, endorsed the process as a second liberation, which after decolonisation freed Africans from the tyranny of self-dealing political elites who routinely dipped into public coffins at the expense of citizens and often made poor policy choices (Ayittey 1992, Dag Hammarskjold Foundation 1992, Diamond 1992).

But are multiparty elections and democratic commitment sufficient to defeat dictators and vote out incompetent leaders? And are leaders rewarded if they choose programmatic over clientelist strategies and dedicate themselves to improving the developmental conditions of the nation? Even if we take the integrity of electoral institutions for granted, many factors may compromise electoral accountability in Africa.

2.1 Ethnic Voting

A prime reason why electoral accountability in Africa may not work as theorised is the politicisation of ethnicity. The continent's states are generally multi-ethnic, with multiple identity groups who speak different languages and often originate from independent cultural and religious traditions. With such diversity, it is commonly argued that voters in the region follow ethnic allegiances in elections while ignoring a government's record. Early works assumed an expressive motivation, whereby voters use national polls to express and reaffirm subnational communal identities. By contrast, most recent publications emphasise an instrumental rationale,

arguing that beliefs of ethnic favouritism drive ethnic voting.

The expressive theory is inextricably linked to Donald L. Horowitz's (1985) seminal book "Ethnic Groups in Conflict", which broadly investigated the consequences of ethnic divisions for democracy. The author departs from the observation that colonialism did not only merge diverse people into one polity but also entrenched deep divisions into society by arbitrarily categorising groups as backwards and advanced, followed by systematic discrimination. The consequences for democracy are problematic. Regarding elections, Horowitz argues that not individual decision-making but ascriptive group identities dictate voting. Shifting majorities and turnovers become difficult or even impossible. Instead, the election becomes a headcount of identity groups:

> "*The election, intended to be a vehicle of choice, was no such thing and will be no such thing in the future; it registered, not choice, but birth affiliation. This was no election—it was a census"* (Horowitz 1985: 86).

Note that the quote distinguishes ethnic voting and rational decision-making. Later accounts of expressive ethnic voting usually argued that voters indeed make a rational decision, earning expressive utility from the affirmation of highly salient ethnic identities through the ballot (cf. Hamlin and Jennings 2011, Carlson 2020). It is, moreover, worth noting that the author conceptualises ethnicity as something ascriptive determined by birth - a view that contrasts with later instrumental theories that assume that individual identities are constructed and may shift in response to changing conditions (Posner 2005, Hyden 2010c: 188).

Horowitz's (1985) theory of expressive voting and census-elections had a profound influence on studies of African voting behaviour. Early works on peaceful African elections found support for the notion of expressive ethnic voting (Nugent 1999, 2001, Ferree 2006). Electoral violence and the outbreak of new devastating ethnic civil wars in the 1990s seemed to confirm some of the gloomy predictions of winner-take-all elections, which inevitably leave minorities excluded and rather lead to violence and rebellion than a consolidation of democracy (Gurr 1993, Horowitz 1993, Osaghae 2004, Höglund, et al. 2009).

However, with more and more states carrying out ordered multiparty elections, the predictive record of expressive models became unsatisfactory. Neither does the perspective explain electoral shifts, nor does it account for voters from minor ethnic groups without a candidate in the race. Moreover, the quality of elections in Africa was gradually improving in series of successive polls (Lindberg 2006), invalidating the notion that electoral competition would raise the risk of violence and rebellion.

Especially Daniel N. Posner's (2005) book "Institutions and Ethnic Politics" led to a shift towards an instrumental understanding of ethnic voting. Studying every election in Zambia between 1968 and 1999, Posner demonstrates that the salience of different ethnic identities systematically

followed changes in regime type over time. During one-party periods, people voted along tribal lines in anticipation of personal patronage. In times of multiparty elections, they shifted to broader linguistic identities to maximise the chances of being part of the winning coalition (Posner 2005: 155). This could only mean that Zambians strategically weighed the relative advantages of identities against electoral rules. As the author puts it

> *"Whereas most accounts tell a story about passive socialisation, I tell a story about active, strategic investment"* (Posner 2005: 24).

Beyond Zambia, Posner found similar patterns of a strategic motivation behind the salience of specific ethnic identities in Malawi and Kenya (Posner 2004b, 2007).

Africans may have good reasons to consider ethnicity when assessing what to expect from a candidate. In a classic essay, Ekeh (1975) described how certain social pressures and norms request elected officials to channel resources from the post-colonial state to the pre-colonial community. Through a new book titled 'The moral economy of African Elections', Cheeseman et al. (2021) give the argument a state-of-the-art conceptual foundation. Accordingly, African politics are characterised by two competing registers of virtue. Whereas civic virtues urge leaders to provide public goods to the national community, patrimonial virtues prompt elected officials to show solidarity to communal identity groups and grant them disproportional access to available resources. Both coexist - the authors find "multiple moralities" in their focus cases Ghana, Kenya, and Uganda, but their relative influence varies across contexts.

Following Posner's (2005) book, the instrumental theory of ethnic voting became a dominant theme in studies of African voting behaviour, with several publications testing and confirming the idea that citizens choose their candidates based on ethnicity for strategic reasons. Ishiyama (2012) observes that geographically concentrated groups are more likely to vote as a bloc and concludes that prospects for favouritism, not expressive motivations, determine ethnic bloc voting. Compelling evidence for a strategic motivation on the micro-level was provided by Ichino and Nathan (2012). They demonstrate that voters in urban Ghana tend to vote for candidates from opposing ethnic groups if they live in an area where the respective group constitutes the majority.

Some experimental designs have also tried to juxtapose considerations of ethnic favouritism to performance evaluations. Carlson (2015) found that performance voting in Uganda is strictly conditional on ethnicity: "V*oters prefer only those candidates who are both coethnics and good performers*", and she concludes that "*Africa's accountability problems are, unfortunately, worse than previous evidence implies*" (Carlson 2015: 381). Adida et al. (2017) observed a similar pattern in Benin. Their study treats participants with information about MPs' legislative productivity and finds that voters reward high productivity only if the incumbent is coethnic and punish only non-coethnics. Both studies indicate that even if voters are aware of the

performance of candidates, they choose based on ethnicity. Prospects for ethnic favouritism take precedence over performance evaluations. However, the two experiments raise some concerns about whether the performance information provided is sufficiently salient to simulate the real-life decision-making process (cf. section 2.4 on Informational Deficits).

Another indirect sign of instrumental ethnic voting is the intensification of ethnic identification during campaign times. In an influential study of 22 Afrobarometer surveys from 10 countries, Eifert et al. (2010) showed that citizens are more likely to identify in ethnic terms around competitive presidential elections. The authors, among them Dan Posner, interpret the rising salience as a sign of the (instrumental) usefulness of ethnic identities. A recent update by Gadjanova (2021a) confirms the finding but provides a social-psychological alongside the instrumental explanation. Accordingly, rising status-anxieties during election campaigns increase the psychological desire for affective group belongings. Regarding both studies, it should be noted that in the used survey question, less than 10% identify in ethnic terms. The increase of ethnic identification accordingly affects only a tiny fraction of the population.

At the same time, a growing body of literature is questioning the relevance of ethnic voting. In some countries, ethnicity seems to have little influence on voting behaviour. Dominika Koter (2016) profoundly illustrates this for Senegalese politics, where religious clerics serve as intermediaries between voters and politicians, connecting the electorate beyond ethnic boundaries. Similarly, Dunning and Harrison (2010) show how an informal institution called "cousinage" leads to an absence of ethnic voting in Mali. Other examples include studies on party systems by Elischer (2013) and Basedau and Stroh (2012). While the former identifies only one of four party systems as ethnic, the latter find no ethnic parties at all in 4 rarely studied Francophone countries.

Changing demographics may also gradually weaken ethnic identities. Africa's population is young, and it seems unlikely that post-independence divisions are simply passed down the generations. In many states, a majority of the electorate have known no other political order than the multiparty nation-state. Just recently, Hino, et al. (2019) presented a valuable volume on social cohesion in Africa, which bears witness to emerging cross-cutting national identities in various countries. Meanwhile, societies are also getting more mixed. Two recent papers in a high-ranked political science journal[1] deal with cross-ethnic families: Dulani, et al. (2020) demonstrate that people from multi-ethnic backgrounds are less likely to adhere to bloc voting norms. Adida, et al. (2016) highlight how cross-ethnic marriages help candidates to appeal to broader coalitions. Cross-ethnic campaign appeals and messages of ethnic equality are generally increasingly recognised as a key to electoral majorities (Gadjanova 2021b, Kim 2021).

Another demographic factor is urbanisation. Moving from homogenous rural communities to

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multi-ethnic cities may also induce an identity shift. Resnick (2014: 216), for instance, argues that the influence of ethnic identities decreases among city dwellers because the urban poor adopt multiple identities, including occupational and socio-economic ones. Her study in Senegal and Zambia finds that oppositional parties avoid ethnic appeals and instead offer a mix of social policies and populist anti-elitist rhetoric. New compelling evidence for the argument comes from Kramon et al. (2021). The team builds on three waves of panel data following 8000 Kenyan citizens over 15 years and clearly confirms that urban migration reduces ethnic identification. However, certain conditions may also amplify ethnic identities in urban settings, as Nathan (2019a) demonstrates. His study in Ghana indicates that ethnic segregation in poor urban neighbourhoods can also lead to ethnic bloc voting.

It is yet to be seen whether ethnicity will lose its importance in Africa's transitional states. For now, instrumental ethnic voting remains a core theme in current perspectives on African voters, and many findings indicate that it plays a powerful role in many contexts. Expressive motivations play only a subordinate role and may come into play as a motivation to support minor parties if voters believe a vote for any major party will not affect their access to resources (Carlson 2020).

Although instrumental voting is guided by rational expectations and somewhat flexible, including the possibility of strategic voting for parties from opposing ethnic groups (Ichino and Nathan 2012), it is at odds with electoral accountability theories. The expectation of ethnic favouritism prompts voters to focus on a candidates' ethnic affiliations and to rather tolerate poor performance than supporting a non-coethnic candidate in his bid for office.

2.2 Vote Buying and Clientelism

Another major theme in studies of African voting behaviour is campaign clientelism, i.e. the distribution of gifts and favours in exchange for the vote. Two reasons make such vote-buying particularly prevalent in Africa. First, the extreme poverty of many people means that little and relatively cheap handouts such as a meal or a T-Shirt may be enough to win over voters (Posner 2005: 159 Jensen and Justesen 2014, Gyimah-Boadi 2015). Second, certain social norms of reciprocal exchange may interact with vote-buying practices and increase demands for gifts and compliance with vote-buying.

Social norms are a crucial factor in vote-buying dynamics in Africa. The relevant values are best captured by Hyden's (2010a) concept of the economy of affection. The economy of affection represents a key redistributive mechanism in African societies. Two core principles include: "sharing personal wealth is more rewarding than investing in economic ventures" and "a helping hand today generates returns tomorrow" (Hyden 2010a:76). Based on these principles, it is entirely legitimate for poor people to seek favours and personal assistance from someone with resources. In return, recipients support sponsors in whatever capacity they can. Such reciprocities permeate social life in African societies and are an essential source of social security in the absence

of a welfare state. It is, furthermore, a key in gaining status and influence. A rich person refusing to share resources is unlikely to earn respect and followers.

While the economy of affection softens the hardship of the developmental context, it clashes with the formal bureaucratic distribution of the modern state and may keep voters from holding elected officials to account. Instead of asking for developmental policies and public goods, voters may judge candidates according to their ability and willingness to grant individual perks. Beyond the realm of the ethnic community, the expectations associated with the "patrimonial register of virtues" (Cheeseman, et al. 2021) may also apply to interpersonal relationships between candidates, party agents, and voters.

Insightful original research on the matter comes from Lindberg (2003, 2010), who inquired Ghanaian Members of Parliament about their accountability relationships with citizens. The MPs unanimously indicated that they face intense pressures to provide personal benefits, including cash handouts, monetary assistance for school fees, hospital bills or funerals and weddings, or jobs in the public sector. Individual MPs spend up to 600,000 US Dollar during campaigns to attend to respective demands (Lindberg 2010: 124). The author's description illustrates how the economy of affection interacts with democratic competition. Politicians are generally red as rich by ordinary citizens, and, indeed, the interviewed MPs indicated that traditional customs oblige them to distribute gifts (Lindberg 2003: 132).

The prevalence of campaign clientelism is well documented all over Africa (e.g. Basedau, et al. 2007, Bratton 2012). Not only individual candidates but also entire parties may rely on vote-buying as a campaign strategy. Informative with regard to party clientelism is the work of Croke (2016), who documents how Tanzania's ruling party distributes private goods via a well-established infrastructure of neighbourhood party agents. The author argues that these practices are the main reason for the electoral dominance of the party.

However, scholars disagree about the impact of campaign clientelism on vote choices. In secret elections, politicians can neither enforce nor observe compliance. The norms of the economy of affection suggest a moral obligation to be loyal on the part of voters. Yet, the relationship between politicians and voters may be less binding than affective face-to-face reciprocities in other social contexts. With competitive elections and multiple candidates cross-pressuring citizens, people can easily use the campaign period as a harvesting season and eventually vote on other grounds.

Indeed, several researchers have expressed doubts about the effectiveness of vote-buying in Africa's new democracies. Nugent (2007) argues that money transfers in Ghana symbolise a credible bit for power but are not sufficient to win votes. Conroy-Krutz and Logan (2012) look at the 2011 Ugandan election and reject that the distribution of material rewards contributed to the victory of incumbent President Museveni. Young (2009), combining survey level data and

constituency-level election results from Kenya and Zambia, finds that gifts offered by candidates did not make voters more likely to support the incumbent. Also, Lindberg, who uniquely documented clientelist exchanges in Ghana (Lindberg 2003, 2010), relativises the influence on vote choices in subsequent papers, maintaining that many more vote on policy grounds than for clientelist offers (Lindberg 2013, Weghorst and Lindberg 2013). A recent paper on party mobilisation strategies also indicates that programmatic themes are, in fact, more prevalent than electoral clientelism in the appeals of Ghanaian parties (Brierley and Kramon 2020).

Some findings even suggest that gift-giving has a negative influence on a candidate's popularity. Kao et al. (2017) argue that poor people in Malawi perceive candidates who distribute gifts as corrupt. Statements from focus group discussions testify that ordinary Malawians view vote-buying as morally unacceptable. The underlying survey experiment indicates that vote-buying attempts lead to vote losses for candidates, especially among poor people. Another study - based on a vignette experiment where the only distinguishing factor between two candidates was the distribution of food – finds that two-thirds of participants opt for the candidate who did not provide patronage (Conroy-Krutz 2012: 364). Similarly, Bratton (2008) deems compliance with vote-buying in Nigeria unlikely because he observes that most citizens condemn campaign clientelism as wrong.

Only a few empirical studies confirm an influence of vote-buying on voting behaviour. Wantchekon (2003) carries out a field experiment around Benin's 2001 presidential election, exposing randomly selected villages to purely clientelist and purely public good campaign platforms. His results suggest that the clientelist treatment produces higher electoral returns. A notable detail in his is a gender gap with women being less susceptible to vote-buying. A similar experimental design treated areas in Sao Tome and Principe with a campaign against vote-buying and infers that higher turnout in non-treated areas in the 2006 presidential election was a consequence of vote-buying (Vicente 2014). Finally, Kramon (2016b) finds that about 23% of Kenyan voters in the 2007 presidential election were influenced by vote-buying. His study reduces response bias through a survey list experiment, revealing a much higher susceptibility to vote-buying compared to a direct question in the same sample. Accordingly, survey-based studies may underestimate the true impact of material gifts on vote choice.

Recently, new explanations of why vote-buying might be effective added fresh impetus to the debate. Ferree and Long (2016) assert that parties ensure compliance by sowing doubts about ballot secrecy, along with the provision of electoral handouts. Evidence is provided in the form of correlations between perceptions of ballot secrecy and vote-buying in Afrobarometer data. However, the link may be owed to oppositional partisans who overreport both items to make the government look bad (cf. Chapter 5.5). As the second piece of evidence, the authors report, based on an exit poll during the 2008' Ghanaian election, that trust in the confidentiality of

ballots clusters around polling stations where campaigning was intense. The effects are, however, weak and the indirect proxies for campaign intensity are not fully convincing. Nonetheless, the research reminds us that even in a country as liberal as Ghana, some voters may feel monitored in the ballot booth, especially after an intense competitive campaign.

A different argument comes from Kramon (2016a, 2018), who presents an informational theory of electoral handouts. Accordingly, gifts and monetary assistance are a piece of information indicating whether a candidate is a 'redistributive type'. Voters do not comply because of loyalty, gratitude, or intimidation. Instead, they are forward-looking and support the candidate who has most credibly signalled that he is able and willing to provide further assistance after being elected. Kramon (2016a, 2018) tests his argument in different experiments in Kenya. Most notably, an experiment involving a radio discussion, where a subtle reference to a cash handout in two otherwise equal audio streams leads to higher support for the gift-giving candidate. As listeners did not actually receive the gift, the finding indicates that the mere information about the handout must bear relevance to voters.

While the two accounts above indicate that vote-buying can be effective, a third theoretical contribution draws a different picture, arguing that vote-buying matters but not at the final stage of the voting decision. Seeking to understand the prevalence of campaign clientelism in Ghana, Gadjanova (2017) presents a theory of status affirmation. Accordingly, campaign gifts are necessary to signal social status but do not influence the ultimate vote choice among candidates who successfully signalled their viability through handouts. The argument is very much in line with Hyden's (2010a) account of the economy of affection, which understands the sharing of material wealth as necessary in gaining status in society.

All in all, it can be recorded that vote-buying is a ubiquitous feature of campaigns in African politics. The literature, however, is divided regarding its effectiveness. If it were effective, vote-buying would undoubtedly represent a major obstacle to electoral accountability and pressures for development and good governance. As Lindberg (2003:124) puts it:

> "*Elected officials are not held accountable for their action, or inaction, with regard to public matters and their political agendas rely on the provision of socio-economic benefits in personalised networks".*

Vote-buying may, moreover, exacerbate incumbency advantages and make it even harder to vote out underperforming governments, as incumbents can channel public resources into patronage (cf. Bleck and van de Walle 2018: 136 - 139).

However, the predominant impression from the related literature is that the influence of vote-buying on African vote choices is limited, despite the persistence of such practices. The majority of publications deny an effect on vote choice, and the effects in those studies that confirm an influence of vote-buying are relatively weak. Moreover, information on government

performance seems to reduce the impact of vote-buying further. Gottlieb (2016) observes that candidates in Malian local elections need to pay significantly more to win votes when people are aware of performance.

2.3 Retrospective Performance Voting

An increasingly mentioned factor in African elections is retrospective performance voting, i.e. the rewarding and punishment of programs and policy outcomes at the polls. It is ow widely acknowledged that some voters are mobilised through the supply of developmental goods and economic growth. However, Scholars disagree about whether the electoral feedback is sufficiently strong to effectively hold leaders to account and incentivise the pursuit of good governance and general national development.

Already Posner (2005), in his landmark study on ethnic voting in Zambia, observed a certain impact of the macro-economy. In a spin-off paper, he asks for the consequences of Zambia's weak economy ahead of the 1996 multiparty election (Posner and Simon 2002). The paper starts with an investigation of survey data from a post-election poll and finds that dissatisfaction with the economy made people significantly less likely to vote for the incumbent. Additionally, the authors regress the change in the president's vote share on changes in poverty levels across Zambia's 39 districts. The results indicate that increasing poverty led to fewer votes for the president - at least in absolute numbers. When it comes to changes in vote share, the poverty variable fails the significance test. The relationships presented are overall relatively weak and, initially, received not much attention, neither in Posner's (2005) main theory nor in general debates on African voter behaviour.

During the 2000s, political and economic performance was hardly considered as a relevant factor in African elections. One of the few notable exceptions in the literature was a paper on economic voting in Ghana. Youde (2005) presents a strong and robust link between economic perceptions and government approval ratings in Ghana's 2002 Afrobarometer and concludes that the finding is a strong suggestion of economic voting. However, the study only looks at government support but not at vote preferences. Considering ethnic and clientelist incentives, we cannot take for granted that approval rates translate into votes.

Performance-based voting came more into the focus of Africanists after some encouraging findings in the early 2010s. Especially, the survey-based research of Lindberg (Lindberg and Morrison 2008, Lindberg 2013, Weghorst and Lindberg 2013) in Ghana added new empirical evidence to suggest that a significant proportion of African voters are persuadable by public goods. One paper analyses why voter switch between parties and finds that policy evaluations are much more common than clientelist offers when it comes to reasons for voters to swing. The authors estimate that about half of Ghana's electorate is persuadable and shows signs of critical performance-based voting (Weghorst and Lindberg 2013). Another work investigates the

political mood ahead of Ghana's 2008 turnover in a pre-election survey and finds that evaluations of the national economy and living conditions are the strongest determinants of vote choice (Lindberg 2013). More recently, Long and Gibson (2015) reported similar results for Kenya, which is arguably one of the countries with the strongest politicisation of ethnicity in Africa (cf. Elischer 2013). Based on a post-election poll, the authors find that evaluations of government performance had a substantial impact on all voters except incumbent coethnics.

Likewise, more evidence of economic voting in Africa came from cross-country studies. Bratton et al. (2012) demonstrated that the link between economic perceptions and vote choice is robust and pretty strong in the full 16-country Afrobarometer Round 3 dataset. Recently, Rhee (2021) identified economic evaluations as the most important determinant of presidential approval ratings in a pooled analysis of three rounds of Afrobarometer data. Global studies also confirm that links economic evaluations reliably explain vote choices in African survey data (Wilkin, et al. 1997, Gélineau 2013).

Other studies have gone beyond survey data and tried to trace the impact of programmatic performance on real election outcomes. Harding (2015) shows that local road maintenance brings electoral gains for the incumbent party in Ghana and develops a general argument that competitive elections induce governments in Africa to invest in health, education, and infrastructure for rural majorities (Harding 2020a). LeVan (2018) attributes the turnover in Nigeria's 2015 election to economic voting. Beyond individual-level links in the 2015 Afrobarometer, he shows that the state-level vote share of the ruling party correlates with average performance perceptions. Even in a country as authoritarian as Burundi, educational policies seem to win votes (Travaglianti 2016). Further support for economic voting comes from Wimpy and Whitten (2017), who study a dataset of 99 African elections and find that GDP growth is a significant predictor of electoral gains and losses for the incumbent party.

Only a few studies find no effect of performance indicators on electoral outcomes. The most remarkable comes from De Kadt and Lieberman (2020), who connect data on water and sanitation services to municipal election results and individual-level voting intentions in South Africa. Surprisingly, improvements in service provision are associated with lower support for the dominant ANC party, whereas in opposition-controlled municipalities, voters reward South Africa's second party. The authors speculate that voters are either not satisfied with the quality of improvements or associate any building project by the ANC with corruption and self-enrichment. Briggs (2019) reports that foreign aid reduced electoral support for incumbents in Senegal, Nigeria, and Uganda, arguing that incumbents may have failed to live up to expectations associated with aid. However, withdrawal of aid may indeed cause losses for incumbents (Briggs 2012). The last example is an experiment by Martin and Raffler (2020), which suggests that Ugandan voters fail to hold the government to account because they attribute responsibility for

poor policy outcomes to bureaucrats.

Despite the mounting evidence, scholars remain sceptical regarding the impact of performance voting. Especially survey-based evidence is called into question because of concerns of endogeneity, i.e. the suspicion that performance perceptions and vote choice may both be endogenous to unobserved identity biases (Carlson 2015, 2016b, 2018a). Suppose supporters of the incumbent evaluate her performance more favourable, while at the same time members of oppositional groups make more negative assessments. We would still see considerable covariation between performance perceptions and vote choice in the national sample, yet both would reflect identity and group rivalries instead of performance voting (Evans and Pickup 2010, Pickup and Evans 2013). Given the historical politicisation of ethnicity, analyses involving survey data from African countries are particularly prone to this endogeneity problem.

Indeed, some of the studies mentioned above do not fully address the risk of endogeneity and omit crucial identity variables. Youde (2005) controls for only one of two highly politicised groups in Ghana and not for partisanship. The models by Bratton et al. (2012) and Rhee (2021) control for coethnics and co-partisans of the incumbent, but not for oppositional identities. So do the global cross-country studies (Wilkin, et al. 1997, Gélineau 2013). A considerable chunk of the relationship between performance perceptions and vote choice may be owed to unobserved identity biases in all these cases. Some studies, however, address the problem and the evidence of performance voting proves robust. Lindberg (2013) controls all relevant ethnic groups and, quite restrictively, includes indicator variables for self-reported vote choices in previous elections. Long and Gibson (2015) show that found effects are robust against adding control variables for several ethnic groups and all regions.

A second common objection against performance evidence is that it does not rule out a clientelist distribution along ethnic lines. The regional character of many developmental public goods such as schools and roads make them prone to clientelist capture and geographic targeting. If governments channel public goods primarily to core supporters, we should still see covariation between performance and vote choice – at the individual level but also in regional election results. However, the scenario would run against the idea of retrospective voting. Instead of critically holding the government to account, long-term reciprocities create dependence and impose a duty on voters to support political patrons (Stokes, et al. 2013, Diaz-Cayeros, et al. 2016). Politicians can observe the collective behaviour of voters down to the level of polling stations, which creates a threat of being cut off in the event of a poor election result (Koter 2013).

Nathan (2019a), for instance, lowers expectations that performance-based voting could bring a shift towards programmatic distribution, pointing to the particularistic demands of poor majorities. His theory draws a line between universalistic policies that benefit the nation at large

and particularistic local public goods, including roads and schools. The study shows that Ghana's urban poor primarily demand particularistic goods and turn out in greater numbers than middle-class voters who ask for universalistic policy strategies. Against this background, Nathan (2019a) expects that the ability to target patronage to key constituencies and ethnic bases will continue to shape the success of candidates.

However, it is contentious among analysts whether the demand and supply of local public goods should be equalised with clientelist targeting. Several scholars argue that the supply of local public goods already represents a shift to programmatic distribution, thereby showing the positive impact of electoral accountability. Weghorst and Lindberg (2013: 722), for instance, insist: "Providing small-scale collective goods like a community well or a school building are targeted but not personal private goods and as such is not clientelism". Poteete (2019) argues that electoral competition may not prevent targeting but ensures that ordinary voters become the primary beneficiaries. She distinguishes between elite clientelism and decentralised clientelism. Studying Senegalese fishing industries, she documents how electoral competition has reduced extra-legal authorisations to foreign fishing operations by rent-seeking elites and increased the supply of public goods that serve the needs of local fisherman. Isaksson and Bigsten (2017) make a similar point based on an investigation of cross-national survey data. They argue that the benefits of local public goods in Africa tend to spill over to the general population – regardless of group affiliation.

The evidence on the prevalence of ethnic favouritism is mixed. Only a few studies identify clear signs of ethnic targeting - the most frequently cited is probably Franck and Rainer (2012). Studying 18 countries over more than 50 years, the authors demonstrate that a leader's ethnicity is associated with more years of primary education and lower infant mortality rates among co-ethnics. Similarly, Kramon and Posner (2016) find that children who grew up under a co-ethnic president tend to have more years of schooling in Kenya. However, the time-series designs of the two studies focus mainly on the troublesome post-independence period and may not be representative of the multiparty era.

Studies on current distributional patterns draw a more nuanced and conditional picture. The most unmistakable evidence of favouritism comes from Ejdemyr et al. (2018), who use fine-grained data from Malawi to show that ethnically homogenous localities have a better chance to receive a borehole from their MPs, indicating that favouritism depends on segregation. Another recent study involving 14 countries finds that leaders allocate Chinese aid towards regions with a high concentration of political supporters, whereas World Bank aid, due to more checks and balances, is distributed programmatically (Anaxagorou, et al. 2020). Mason et al. (2017) observe that government strongholds in Zambia received fertiliser subsidies, but, interestingly, the study indicates that the targeting did not positively affect vote gains.

Other works find no signs of clientelist targeting. Dionne and Horowitz (2016) reject that subsidy programs in Malawi were targeted to coethnics or copartisans of the president. Bandyopadhyay and Green (2019) analyse data on paved roads across the continent and observe, counterintuitively, that home regions of presidents receive poorer roads. Similarly, Rosenzweig (2015) reports that Tanzania's ruling party is not targeting strongholds but more competitive districts with public goods. Brass et al. (2020) find that a solar panel program in Ghana got distributed in accordance with electricity needs, alongside weak signs of potential turnout buying motivations.

New research indicates that politicians use various coexisting distributive strategies. Especially insightful in this regard is a new paper by Briggs (2021). Looking at data on electrification projects across Ghana over twelve years and three different governments, he finds that one party (NDC) tends to focus on core voters, which interestingly includes oppositional strongholds. In contrast, the other major party (NPP) targets swing voters by allocating an above-average share of electrification projects to competitive regions. In the latter case, core supporters (in the Ashanti region) even receive the lowest share of projects, which the author attributes to the respective party being afraid of being seen as an ethnic party and getting punished by voters for allegedly unfair transfer. We hence see a dynamic, which is the opposite of what instrumental narratives of ethnic voting expect. Ghanaian voters in the Ashanti region would actually be well advised to vote against their traditional political allies.

Against recent empirical evidence, fears that electoral competition only strengthens ethnic favouritism seem exaggerated. The documented distributive patterns indicate diverse distributive strategies. Governments are apparently relatively flexible in the supply of public goods and may target both core and swing voters depending on electoral incentives. This is good news for accountability because it implies that retrospective electoral feedback can quickly draw political elites towards a programmatic distributive strategy. In most countries, parties need to attract votes across ethnic lines, anyways, to form a majority(Long and Gibson 2015, Gadjanova 2021b, Kim 2021).

Nonetheless, the debate is critical to consider in the evaluation of performance evidence. Scholars need to pay more attention to the behaviour and the loyalty of sub-groups to validate whether demands for public goods translate into pressures for programmatic distribution. If a sufficient share of voters votes based on public goods, at least national executive leaders have little choice but to consider programmatic strategies that maximise the impact and the reach of public policies (cf. De Mesquita, et al. 2003). As typical in African politics, these may well coexist with ethnic clientelism.

Altogether, the evidence on performance-based voting suggests that economic progress and developmental public goods have a certain influence on vote choices. However, it remains

contentious whether the performance signal is sufficiently solid and unambiguous to create incentives for good governance in the interest of the nation-at-large. Pointing to problems of endogeneity, it has been argued that survey-based studies have overreported performance effects. Furthermore, there is doubt about whether performance voting can effectively counter ethnic clientelism. Some authors fear that electoral competition around local public goods could instead facilitate the targeting of core supporters at the expense of minority groups.

2.4 Information Deficit?

A primary reason why scholars deem it unlikely that performance considerations outrank ethnic and clientelist motives in the calculus of African voters is the informational context. Low-income settings make it particularly difficult to obtain reliable facts on government activities and outcomes. Low education, low political sophistication, weak media infrastructure, and a lack of political transparency make political information costly (cf. Conroy-Krutz 2012: 349, Dunning, et al. 2019b: 6). Moreover, educational deficits are associated with an uncritical and obedient attitude towards the powerful and may lead citizens to overrate performance while preventing them from obtaining other facts (Mattes and Shenga 2012).

Informational deficits are a core argument in many prominent theoretical accounts of voting behaviour in Africa. Posner's (2005: 154f) seminal work on ethnic voting, for instance, views poorly developed communication infrastructures and unreliable media reporting as a central reason why ethnicity is such an important determinant of voting behaviour:

> *In the absence of reliable information about either the policies that the competing candidates will pursue or the ability of each contestant to secure development resources for the constituency from the central government, voters will focus their attention on what little information they do have that will allow them to predict the candidates' future behavior: the candidates' ethnic affiliations.* (Posner 2005: 153)

Similarly, Kramon's (2018) recent book on vote-buying revolves around the argument that electoral handouts are a source of information. Kramon argues that vote-buying offers may raise the electoral chances of candidates because they are observable to voters, unlike information on how incumbents attend to the policy duties of their offices:

> *Where voters lack access to credible information about the policy performance of incumbents and the policy proposals of competing candidates, they may be more likely to weight clientelistic considerations more heavily when deciding how to vote, since this dimension is observable to them.* (Kramon 2016b: 399).

The prominence of informational arguments has led to rising scholarly efforts to understand and test the impact of information. If the informational environment prevents voters from holding governments to account, better knowledge should induce voters to align their decision with performance perceptions. Conversely, if performance information does not affect electoral

behaviour, this strongly indicates that people weigh factors like ethnicity and patronage higher than performance.

Empirical findings on the impact of information are mixed and partly contradictory. Some studies clearly find that information raises performance voting and reduces the influence of identity-based and clientelist voting. Conroy-Krutz (2012) asks Ugandan voters to choose between two hypothetical candidates. A hint at a poor performance induces an overwhelming majority of 98% to defect from ethnic allegiances and cast a vote for a non-coethnic candidate. Very encouraging results are also reported by Gottlieb (2016). She disseminates information on the responsibilities and the performance of local governments in Malian villages. Voters in treated villages are more likely to sanction poor performers and care less about kinship or gift-giving. Similarly, Bhandari et al. (2021) provide Senegalese citizens with information on the performance of MPs. Especially temporal comparisons to previous incumbents lead voters to update their beliefs and reconsider their vote choices. Platas and Raffler (2021) show videos on policy positions and qualifications of parliamentary candidates to voters in Ugandan villages and find that the treatment decreases voting for Uganda's dominant ruling party.

Moreover, researchers have documented a direct impact of actual campaign activities on voting. Bidwell et al. (2020) work with local media partners to organise a "roadshow" ahead of Sierra Leone's 2012 parliamentary election, which presents debates of MP candidates in different formats. The author's find that the debates raise openness towards non-coethnic candidates and that well-performing candidates achieved better election results, while the incidence of ethnicity-based voting decreased in treated areas. In an earlier study, one of the authors also reported suggestive evidence that radio information about local election candidates increases voting across ethnic-party lines in Sierra Leone (Casey 2015). In Ghana, Brierley et al. (2020) followed locally organised debates among MP candidates and found that policy information presented during the debate was highly relevant to voters, making even strong partisans more likely to support opponents.

Interestingly, other major publications arrive at fundamentally different conclusions, finding no signs of a voter reaction to informational interventions. The most comprehensive work in this regard is the Metaketa project (Dunning, et al. 2019b), which conducted seven similar field experiments in various developing countries, including the African cases Benin, Burkina Faso, and Uganda. All experiments were designed to establish whether informational interventions change the voting preferences of citizens, and the cumulative meta-analysis finds little support for this idea: "For the incumbent vote choice and turnout, we find no evidence of impact on the common informational intervention across all studies" (Dunning, et al. 2019b: 10). Especially the results from Burkina Faso (Lierl and Holmlund 2019) and Benin (Adida, et al. 2017, 2019) indicate that voters do not change their minds upon news about incumbent performance,

whereas two experiments from Uganda (Buntaine, et al. 2019, Platas and Raffler 2019, 2021) observe reactions to performance treatments.

Some designs report that, even if voters know that a coethnic is a poor performer, they still prefer her over a well-performing candidate from a different group. Carlson's (2015) abovementioned experiment on ethnic voting and accountability in Uganda finds that voters continue to choose co-ethnics, even if they receive information that a competitor from a different group is a better performer. Interestingly, her setup is very similar to Conroy-Krutz's (2012) experiment, but the results are in stark contrast. A likely reason is the salience of the information provided, as I will discuss below. In line with Carlson's results, Adida, et al. (2017) report that people do not punish poor performance by co-ethnics. Pointing to social identity theory (Tajfel 1974), she argues that voters engage in motivated reasoning, .i.e. the filtering of information to retain a positive image of in-group members. Consequently, "increasing voter access to information may reinforce or amplify ethnic voting" (Adida, et al. 2017: 3).

Recent publications also indicate that independent partisan identities may influence how voters process information. Carlson (2016a) demonstrates that Ugandans with pre-existing partisan identities under- or overestimate what they have received from the government in terms of public goods. Her experiment involving data on clinics and schools strongly suggests a mechanism of motivated reasoning, not an informational deficit. The study indicates that party identification needs to be taken seriously as an information filter. Others have also suggested that partisanship may be a relevant category of political identification with independent behavioural consequences in Africa (Michelitch 2015, Harding and Michelitch 2019, Mattes and Krönke 2020). As Uganda has arguably not Africa's most institutionalised party system, partisan-motivated reasoning may even be much stronger in other countries.

What might explain the contradictory results regarding the effect of performance information on voting patterns? Some theoretical arguments suggest that the impact of information is conditional. Carlson (2018b), based on an experiment in Uganda and Afrobarometer cross-country data, argues that relative distribution is decisive. Accordingly, voters care primarily about their relative advantage to others, which hints at a patronage-oriented understanding of performance and a high salience of the patrimonial register of leadership virtues (cf. Cheeseman, et al. 2021). Ferree et al. (2021) suggest that only unambiguous records impress people, whereas much more common mixed records may not provide a sufficiently clear basis for performance voting. Adida et al. (2020) argue that two factors – salience and coordination – determine whether performance information is considered. Voters must care about the issue and believe that others in their constituency care as well.

The question of salience is an important issue, which may explain some of the contradictory findings. The facts provided in the various study settings may not have been equally important

to voters. Indeed, Dunning et al. (2019b: 11) suspect that the weak impact of information across the seven Metaketa studies may be owed to low interest in the benchmarks provided: "We find the most likely explanation for the nulls to be that, in hindsight, the treatments were neither strong enough nor salient enough to affect voters' beliefs about politicians." One of the experiments (Adida, et al. 2017), for instance, uses statistics on an MPs legislative work, such as attendance rate and frequency of questions. Although such data tells something about an MP's dedication, it is conceivable that more concrete policy outcomes would trigger stronger voter reactions.

Salience may also explain the puzzling contradiction between the two similar experiments from Uganda (Conroy-Krutz 2012, Carlson 2015). Conroy-Krutz includes negative performance information in the candidate profiles and reports a powerful reaction. In contrast, Carlson's participants receive either positive or no stimuli (but never negative information) on candidate performance and prefer coethnics even when a non-coethnic candidate with a positive record is available. Carlson is probably right in asserting that Conroy-Krutz's hint at a poor performance is too obvious, prompting participants to opt for the 'correct' choice (Carlson 2015: 364). However, entirely omitting negative information seems at odds with real-world conditions, where the grievances of poor performance are likely to be more salient than subtle positive developments (cf. Nannestad and Paldam 1997).

Issues of external validity are a broader concern regarding the informational literature, which heavily rests on experimental designs (Davis 2020). Research is often based on hypothetical settings and candidates. It cannot be taken for granted that those trigger the same behavioural patterns as actual elections, where good or bad governance often brings great relief or existential worries into the lives of citizens.

Despite partly contradictory results, the overall impression is that information raises accountability, making voters more likely to punish and reward elected officials for policy outcomes. Many studies find clear evidence that once performance information gets available, many voters cross ethnic and partisan lines and ignore the supply of gifts and favours. Null results may be owed to a low salience of the information provided, which provides insights into the relative importance of different topics and expose errors in civic education campaigns (cf. Dunning, et al. 2019a), but does *not* imply that information generally does not make a difference.

While it is encouraging that salient performance information has an influence, the default level of political knowledge of average African voters remains low. Hence, the readily accessible information of a candidate's ethnicity and her ability to supply personal assistance may continue to influence vote choices. It is, moreover, essential to consider motivated reasoning. Some voters may only accept information that reaffirms their ethnic and partisan alignments. In such cases, it is not the informational environment but cognitive misperception, which keeps voters from

holding the powerful to account. Especially the results by Carlson (2016a) in Uganda are remarkable in this regard, as they indicate that not only ethnic but also partisan identities may heavily colour political perceptions. This aspect has been mostly disregarded so far on the grounds of weakly institutionalised party systems.

2.5 Summary: Shared Themes, Competing Narratives

The literature provides a rich analytical framework to understand electoral behaviour in Africa's new democracies. Current perspectives explain election outcomes in the region by a combination of ethnic voting, vote-buying, and performance voting.

The instrumental theory of ethnic voting is arguably the most common theme. Many empirical findings indicate that citizens use a candidate's ethnicity as a cue of her distributional intentions and expect higher returns from coethnics (Posner 2005, Ichino and Nathan 2012). However, a growing number of scholars point out that "the ethnicisation of parties and party systems varies substantially across the region" (Bleck and van de Walle 2018: 230). Major studies on traditional leaders in Senegal (Koter 2016) and informal institutions in Mali (Dunning and Harrison 2010) underline that ethnicity has little relevance in certain countries. Changing demographics and urbanisation may also weaken ethnic ties (Hino, et al. 2019, Kramon, et al. 2021).

A second major theme is campaign clientelism. Personal assistance and gift-giving are ubiquitous in electoral campaigns. Most authors view handouts as a sign of status affirmation with little influence on vote choices, and empirical evidence tends to support this view (Nugent 2007, Bratton 2008, Gadjanova 2017). However, it has also been argued that vote-buying is effective, either because voters infer future patronage (Kramon 2018) or because they doubt the secrecy of the ballot (Ferree and Long 2016).

Whether performance voting plays a relevant role remains contentious. Following some landmark studies (Weghorst and Lindberg 2013, Harding 2020a), it is widely acknowledged that the national economy and the supply of developmental public goods may win votes. However, many scholars doubt that the electoral feedback is strong enough to incentivise political elites to pursue general development. Survey evidence is called into question on the grounds of potential unobserved identity bias (Carlson 2015, 2016b, 2018a). Some scholars also argue that demand for local public goods such as roads and schools only reinforces unequal distribution along ethnic lines (Ejdemyr, et al. 2018, Nathan 2019a).

A lively discussion revolves around the potential of information. Several studies indicate that better knowledge on programs and policies raises accountability, with voters crossing ethnic and partisan lines to vote based on performance (Gottlieb 2016, Brierley, et al. 2020, Bhandari, et al. 2021). Other works arrive at opposing conclusions, finding no evidence that informational interventions affect vote choices (Dunning, et al. 2019b), but strong signs of motivated reasoning, i.e. voters discounting information that is not in line with their ethnic and partisan preferences

(Carlson 2016a, Adida, et al. 2017).

While there is broad agreement on the list of relevant topics, the literature offers two contradictory narratives regarding the functionality of electoral accountability. The dominant view remains that the electoral feedback of voters is too week to incentivise good governance effectively. Many authors deem it unlikely that voters reward and punish leaders for developmental progress and economic performance because of ethnic voting, vote-buying, and informational constraints. Electoral competition may accordingly even exacerbate informal distribution and ethnic favouritism (Eifert, et al. 2010, Carlson 2015, Kramon 2018, Nathan 2019b). Conversely, another stream of the literature maintains that Africans are well aware of governmental responsibilities and provide considerable electoral feedback in response to policy outcomes. According to this view, democratic competition has already introduced a shift towards the supply of national development in Africa (Weghorst and Lindberg 2013, Poteete 2019, Harding 2020a).

Why do we find the same factors at play across the region but arrive at opposing conclusions regarding accountability? A useful contribution to harmonise the deviant accounts is the framework of multiple moralities introduced by Cheeseman et al. (2021). Accordingly, African elections feature two competing ideals of moral virtue. Patrimonial virtues urge candidates to be generous in personal relations and supply patronage to their networks and communal identity groups. By contrast, civic virtues emphasise national unity and the responsibility to bring about inclusive developmental progress. Patrimonial and civic ideals coexist, but their relative influence varies – and this variation may produce very different accountability pressures: In settings where patrimonial virtues dominate, clientelism and ethnicity are likely to remain the key focus of voters. Where civic virtues have the upper hand, voters may start focusing on performance, even though clientelism and ethnic politicisation remain visible.

Indeed, some controversies on African voters may be owed to a tendency to overgeneralise in the field. Generalisations raise the chances of getting published (Briggs and Weathers 2016), but most publications are actually single-country studies set in narrow local contexts. The micro-perspectives have advantages and reflect the experimental turn in pursuit of unambiguous causal inferences (Pepinsky 2019). However, experimental designs raise concerns regarding external validity. Randomised control trials are usually not feasible in African studies, and contextual peculiarities further complicate replicability (Davis 2020). In this light, scholars increasingly call for a reduction in the scope of generalisations and more comparative cross-country research (Basedau, et al. 2011, Briggs 2017).

The literature on voting behaviour reviewed here resembles the described patterns. Figure 2-1 displays some meta-statistics. Of all citations, I have singled out those that directly analyse vote choices of African citizens – altogether 51 publications. The set is *not* based on systematic

sampling but represents a selection of studies considered relevant for this review. However, the collection is based on extensive literature research. I also conducted keyword searches across standard journals[2] to avoid missing relevant contributions. Thus, the frequency statistics should represent a fair approximation to general patterns in the field.

The left plot highlights the dominance of single-country designs. Of 59 studies, only 15 cover more than one country. Only nine investigate more than two states. Even in the multi-country designs, we see few systematic comparisons. Most are investigations of pooled cross-country data without a break-up at the national level. In several instances, the large-N perspective serves as a quick verification of case-study results. A systematic juxtaposition of different societies is largely confined to two-country designs (e.g. Posner 2004b, Koter 2016).[3]

As the middle plot shows, Ghana and Uganda appear most frequently in the literature review.[4] Especially Ghana, which has seen three presidential turnovers, receives great attention, with many influential studies focussing on the west African nation (e.g. Nathan 2019b, Harding 2020a). Five relevant contributions on different matters by Elizabeth Carlson partly boost the figure for Uganda. However, the list extends to other publications in highly esteemed journals (e.g. Conroy-Krutz 2012, Martin and Raffler 2020), potentially because long-term president Museveni's hybrid regime and Uganda's ethnic make-up is viewed as particularly representative (c.f Conroy-Krutz 2012: 353). Kenya, arguably one of the most ethnically politicised countries in the region (Elischer 2013), ranks third with seven studies. In terms of francophone countries, we find only Senegal, Benin and one study from Mali.

Another relevant statistic is the frequency of presidential and parliamentary elections. Many key publications, particularly the rising number of experiments, investigate parliamentary races. However, the dynamics may deviate in presidential elections. MP contests are characterised by face-to-face interactions between candidates and constituents (cf. Lindberg 2010). Presidential races are remote, and voters will usually not expect to meet the candidates. Without direct encounters, ethnicity and patronage may play a lower role in presidential elections. Using the framework of dual moralities (Cheeseman, et al. 2021), MP candidates may face more pressure to adhere to patrimonial virtues, whereas presidents may be judged primarily by their commitment to civic virtues. Africa's constitutions generally concentrate power at the national

[2] Keyword searches were carried out for the following journals: African Affairs, American Journal of Political Science, American Political Science Review, British Journal of Political Science, Comparative Political Studies, Democratization, Electoral Studies, Journal of Politics, Political Behavior, World Politics. Keywords: Africa* and vote* or election*, Period 2010-2021.

[3] Note that only publications which directly investigate vote choices are considered here. Important other examples of excellent comparative research on political dynamics in Africa include: Bratton, et al. 2005, Elischer 2013, Cheeseman, et al. 2021

[4] It is possible that Ghana and Uganda are somewhat overrepresented because they are also this studies' focus countries. However, included are only papers with a broader relevance for the field. Brigg's (2017) literature analysis also finds both among the most frequently studied countries.

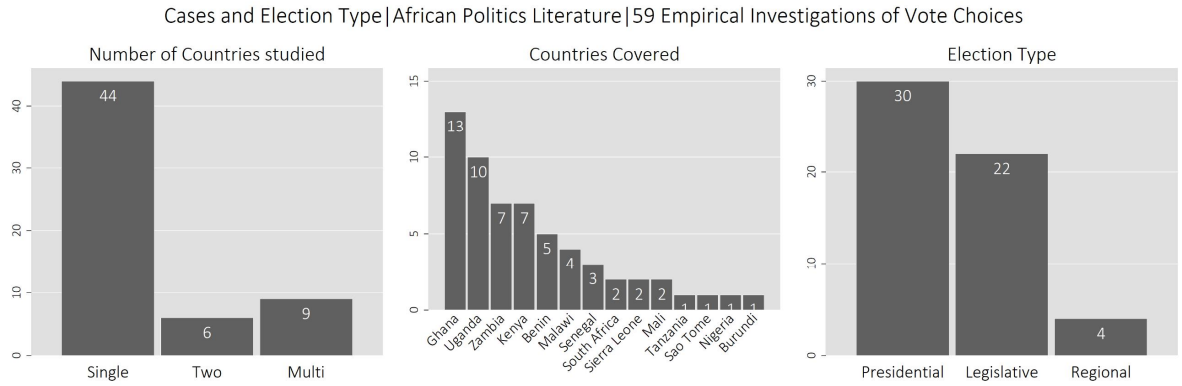

Figure 2-1: Cases and Election Type in Empirical Studies of Voting Behaviour in Africa

executive, with weak parliamentary checks and balances (cf. Bleck and van de Walle 2018: 9).

Different dynamics in parliamentary and presidential races may account for conflicting conclusions of two recent major books on Ghana (Nathan 2019b, Harding 2020a). Nathan (2019b) developed his argument upon parliamentary contests in dense urban neighbourhoods and emphasises patronage and ethnic voting as primary drivers of voting behaviour. Harding's (2020a) focuses on presidential and reckons that electoral competition boosts rural development across Ghana because voters hold leaders to account for roads, clinics, and schools.

Considering the overall state of knowledge, it remains challenging to assess what electoral accountability can achieve in Africa's post-colonial nation-states. In theory, elections ensure that governments pursue the common good and national development. In the region's democratic practice, ethnicity, clientelism, and low information may or may not undermine the mechanism. The literature offers evidence for both views. One reason why we arrive at contradictory conclusions may be the coexistence of patrimonial and civic ideals of leadership (Cheeseman, et al. 2021). Both are likely present at most study sights, but their relative influence may vary considerably. As the field often draws upon micro-perspectives, it is difficult to infer the big picture of national accountability.

At the same time, certain issues call for further research. A common concern is that performance perceptions are not much more than a reflection of ethnic and partisan preferences, but we are short of systematic studies on the prevalence of identity biases. A related claim holds that the statistical links cannot rule out a strictly clientelistic pattern in the distribution of local public goods, and we need more nuanced insights into the make-up of survey links to assess the regional underpinnings of the national performance signal. There is also considerable ambiguity regarding the role of information. Some experts contend that information makes voters responsive to performance; others argue that identity-motivated reasoning often leads people to disregard facts. More research on the behavioural implications of different levels of information is hence needed. And, of course, more comparative research would be a valuable addition to better assess the scope of generalisation in the rich but often contradictory literature.

2.6 Aims of this Study

By this study, I seek to address certain critical questions regarding the power and potential of electoral accountability in Africa. The focus is on presidential vote choices, and the study zooms in on different aspects of the retrospective accountability mechanism. Specifically, the book addresses three issues to improve knowledge in reference to ongoing debates.

Firstly, the study provides new insights on whether social identities determine political evaluations. We have mixed evidence on the matter, but some studies indicate that electoral accountability fails because performance perceptions merely reflect ethnic and partisan preferences (Carlson 2016b, Adida, et al. 2017). Interestingly, we know little about the actual prevalence of biases in representative survey data. Chapter 5 presents the first broad analysis of ethnic and partisan leanings in Afrobarometer data. In Ghana and Uganda, I trace performance perceptions of relevant identity groups over a period of more than ten years. By extending the analysis to 16 countries, I provide a comparative picture of identity biases across the continent.

An important aspect is the consideration of partisanship in the mapping of identity biases. For long, scholars assumed that partisan identities do not really exist in Africa because party systems are young, weakly institutionalised, and non-ideological. However, recent findings hint at independent partisan identities with various behavioural consequences (Michelitch 2015, Carlson 2016a). The simultaneous investigation of ethnic and partisan identities illuminates their relative influence and yields surprising evidence of rising partisan identification in certain contexts.

The analysis of biases also contributes to the lively debate to what extend policy information is considered among voters. By testing whether greater access to information has a moderating effect on ethnic and partisan sentiments, the study provides new insights into how different informational conditions affect political perceptions in a nationally representative cross-section. If informational deficits are the only limitation, knowledgeable people should be less biased (Gottlieb 2016, Brierley, et al. 2020, Bhandari, et al. 2021). If identity-motivated reasoning colours the processing of facts, leanings can be expected to prevail irrespective of information supply (Carlson 2016a, Adida, et al. 2017).

The second major aim is to address problems of survey evidence on retrospective performance voting. Links between performance perceptions and vote choice in African survey data are well documented, but some scholars suspect unobserved identity biases inflate them, thereby falsely indicating retrospective voting (Evans and Andersen 2006, Carlson 2016b, 2018a). Another concern is that strict clientelist distribution along ethnic lines could also lead to a good match between performance perceptions and vote choices in a national sample while completely being at odds with the theoretical notion that accountability incentivises national development (Ejdemyr, et al. 2018, Nathan 2019a).

Chapter 6 offers a new approach in the analysis of survey voting intentions. To mitigate the issues risen, I shift the focus from the national sample to the voting behaviour of specific identity groups. Over more than ten years, I track changes in the electoral preferences of relevant ethnic and partisan constituencies and link them to performance perceptions. The group-level perspective disaggregates the performance signal and provides a sound foundation to assess whether retrospective voting translates into pressure for national programmatic strategies. As identity is held constant, group-level performance effects can rule out that the link is an artefact of omitted identity biases and, hence, address concerns of endogeneity.

Thirdly, Basedau (2020) diagnoses an urgent need for a "pronouncedly comparative perspective" in the study of African Politics. The final major aim of this book is to deliver such a perspective regarding identity biases and performance voting. In two in-depth case studies, I contrast two of the most frequently studied countries – Ghana and Uganda. The findings are then mapped against results from 14 other countries to situate them within the larger universe of cases and evaluate their generalizability. I use multi-level mixed-effects models to illuminate systematic differences at the country level and at the level of partisan and ethnic groups. The approach sheds light on the magnitude of identity biases and the distribution of performance voting across the continent. Indeed, the comparative perspective reveals significant differences between Ghana and Uganda and indicates that both are not exactly typical cases in Africa. The comparison helps to assess the scope of generalisations from many previous studies (cf. Briggs 2017, Davis 2020).

With an observational period of more than 10 years, the study also considers temporal variation. Political attitudes may be volatile, and the salience of identity and performance may quickly change. In some countries, I observe remarkable shifts in the preferences of supposedly politicised identity groups, which indicates that identity biases and voting patterns may be less stable than implicitly assumed in many studies.

3 A Framework to investigate Electoral Accountability in Africa

> *Electoral accountability, inefficient as it may be, is both a critical and in many instances effective, element of representative democracy (Franklin, et al. 2014: 390)*

Great hopes are associated with electoral competition. In modern political thinking, elections have been praised as a powerful tool in the hands of ordinary citizens to control and discipline political elites. Regular polls are associated with good governance, economic growth, better public service delivery, and general development (Besley 2005, Besley, et al. 2010, Harding and Stasavage 2014, Dash and Mukherjee 2015, Rosenzweig 2015, Carbone, et al. 2016, Harding 2020b).

However, the efficacy of electoral accountability cannot be taken for granted. As the quote above asserts, elections are certainly not always efficient and effective in ensuring that politicians act in the best interest of their citizens. Theories of electoral accountability seek to spell out under which conditions electoral control is effective. Over the last decades, political scientists have identified different mechanisms of how voting can align the behaviour and the policies of elected officials to the preferences of citizens. At the same time, certain pitfalls have been highlighted that can distort the link between voters and politicians and lead to a failure of accountability, despite strong and healthy electoral institutions.

This chapter aims to deduce a theoretical framework for the intended investigation of electoral accountability in the context of African new democracies. Almost all countries of the region, nowadays, carry out regular multi-party elections yet it remains contentious whether they produce effective accountability, especially because politicised identities are thought to interfere with mechanisms of electoral accountability. To assess the contending arguments, it is important to operate with a clear idea of what we can expect in terms of mechanism within the African context.

The focus is on elections of the chief executive, or "heads of states". For most African countries, this means majoritarian presidential elections, which require the winning candidate to surpass 50% of the votes in a single national constituency. In these systems, the president is generally the most powerful political institutions and accordingly, the presidential election is by far and large the most important electoral contest (Jones 2018). In parliamentary and regional elections, accountability dynamics may deviate as responsibilities are more ambiguous and direct personal contact with candidates makes political interaction more prone to patrimonial exchange and vote-buying.

I argue that electoral accountability in African executive elections is a matter of retrospective sanctioning and present a moral-hazard model. The institutional design, with its high clarity of responsibility and the dynamics of political competition, are conducive to retrospective

sanctioning. Likewise, the moral-hazard perspective offers a good basis to model the moderating impact of identities, which is seen as the prime threat to accountability in Africa.

By transferring the moral-hazard model to the developing context, I hope to contribute to our theoretical understanding of electoral accountability beyond traditional democracies. Indeed, most publications on accountability in Africa – explicitly or implicitly – invoke a sanctioning model. However, few unravel in detail how the mechanism unfolds in the developing context of African new democracies. This chapter clarifies implicit assumptions and illustrates contextual pitfalls of the mechanism.

Section 1 discusses different mechanisms of electoral accountability and identifies a sanctioning model as the most appropriate approach for the context of Africa's transitional states. Section 2 investigates the viability of the mechanism within this context and discusses popular expectations, information availability, and the attribution of responsibility. Section 2.3 analyses how ethnic and partisan identities may hamper the efficacy of accountability. Section 2.4 gives an overview of the model and derives the main hypotheses of this study. Section 2.5 discusses the implications for the distributive strategies of African heads of states.

3.1 The disciplining Effect of Elections on Politicians

Theories of electoral accountability are rooted in a rational-choice perspective on individual behaviour and democratic competition (Downs 1957). Politicians and voters are understood as rational actors. In most general terms, rationality means purposeful and deliberate behaviour (Hindmoor and Taylor 2015). Rational individuals undertake actions with particular consequences or goals in mind. In a decision-making situation, available alternatives are weighed and ranked to eventually choose the option that produces the most desirable consequences (Downs 1957, Thurner 1998). The rational-choice perspective implies predictability of individual decisions, thereby providing the foundation for a methodological individualism that explains institutional outcomes by individual behaviour (Congleton 2019).

The rational-choice perspective assumes that the maximisation of self-interest is at the core of rational goals. The meaning of self-interest, however, is subject to lively philosophical debates.[5] Down's (1957:27) had a relatively narrow concept, which understood self-interest primarily in terms of personal wealth: "whenever we speak of rational behaviour, we always mean rational behaviour directed primarily towards selfish ends". Other definitions seek to include more elusive individual goals such as happiness and satisfaction and prefer the term *utility* to include a broad range of personal benefits that individuals may seek (Weirich 2009). Other works have challenged the notion of self-interest (Hindmoor 2010) and argued that it disregards altruism and collective well-being as important human motives (Mansbridge 1990, Simon 1995), resulting in a poor predictive record of rational choice theory regarding the real-world behaviour of human

[5] See Hindmoor 2010 for a comprehensive overview of the debate

beings (Green and Shapiro 1994). Nonetheless, a narrow idea of self-interest can be a useful analytical tool to describe certain human interactions. The study of electoral accountability is a good example in this regard.

Models of electoral accountability benefit from a relatively narrow concept of self-interest because it is well suited to capture the inherent antagonism in the interests of voters and politicians. The idea of representative democracy implies that politicians are not acting in their own interest but on behalf of citizens, and most common abuses of political responsibility are in turn about the pursuit of selfish ends at the expense of the common interest. A relatively narrow and selfish concept of individual goals hence isolates those aspects that are relevant to think of electoral accountability. In the specific context of voter-politician relations, it is thus an appropriate model to investigate the rationalities of bad leadership and to highlight how electoral competition can change the calculus and discipline politicians. The analytical reduction does not dispute that "in reality, men are not always selfish" (Downs 1957: 27). Some politicians may well be public-spirited and motivated by collective goals; electoral accountability is about controlling those who may not be so virtuous.

Conceiving of politicians as self-interested is not at odds with real-world conditions considering their institutional position. A public office provides manifold temptations to put private before public interests. Even the most virtuous politicians may be seduced by the power they get and the opportunities that come with it. Officials can channel public revenues to personal accounts or rake in bribes from affluent citizens in exchange for preferential treatment. They can also abuse the perks of office and use them (official cars, public air fleet) for private purposes at the expanse of citizens. The opportunities to seek individual gains at the expense of the public interest are wide and varied. Political scientists usually speak of rent-seeking, shirking, or corruption to capture these phenomena. In this work, I will follow Manin et al. (1999a: 40) and use the term *rents* to refer to any income from office and the term *shirking* to refer to the wide array of behaviours that are not in line with citizen preferences, including passive (low effort) and active actions (corruption).

Even if politicians cannot extract illegal rents, they have strong incentives to seek re-election. These include legal rents that consist of salaries and authorised perks of office. Furthermore, there are more elusive nonmonetary goals. Politicians may seek prestige, power, public respect, and influence (Lake and Baum 2001). Downs (1957: 30) also points to "the love of conflict, i.e. the thrill of the game". Last but not least, public good concerns and the desire to carry through specific policies are certainly an important incentive, especially in polarised political settings (cf. Besley 2006: 104). All things considered, political leaders have many reasons for wanting to stay in office even if they cannot extract illegal rents or shirk. It just needs to be ensured that they do not succumb to rent-seeking temptations but dedicate their effort to furthering the public

interest.

Mechanisms of Electoral Accountability

Theories of electoral accountability view elections as the key mechanism to ensure that politicians refrain from rent-seeking and act in the interest of the general public (Cheibub and Przeworski 1999). When it comes to the specific mechanism behind this dynamic, accounts vary. Early works focused on the sanctioning potential of voters, whereas the second generation of models emphasized the opportunity to select qualified leaders.

Among the earliest advocates of electoral accountability were the founding fathers of the United States, especially James Madison. As he wrote the federalist papers to promote the new US Constitution, the conflict between self and common interest was a central concern. He warned against "men of factious tempers, of local prejudices, or of sinister designs, [who] may, by intrigue, by corruption, or by other means […] betray the interests of the people" (Madison 2008a: 53). Elections were seen as one pillar of a constitutional design that aimed at keeping self-interested rulers virtues (cf. Madison 2008b: 282).

In modern political science, the accentuation of elections as a key instrument of political control became more pronounced. One of the most influential works in this regard was Key's (1966) "The responsible electorate". The book challenged the at the time dominant view that electoral outcomes were predetermined mainly by a society's demographics (e.g. occupation, religion, education). Instead, Key 1966: 61) argued that voters act as "appraisers of past events, past performance, and past actions", whose most central function is to vote out underperforming governments. His analysis of US Elections indicated that switching between parties in US elections was not only much more common than expected but also driven by a high interest in current political affairs. He concluded that switching voters would indeed punish bad governments, thereby turning elections into an effective weapon to commit governments to the public interest, "for the fear of loss of popular support powerfully disciplines the actions of governments" (Key 1966: 10).

Key's idea of electoral control got further advanced when political scientists started to frame the conflicting interests between voters and politicians as a principle-agent problem. Theories of agency stem from the economic contracting literature and describe a specific setting: Some actor (the principal) wants another actor (the agent) to take actions that are in accordance with the principal's goals (Gailmard 2014), yet the agent may have other interests so that the principal has to find strategies to incentivise or control his agent. The principal-agent perspective is perfectly suited to describe the conflict of interest between voters and politicians: Voters are the principal(s) who want their politicians to act on their behalf, maximise the voter's welfare, and refrain from rent-seeking. Politicians are the agents who prefer to minimise their effort and extract rents to raise their personal wealth.

Two of the most influential papers to investigate electoral control from a principal-agent perspective are Barro (1973) and Ferejohn (1986). Within the family of principal-agent models, both papers represent pure moral-hazard models with a focus on hidden actions. Hidden action refers to the problem that most actions of politicians happen behind closed doors, evading the oversight of voters. Such secrecy in a constellation of conflicting interests between principals and agents represents a moral hazard as it allows politicians to shirk without consequences, may it be in the form of low governance effort (Ferejohn 1986) or overpayments and rent-seeking (Barro 1973).

Elections, however, provide agents with an instrument to change the incentive structure and prevent shirking by politicians. Although voters may not be able to observe the hidden actions of their leaders, the policies and the level of effort provided by an elected official will produce outcomes that modify the utility of voters (wealth, public service etc.). In moral hazard models of electoral accountability, voters use this information to apply a simple retrospective voting rule: Re-elect the incumbent if the utility over a term meets or exceeds expectations and vote against her if she falls short.

The sanctioning of poor performances at the polls resolves the moral hazard problem. For politicians, losing office is usually more costly than acting in the best interest of constituents, given the vast array of legally authorised benefits linked to a political position. In anticipation of voter reactions, rational officeholders should accordingly seek to raise the utility of voters and refrain from shirking and rent-seeking. Indeed, both theoretical models by Barro (1973) and Ferejohn (1986) confirm that elections can "move officeholders toward a position where the advancement of self-interest approximates the advancement of the interests of his constituents" (Barro 1973: 19). The moral hazard perspective thus, all in all, offers a simple but plausible mechanism to explain how electoral competition induces politicians to do what voters want and reduces the temptation to extract rents. The credible threat of removal from office is enough to motivate politicians.

The simple sanctioning mechanism of the moral-hazard framework is compelling, but it has some limitations. The first subject of debate are term limits (cf. Ashworth 2012). If it is all about getting reelected, an outgoing incumbent has little incentive to refrain from shirking and may want to use her final term to extract as many rents as possible. However, some authors, including Barro (1973) and Stiers (2019), suggested extending the model to the level of political parties, which are not affected by term limits and may serve as a control to outgoing officeholders. Furthermore, politicians may care a lot about their legacy since their reputation will affect their post-office opportunities. A poor final term in conjunction with a bad election result for the affiliated party could considerably diminish legacy payoffs; hence self-interested officeholders may still be interested in concluding their reign with a positive election result (cf. Maskin and

Tirole 2004). Indeed, empirical studies find only minor and inconsistent last-term effects when comparing outgoing politicians to those who stand for re-election (Besley and Case 1995, 2003, Ferraz and Finan 2011, Aruoba, et al. 2019).

Another point of debate is the trade-off between seeking re-election and shirking in the utility-maximising calculus of politicians. For the moral hazard model to be effective, the utility of re-election must always exceed the utility of exploiting office for selfish ends. The explicit salary and other benefits of office need to be sufficiently high (Barro 1973), and high salaries should, according to this logic, increase electoral accountability (Fearon 1999). Furthermore, re-election needs to be achievable from the viewpoint of politicians. If the threshold set by voters is too high, incumbents may deem re-election unlikely and, consequently, opt for shirking as a less risky strategy. Overly critical and demanding voters may thus fail to discipline politicians (Maravall 2009). In practice, the utility of holding office and the chances for re-election are arguably high enough for politicians to seek re-election. Public debates often criticise politicians for clinging to office, whereas reports of leaders who do not worry about re-election are hard to find. It is thus reasonable to assume that re-election under most circumstances outweighs the utility of shirking in the calculus of politicians.

The most central critique of the moral-hazard framework, however, regards its disregard of differences between candidates. All candidates are viewed as equally competent and equally self-interested, which is why electoral accountability is confined to voting out underperforming incumbents. Critics object that the purely retrospective rationale contradicts the emphasise that public discussions put on candidate traits such as competence, experience, virtue, or wisdom (Fearon 1999, Mansbridge 2009). If candidates indeed vary in terms of their qualification, rational voters who seek to make the best possible decision should usually consider this information in their decision-making process to arrive at the optimal choice (Gailmard 2014).

To account for differences in the qualification of candidates, some scholars have suggested to rather understand electoral accountability as a selection problem (Rogoff 1990, Banks and Sundaram 1993, Besley and Case 1995, Canes-Wrone, et al. 2001). Respective works build on the concept of adverse selection, another central idea of principle-agent theory: The focus of corresponding models is to identify good types of agents instead of incentivising against moral hazard. Regarding electoral accountability, this means finding an appropriate candidate becomes the centre of attention. Voters in adverse selection models are forward-looking and focus on skills and qualifications to ascertain a candidate's ability to produce public goods[6] instead of sanctioning politicians retrospectively. Politicians serve the interests of their principals not for

[6] To describe the differences between candidates, authors have distinguished between good and bad types (Fearon 1999), low and high quality candidates (Canes-Wrone, et al. 2001), competence (Rogoff 1990, Duch and Stevenson 2008) or congruent vs. dissonant characters (Besley 2006). The ability to produce public goods is a common ground across works.

fear of losing office but because they are good types. A similar logic underlies spatial models of party competition (e.g. Downs 1957, Adams, et al. 2005), where the selection process promotes those candidates that meet the ideological preference of a voter majority. In strict adverse-selection models, however, an incumbent's actions over a term are discounted and do not affect the electorate's opinion. This makes them rare in studies of electoral accountability because, in reality, politicians are likely to reveal critical information about their true type through their performance in office, and voters seem unlikely to disregard this information (Besley 2006: 82).

Most recent works, therefore, combine elements of sanctioning and selection (Banks and Sundaram 1998, Besley 2006, Duch and Stevenson 2008, Ashworth, et al. 2017, Aruoba, et al. 2019). Elections in such models have two functions. They reduce the moral hazard in the relationship between voters and politicians but also serve to pick the most qualified candidate. The combined perspective usually follows adverse selection models in understanding elections as a selection process among different types of candidates. Sanctioning is integrated by interpreting the conduct of an incumbent in office as a signal of his competence. Voters use this signal to sort good from bad candidates, thereby also retrospectively sanctioning incumbents (Duch and Stevenson 2008).

All in all, it can be said that principal-agent theory is currently the standard to describe how elections may reconcile the conflicting interests between politicians and their constituents. Both types of models, moral hazard and adverse selection, add to our understanding of electoral accountability. Moral hazard models illustrate how elections can induce politicians to refrain from rent-seeking because they fear being voted out, which is usually more costly than simply adhering to the voter's interest. Adverse selection models offer a theoretical mechanism by which voters can make sure that the executive acts in the public interest by sorting good from bad types of candidates. Comparisons of both approaches tend to favour a selection perspective that integrates retrospective sanctioning into the selection process (Fearon 1999, Besley 2005, Mansbridge 2009, Maravall 2009, Ashworth 2012). Nonetheless, moral hazard models remain relevant in practical applications (Persson, et al. 1997, Shi and Svensson 2006).

3.1.1 Selection or Sanctioning?

Considering the different causal mechanisms that theories of electoral accountability have developed, an empirical study must be unambiguous about its approach and the implications that flow from that choice. The suitability of a theoretical model depends on the research goals and the contextual features of the research environment. A good model ought to be as complex as necessary and as simple as possible. Generally, models idealise and simplify reality to isolate those structures that are relevant. The decisive criterion for the usefulness of a model is its ability to link the variables of interest and to illustrate how their variation affects the outcome (Hamlin 2017).

Against this criterion, a moral hazard approach seems preferable over a selection perspective in

providing a theoretical foundation for the intended investigation. This study's guiding question is whether elections in Africa's new democracies incentivise leaders to facilitate national development. Two reasons speak for a sanctioning perspective. First, the concept of moral hazard reflects the most eminent problem of African governance, that is, political elites who use the state for self-dealing. A sanctioning perspective hence isolates the key aspects of the question. Secondly, electoral systems and party dynamics in Africa's new democracies comply relatively well with the logic of the moral hazard model, while critical caveats against a sanctioning perspective do not apply.

Avoiding moral hazard is arguably at the core of academic and public discussions about the benefits of competitive elections in Africa. Through democratisation, the continent hopes to overcome a troubled history of rent-seeking and corruption by political elites (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997, Cheeseman 2015). Concepts such as Big Man Rule or Kleptocracy have been developed almost exclusively in reference to the region's postcolonial states and reflect a broader structural problem. The colonial experience has left societies with an ambivalent relationship to the state by which robbing the public hand for personal ends is to a certain extend morally justifiable (Ekeh 1975). Consequently, it has been rather the rule than the exception that regimes extensively dipped into the state treasury while disregarding developmental and economic progress. Rent-seeking in Africa is thus a structural problem and not merely owed to bad types of leaders. It also remains a problem today, as evident, for instance, in the misappropriation of aid by political elites to offshore bank deposits (Andersen, et al. 2020).

Echoing this trajectory, the academic debate motivating this book comes down to the question of whether elections can break the tradition, and finally, sanction leaders who disregard their developmental responsibilities. While some scholar's express optimism (e.g. Harding 2020b), others fear the sanctioning gets subverted by identity voting (e.g. Carlson 2015). The moral-hazard framework is well-suited to model both arguments, integrate related variables, and show how their variation changes the outcome (cf. section 2.3).

It can also be noted that the chief executive in most of Africa's polities is selected through majoritarian presidential elections, which require the winning candidate to receive more than 50% of votes. Under these rules, elections usually come down to a binary choice between re-electing the incumbent and voting for one opposition party. This is again much more in line with a pure moral hazard than a proportional electoral system, where a selection perspective is preferable to account for the complexities of vote choice (cf. Duch and Stevenson 2008). Generally, proportional systems are more conducive to the (prospective) representation of interests, whereas majoritarian elections are more conducive to retrospective accountability (Powell 2000).

All in all, the moral hazard model of electoral accountability represents the best approach to

think of electoral accountability in Africa. It gets right to the core of the question of whether democratic elections can break Africa's troublesome history of leaders who elevate their own interests over those of the general public, and it is well in line with the contextual settings we find in most African states. This study, therefore, invokes a moral hazard model to analyse electoral accountability in Africa.

3.2 Electoral Sanctioning in Africa's developing Democracies

Above, I have argued that the sanctioning model is well suited to think of electoral accountability in Africa, but is it also suited to describe the individual-level behaviour of rational voters? In the analysis of voting in advanced democracies, rational choice explanations of voting behaviour usually follow Down's (1957) and assume a spatial perspective. Accordingly, voters evaluate parties in terms of their position on an ideological left-right scale and cast a ballot for the party closest to their ideal point. Modern applications assume multiple ideological dimensions and allow for a varying salience of different issue dimension on the side of voters (e.g. Mauerer, et al. 2015). Especially in proportional systems where many relevant parties, with different ideological profiles, compete for votes, spatial models appear to be the preferable approach to understanding vote choice (Thurner 1998, 2000).

By contrast, the moral hazard model rests on a relatively simple understanding of vote choice. Citizens evaluate politicians retrospectively and apply a cut-off rule by which they retain an incumbent only if she has met a certain performance threshold. Accordingly, voters have certain expectations about what a government should achieve over a term. Although the incumbent's actions remain hidden, voters observe changes in their utility over a term. For their electoral choice, voters compare expectations to outcomes and re-elect the incumbent if she has met or surpassed expectations. If not, they vote for an oppositional candidate to sanction the incumbent.

The strategy aims to build and maintain a credible threat of losing power and signal politicians that poor performance, shirking, and rent-seeking will not be tolerated. By doing so repeatedly, voters can motivate politicians and ensure that elected officials do whatever is needed to satisfy the criteria of citizens (Barro 1973, Ferejohn 1986, Healy and Malhotra 2013). Sanctioning voters accordingly seek to influence future outcomes, even though their strategy is purely retrospective (Maravall 2009: 915).

Although retrospective voting is motivated by the rational aim to discipline politicians to act in the best interest of voters, a major point of criticism is the disregard of diverging policy positions. Instead of an ideological space that may consist of multiple issue dimensions, the retrospective logic implicitly assumes that parties and candidates have identical positions (Thurner 1998: 50-52). Otherwise, voters should prefer an underperforming incumbent close to their programmatic ideal point over an alternative candidate who wants to move the country into a different ideological direction. In this light, the model seems not sufficiently complex to model a voter's

decision-making process in advanced democracies, where we find considerable ideological differences between parties.

However, the retrospective voting model is well suited to describe the voting decision in Africa's new party systems. It has well been documented that ideological position-taking is rare in the region's presidential campaigns (Bleck and van de Walle 2013, 2018: 143 – 184). Parties fear being seen as divisive if they take controversial positions (Bleck and van de Walle 2018:114) and appeal to poor majorities through general promises of developmental improvements (Harding 2020a). The pressing needs of low-income settings level out the ideological spectrum towards the shared goal of developmental progress (Elischer 2012, Bleck and van de Walle 2013).

Likewise, it seems not in conflict with realities to assume that voters largely disregard differences in the personality of candidates in their voting decision. The level of trust in the good intentions of politicians is generally low in Africa (Bratton and Logan 2015). Following reoccurring experiences of rent-seeking and corruption, citizens are hard to convince of a candidate's benevolence. From the voter's standpoint, sanctioning is thus an appropriate strategy to make any candidate aware of the consequences of shirking and rent-seeking.

Moreover, political processes are generally non-transparent, aligning with the logic of hidden actions underlying the moral-hazard model. Weak media structures and low transparency in political decision-making processes make it difficult to follow governmental activities. A retrospective cut-off rule by which voters focus on policy outcomes to establish whether they should retain the incumbent or give the job to another candidate is hence a likely rationale in the voting decisions of policy-oriented rational voters in Africa.

Overall, retrospective voting via a cut-off rule seems appropriate to think of the decision-making process of voters in Africa's democracies. However, the model raises some questions regarding the practical execution that need to be discussed and answered to provide a sound theoretical foundation for an investigation. First, it is necessary to specify the expectations of voters. What outcomes are they looking for, and what are the reference points to determine whether an incumbent's performance is sufficient or deficient? Secondly, it is crucial to consider the informational base of voters. What sources do voters have, and do these sources allow for an objective assessment? Finally, it is necessary to look at the clarity of responsibility. Can voters assign blame and credit to a single incumbent, or does the institutional framework distribute responsibility among various independent actors?

3.2.1 Political Demands and Reference Points

For the definition of performance, prior research has concentrated primarily on macroeconomic indicators. The rise of behavioural models of electoral accountability triggered an entire subfield, which studies retrospective voter reactions to changes in GDP growth, inflation, or unemployment (Kramer 1971, Stigler 1973, Fiorina 1978, Lewis-Beck 1988, Duch and

Stevenson 2008, Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2013).

However, a purely economic conception of voter expectations may be misguided in the context of Africa's new democracies. In developing countries, macroeconomic indicators are not necessarily linked to the experience of ordinary citizens in their daily lives. A government may, for instance, benefit from the trust of international donors and deliver positive change even during dire economic times. Another administration may produce impressive growth rates but fail to improve living standards. Scholars have generally diagnosed a disconnect between macroeconomic indicators and popular welfare in the region (Lewis 2008, Whitfield, et al. 2015). Macroeconomic indicators are, moreover, volatile and not fully reliable. It is, for instance, next to impossible to accurately track unemployment because many people earn their living in the informal sector. Therefore, understanding performance purely in terms of macroeconomic developments may miss the true perceptions about government performance.

Instead of focusing on the macro-economy, I suggest using the shared experience of underdevelopment as a reference point to derive expectations of African citizens. Africa's societies are, with very few exceptions, low or low-middle income societies. Colonialism and the political instability of the first decades after independence have led to a homogenous set of challenges.[7] Basic needs such as water supply, education, and health services are unavailable, unreliable, or inaccessible – at least to parts of the population. Even economically more successful states still struggle to provide all their citizens with some essentials of human development.

Human Development is in itself an underspecified concept surrounded by lively debates about what it should include (Sen 1988, Jolly 2018). However, its essence is captured by the three dimensions of the Human Development Index (HDI): Long and healthy life, Knowledge, and Standard of Living (UNDP 2018). These three dimensions are remarkably close to the programmatic priorities of African citizens.

Citizen demands in Africa coincide almost perfectly with the developmental core topics laid down by the HDI. This is not surprising given that development is about the supply of basic human needs. Looking at popular priorities in 36 African countries, Bentley, et al. (2015: 5) note that "the struggle to survive economically and to attain an acceptable physical quality of life clearly dominates respondents' immediate responses". The underlying analysis of cross-country survey data highlights a small cluster of topics that electorates consistently identify as the most important problems. On top of the list are unemployment, health, education, and infrastructure. The first three issues correspond to the HDI's dimensions. Infrastructure is not explicitly included in the index, yet it is related as a vital condition to raise living standards and a core element of

[7] On the negative impact of colonialism on Africa see: Heldring and Robinson 2018. Comprehensive accounts of the political problems of the post-independence period can be found in Cheeseman 2015: 32-56 and Hyden 2010a.

developmental strategies.[8]

Not only popular demands but also programmatic appeals by candidates centre on the developmental agenda. A content analysis of party manifestos from 4 African countries finds that the lion's share of programmatic statements is on infrastructure, productivity (including job creation), education, and welfare state expansion (including health) (Elischer 2012). Bleck and Van de Walle (2013: 1406) even argue that the developmental discourse is of such outstanding importance that it prevents an ideological differentiation of African party systems: Since "actors cannot take a stance against development", programmatic appeals are exclusively formulated as valence appeals. Valence issues describe proposals that nobody can disagree with, such as economic growth, better education, or better clinic facilities. They are distinguished from position issues, where actors take opposing standpoints regarding the direction in a policy field (Stokes 1963). Based on the congruence between citizen demands, candidate appeals and leading definitions of development, we can thus define the expectations of African citizens as developmental progress. Compared to a purely economic definition, the notion of development may sacrifice some conceptual clarity, yet it represents a much more accurate reflection of the actual demands of African voters.

But what level of developmental progress will satisfy citizen expectations? In defining the cut-off point between good and poor developmental performance, voters may compare outcomes either to the domestic past or internationally to the performance in similar countries. (Kayser and Peress 2012, Olsen 2017, Aytaç 2018).

For the present context, it is relatively sure that the domestic past is the primary reference point. Firstly, because recent studies indicate that only highly educated populations assume an international perspective and benchmark outcomes against other similar countries (Aytaç 2018, Park 2019a). Secondly, the urgency of the developmental agenda suggests that the evaluation will not be a matter of statistical indicators but tangible improvements. Citizens are going to trace perceptible changes in prosperity, infrastructure, or public service delivery. Given the history of government failure in the region, even little improvement may be interpreted as a signal that the incumbent acts in the people's best interest, whereas stagnation and drawbacks hint at a corrupt government. The most plausible proceeding is thus that voters sum up what they have seen over a term and benchmark it against the status quo at the start of the term to discern whether the government has met expectations.

3.2.2 Sources of Information

Development may provide a clear set of expectations, but voters need information to judge whether an incumbent has met the standard. Availability and sources of information are a crunch

[8] See, for instance, World Bank's statement on the role of infrastructure: https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/infrastructure

point in models of electoral accountability, especially in developing states (Manin, et al. 1999b, Wimpy and Whitten 2017). If voters lack access to knowledge about a government's performance, their verdicts are disconnected from the true performance, and incumbents cannot be held to account.

The literature usually views the news media as the single most important source of information. In developing nations, information from the media is generally more costly than in the industrial world, where national media outlets provide a steady stream of coverage on current affairs and government actions. (Pande 2011). Mass media infrastructures are weak, and a considerable share of the citizenry do not even have access to newspapers, tv or the internet.[9] The only widely available news source is the radio. Listening to the radio is probably the most popular side-line activity in Africa, and major radio stations alongside local community radios dedicate a lot of time to the discussion of current affairs. Particularly popular are call-in programs where ordinary citizens join lively debates on the current state of the nation (Gunner, et al. 2012, Spitulnik 2017). Although journalistic sophistication may be limited, radio consumption guarantees ordinary citizens' exposure to information about public management and political outcomes. Nonetheless, scholars tend to be rather pessimistic about the ability of African voters to obtain good information from the media (Conroy-Krutz 2012, Casey 2015, Gottlieb 2016, Dunning, et al. 2019a).

However, the media may not be the primary source of information for voters in Africa's new democracies. An often-overlooked factor are daily experiences that are readily available and virtually costless. In low-income settings, public management has immediate and far-reaching consequences for the daily lives of ordinary people (Singer 2016). Economic mismanagement is often accompanied by soaring prices for everyday needs. Shirking on state-owned utility companies causes outages in water and electricity, and disregard of chronically underfinanced education and health sectors becomes painfully visible through shortages and strikes at clinics and schools. Positive changes can, in turn, tremendously improve everyday life. Administering a newly paved road can positively transform the economy of entire communities, while reforms in the education and health sector may lead to apparent improvements in service delivery. General prosperity may also quickly create new jobs in the informal sector and on a day-to-day basis allow more people to generate some monetary income.

Daily experiences hence inevitably confront voters with a government's management. Apart from personal observations, social interactions can help to aggregate information from daily experiences towards a general picture of how the country is doing. Africans show a high interest

[9] Data from 36 countries compiled by the Afrobarometer indicate, 60% never read newspapers, 40% never watch TV news, and 70% never obtain news from the internet. However, 70% listen to radio news several times a week and more. (Data: Afrobarometer Round 6, 2014, Author's analysis)

in public affairs and frequently discuss politics with family and friends.[10]

Overall, the informational base of African voters may be somewhat better than the literature suggests. Although some media sources may not be widely available, radio stations reach large parts of the population and should not be underestimated regarding their impact in educating people about current political affairs. Beyond the news media, daily experiences and social interactions may serve as an important source of information. The immediate impact of governmental management on everyday life coupled with frequent political discussions provide valid insights on an incumbent's developmental record.

The information at hand may be relatively noisy and prone to errors, though. Community radio stations and personal observations may have a rather local focus and not provide a comprehensive image of the nation-at-large. Still, the available information certainly contains true information about the performance of the incumbent. As long as errors are not systematic, they may cancel out each other at the aggregate level so that a national election result provides the required feedback on a government's true performance (Page and Shapiro 1992). That said, the described informational setting carries certain risks that may lead to a failure of the accountability mechanism. In section 3.3, I discuss the risk of systematic identity biases. The implications of the rather local informational focus are elucidated in the discussion on distributive strategies in section 3.5.

3.2.3 Clarity of Responsibility

A final critical and widely debated issue in studies of retrospective voting is the clarity of responsibility. The idea of retrospective sanctioning requires that citizen can identify the responsible candidate to target their electoral response. If power is distributed across different actors, it gets difficult for citizens to determine who was responsible for policy-making. Bad politicians may survive elections, and successful governments may get dismissed by the electorate.

The most seminal work on the matter stems from Powell and Whitten (1993), who built an index of clarity and demonstrate through a time-series analysis of nineteen countries that the strength of retrospective voting depends on the level of clarity. Specifically, they identify bicameral systems, coalition governments, minority governments, and weak party cohesion as factors that blur responsibility and provide incumbents with opportunities to diffuse the blame for negative outcomes.

The results were confirmed by several studies, which also added additional institutional variables, including the number of viable alternative candidates and a parliamentary system (Whitten and Palmer 1999, Anderson 2000, Van der Brug, et al. 2007, Duch and Stevenson 2008, Hellwig and Samuels 2008). Generally, shared policy-making competencies reduce clarity, while a

[10] In Ghana, 60% of respondents say they are interested in public affairs and almost 70% indicate to discuss politics with family and friends (Data: Afrobarometer Round 6, 2014, Author's analysis)

concentration of authority increases clarity and with-it retrospective voting. Or, put briefly: "Voters' ability to express discontent with performance is enhanced when accountability is simple" (Anderson 2000: 168).

African democracies tend to provide high-clarity settings – especially regarding the chief executive. The vast majority of countries are presidential and elect their leader through majoritarian two-round elections, which require winning candidates to surpass a vote share of 50% in a single national constituency. Such an electoral system inherently concentrates power in the hand of one individual or group. Secondly, as predicted by Duverger's law, most elections see only two relevant parties competing (Duverger 1954).

Minority rule or coalition governments are virtually non-existent. If coalitions are formed, this usually happens before the election (Oyugi 2006). Generally, constitutions in the region tend to give a lot of power to the president, which some scholars even view as a flaw in the institutional design of Africa's new democracies (Van de Walle 2003, Gyimah-Boadi 2015, Mensa-Bonsu 2021). However, it also raises clarity of responsibility which means greater opportunities for retrospective voting. Provided African voters take advantage of this, worries about excessively powerful presidents are unfounded, as the electorate will effectively discipline them.

3.3 Identities and the Failure of Accountability

The previous section has described how demand for developmental progress and clear responsibilities make retrospective voting a viable strategy for African citizens to motivate good leadership and reduce the temptation to extract personal rents of national governments. A main reservation against the model, however, are salient politicised identities in the region, which may substantially weaken or fully interrupt the mechanism at different causal steps and prevent the required electoral feedback.

Especially ethnic identities may impede electoral sanctioning. Ethnicity generally plays an exceptionally important role in African politics. The arbitrary colonial boundaries of African states merge various cultural and language groups into a single polity. Indirect colonial rule, in many cases, further exacerbated the cultural divisions by systematically privileging some groups while discriminating against others (Cheeseman 2016, McNamee 2019). As a consequence, ethnicity is seen as a major influence on political behaviour. Whether ethnicity gets politicised in a given country depends on a wide range of factors, yet there is undoubtedly always a potential for ethnic politics in sub-Saharan Africa (Posner 2005, Hyden 2010c).

Of similar significance may be partisan identities - at least in the realm of voting behaviour. In established democracies, partisanship is associated with strong emotions and strong convictions (Campbell, et al. 1960, Green, et al. 2002, Bartle and Bellucci 2009). In Africa, partisanship has long been disregarded as a social identity because party systems are young and characterized by low ideological polarization. However, some recent findings hint at the existence of independent

partisan identities (Michelitch 2015, Carlson 2016a, Harding and Michelitch 2019). As such, they may influence political perceptions and decision-making in similar ways like ethnicity.

Three ways by which identities interfere with the causal process of retrospective voting can be distinguished. The first one, expressive voting, suggests that voters ignore performance and instead use their vote to express their identities. The second argument assumes that voters interpret identity as an (inappropriate) information cue, resulting in a systematic misperception of performance. Thirdly, voters may be convinced that politicians generally favour certain groups and therefore choose candidates according to their ethnic and partisan affiliation while ignoring programmatic performance.

3.3.1 Expressive Voting

Expressive voting describes a voting strategy that aims to confirm aspects of individual identities. The concept is also situated within the rational-choice school of voting behaviour but departs from the materialistic focus of self-interest. Expressive voting is not about goods to be provided by a candidate; instead, the utility flows from the act of voting itself. Individuals receive a certain immaterial satisfaction by supporting a group they strongly associate with (Hillman 2010, Hamlin and Jennings 2011, 2019). By implication, expressive rationality cuts the link from incumbent performance to the individual vote. Expressive voting, moreover, hinders democratic turnovers because identities tend to be fixed, and expressive voters are therefore unlikely to consider switching between parties (Hillman, et al. 2015). Even worse, it may reaffirm rivalry between certain groups, thereby potentially contributing to an outbreak of intergroup conflict (Horowitz 1985).

Expressive voting is of particular relevance for African elections (Lemarchand 1972, Horowitz 1993, Hyden 2010c). The common politicization of ethnicity makes the confirmation of ethnic identities a potential motivation for voters. Several studies have found expressive voting to be an important factor in specific elections in the region (Ferree 2006, Nugent, et al. 2010). Although recent works highlight more instrumental goals behind ethnic voting, the expression of ethnicity may remain a powerful motivation (Carlson 2020).

Similarly, the wish to express partisan feelings may play a role in Africa. Partisanship is generally the typical example of expressive voting because close personal ties with a party evoke emotions such as sadness and happiness about electoral defeat and victory, which motivates voters to express their partisan feelings at the polls (Huddy, et al. 2015). Studies like Michelitch's (2015) observations on interpartisan discrimination by Ghanaian taxi drivers indicate that African citizen may have such strong emotional bonds with parties, despite relatively young and barely polarized party systems.

3.3.2 Cognitive Shortcuts

A second mechanism through which identities may impede retrospective voting is their use as information cues or heuristics. Heuristics are easily obtainable facts on which people rely to save

costs of acquiring information or to overcome cognitive limitations (Kahneman 2003, Bowler and Nicholson 2019). In the realm of politics, examples of heuristics include party ideology, interest group endorsements, or the likeability of candidates (Campbell, et al. 1960, Brady and Sniderman 1985, Mondak 1993). Ideally, heuristics guide citizens to the same option they had picked with perfect information. Some heuristics may indeed be valuable information shortcuts (Lupia 1994), whereas others lead to significant mistakes (Kuklinski and Quirk 2000, Lau and Redlawsk 2001, Healy and Malhotra 2013). For instance, ideological labels may direct voters towards the party which best represents their interest. Other indicators such as the likeability of candidates contain little political information and are therefore prone to misjudgements.

Voter reliance on heuristics runs against the logic of retrospective voting. While heuristics such as party affiliation contain information on the future goals of politicians, they naturally do not carry information about past actions. Instead, people whose perceptions are derived from cues tend to disregard new information such as signs of poor performance and may even be more misinformed than voters with very little information (Rahn 1993, Dancey and Sheagley 2013). Common reliance on cues within an electorate is thus likely to produce systematic biases in performance perceptions, thereby undermining the link between a government's true performance and voter perceptions.

Concerning the African context, there are reasons to be concerned that voter perceptions are heavily influenced by identity cues. Weak media structures and low levels of civic education provide a typical environment for reliance on heuristics. Instead of processing the available information, people may look at ethnic and partisan affiliation to judge the performance of an incumbent. The high level of clarity of responsibility may further nurture the use of cues (cf. Parker-Stephen 2013). Experimental evidence suggests that identity shortcuts indeed introduce systematic biases to performance perceptions. Conroy-Krutz (2012) demonstrated that Ugandan voters, in situations of information scarcity, rely heavily on ethnic cues when picking a parliamentary candidate (with more information on performance, the use of ethnic cues diminishes, though). Similarly, Carlson (2016a), also in the Ugandan context, finds that government partisans significantly overestimate the quality of public schools and clinics, whereas opposition partisans underestimate what they have received from the government.

Neither ethnicity nor partisan cues can be deemed especially informative regarding government output within the African context. The ethnicity of candidates is generally not linked to the true performance in office and consequently an inaccurate proxy. Party affiliation can be a useful heuristic in contexts with a broad ideological spectrum. In new democracies, however, where parties are hardly distinguishable by ideological labels, partisan labels are not well suited to infer a government's true performance. Instead of providing information, identity cues may thus cause African voters to overrate the performance of affiliated incumbents and discount or ignore the

provision of resources by members from other groups.

3.3.3 Clientelism and Expectations of Favouritism

Finally, clientelism may be a reason for voters to put identities before programmatic performance. Clientelism describes a reciprocal link between politicians and certain groups or individuals, where politician allocate resources only to those who support or promise to support the politicians when going to the polls (Hicken 2011). This can lead to a reversal of the accountability relationship, where voters have a duty to deliver their vote in the hope of being granted access to state benefits, a mechanism prominently described as 'perverse accountability' by Stokes (2005).

If politicians draw their power mainly from clientelist links with certain identity groups, access to state resources becomes a matter of group affiliation. Voters who believe that distribution follows identity lines will primarily look at a candidate's identity configuration when casting their ballot while ignoring performance. In a scenario where politicians systematically favour certain groups, a bad type incumbent from one's own group offers greater perspectives than a good type from a different group (cf. Adida, et al. 2020).

To make things worse, clientelist expectations may draw voter attention away from developmental public goods to private, excludable benefits. Instead of demanding public investment, voters may request private gifts such as cash handouts, food baskets, school scholarship from incumbent patrons (Lindberg 2003). Politicians who strategically rely on clientelism prefer such private goods because they are easy to distribute and can be targeted with higher precision than public goods (Diaz-Cayeros, et al. 2016).

That said, public goods such as school buildings, clinics or community halls are also a potential currency in patron-client relationships, especially where a regional concentration of groups allows targeting. In this case, it is more difficult to discern clientelist and retrospective voting[11]. In both scenarios, developmental improvements and electoral support go hand in hand. The decisive difference, however, is that clientelist voters, for the fear of being excluded from future benefits, will be hesitant to sanction even in the event of a dissatisfying performance.

Clientelism is arguably the most central concern regarding the effectiveness of electoral accountability in Africa. Especially ethnic identities are viewed as a source of clientelist networks (Lemarchand 1972, Posner 2005). There is generally strong evidence that, over the last 60 years, some ethnic groups have benefited from a co-ethnic president (Franck and Rainer 2012, Kramon and Posner 2016). Partisan identities are less prominently featured in accounts of clientelism in Africa, but they generally constitute another important source of clientelism, especially when voters are poor (Diaz-Cayeros, et al. 2016). It has, for instance, been documented that the

[11] See section 3.5 for a deeper discussion about accountability affects distributive strategies in systems where political clientelism is common.

government of Zambia systematically channels fertilizers to partisan strongholds (Mason, et al. 2017). Similarly, Tanzania's ruling party uses party structures to distribute private goods to supporters (Croke 2016). It is thus reasonable to believe that partisanship may produce a similar reversion of accountability, especially as African parties are getting more institutionalized with comprehensive networks of branches and agents (Whitfield 2009, Elischer 2013).

Despite the prevalence of clientelism, it is less clear to what extend African voters are still guided by expectations of favouritism in the era of Democratization. Some studies indeed suggest that clientelism trumps performance in the calculus of citizens. Most notably, a study in Uganda finds that participants reward good performance only if the candidate is a coethnic (Carlson 2015). However, the use of hypothetical candidates in the experimental design raises some doubts about whether voters would make the same choice when confronted with real-world outcomes. Other findings rather refute the notion of loyal clientelist voters. This includes several studies observing that performance information draws voters away from ethnic and partisan labels (Conroy-Krutz 2012, Gottlieb 2016, Platas and Raffler 2019), which should not be the case if people are convinced only group members will supply benefits. There are, moreover, findings that indicate that clients may not comply with their patrons and still sanction politicians even if they receive clientelist benefits (Mason, et al. 2017). Nonetheless, clientelism needs to be taken seriously as a potential confounder of electoral sanctioning.

The discussion above has illustrated how identities through different mechanism may collide with the logic of performance voting. Expressive voting, the use of cognitive shortcuts and clientelist expectations may lead voters to discount or misperceive performance.

3.4 Theoretical Model and Core Hypotheses

A useful scheme to give an overview of the mechanism of retrospective electoral accountability guiding this study is the bathtub diagram (Coleman 1990). The bathtub connects micro and macro level propositions to a coherent theoretical framework. Theories of electoral accountability represent a typical case of such a macro-micro theorem: At the core is the macro-level proposition that a government's performance will affect its aggregate vote share. The viability of the mechanism, however, hinges on the capacity of individuals to form judgements and to enact upon these judgements when going to the polls.

Figure 3-1 employs the bathtub diagram on the sanctioning model of electoral accountability. The upper horizontal arrow represents the macro-level proposition: An incumbent's performance leads to a higher/lower vote share in an election. If the electoral feedback is strong and consistent over time, leaders will anticipate voter reactions and, in order to maximize their chances of getting re-elected, dedicate themselves to furthering the public interest while refraining from rent-seeking and shirking (Barro 1973, Ferejohn 1986). However, the mechanism hinges on the voting behaviour of individuals as represented by arrows 1 and 2 in

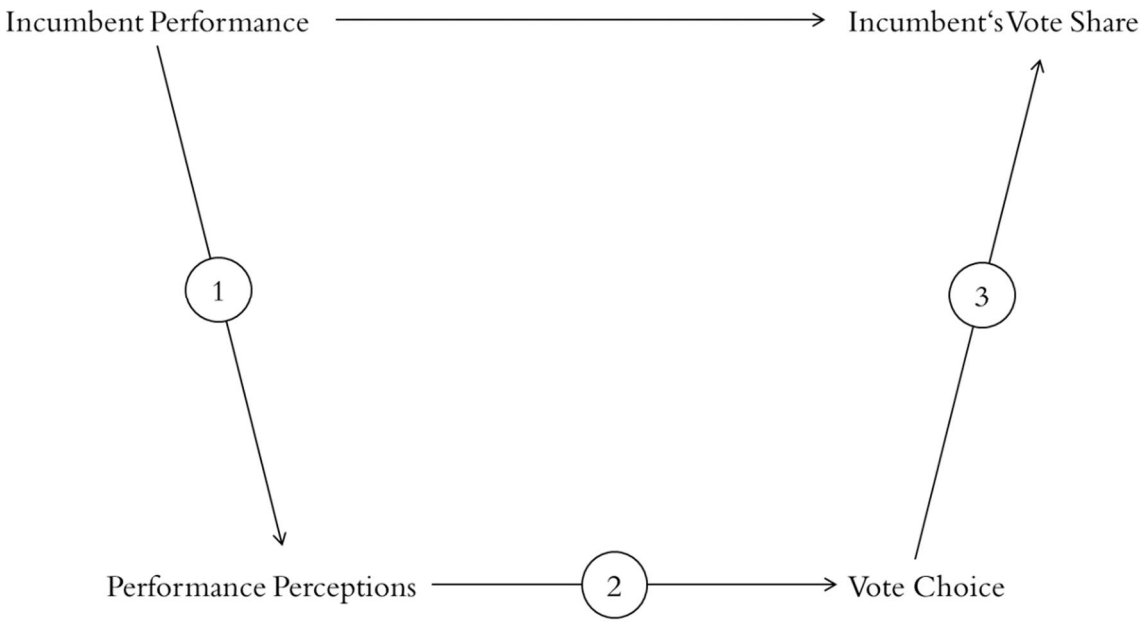

Figure 3-1: Mechanism of Electoral Sanctioning

the diagram.

Arrow 1 corresponds to the formation of performance perceptions. Following the discussion in section 3.2, sanctioning voters in Africa's new democracies are expected to focus on improvements in developmental core areas (e.g. Jobs, Health, Education, Infrastructure) and to rely on the media, social interactions, and daily experiences for information. Arrow 2 represents the voting decision. In line with the sanctioning model, the act of voting is reduced to a binary discrete choice between re-electing the incumbent or casting a ballot for the opposition. Performance perceptions are considered through a simple cut-off rule: Vote for the incumbent if she has met or exceeded expectations; vote against her if she has missed the benchmark.

The third and final arrow represents the aggregation of votes to a national election result. Elections of the chief executive in Africa are usually majoritarian presidential elections. The aggregation here is straightforward as ballots are simply added up in a single national constituency. Under such rules, individual errors can be expected to cancel out within the large electorate, provided they are random (Wittman 1989, Page and Shapiro 1992).[12] Errors in the formation of performance perception due to noisy information or low political sophistication do thus not necessarily harm electoral accountability provided they are random and not owed to identity biases. By the same logic, minor irregularities in the electoral process will not affect the election result, whereas systematic rigging or the regional clustering of errors may produce a false aggregation.

The bathtub diagram, furthermore, allows highlighting the different ways by which identities

[12] The argument is derived from Condorcet's Jury Theorem (Condorcet 2014 [1785]). For a good summary of the theorem see: Grofman and Feld 1988.

interfere with the mechanism. Expressive voting affects especially the second arrow. As the expression of identity becomes an end in itself, performance perceptions should no longer influence vote choice. Similarly, instrumental expectations of clientelism should substantively weaken the link between performance perceptions and vote choice. Clients generally tend to be loyal even if performance falls short of expectations because the rationale of clientelist favouritism suggests that an underperforming ally in office may still provide more resources than a politician to whom the voter does not have a clientelist connection.

The use of ethnic or partisan identity heuristics, by contrast, affects the first arrow. Instead of deriving performance perceptions objectively from observations about actual performance, voters infer their judgements directly from an incumbent's ethnic or partisan affiliation, which cuts any link between a government's true performance and voter perceptions.

Based on this model, this work investigates two main hypotheses to assess whether African voters behave in accordance with the sanctioning model of electoral accountability. Each of the two hypotheses pertains to a specific arrow of Figure 3-1. The most common way to investigate electoral accountability is to test the link between performance perceptions and vote choice. H1 is thus derived from arrow 3 and reads as follow:

H1: Better (worse) performance perceptions increase (decrease) the likelihood to vote for the incumbent

However, even if performance perceptions are linked to vote choice, this may not reflect actual performance but identity biases in the formation of performance perceptions. The second hypothesis to be investigated in this work is thus on the independence of performance perceptions from identity biases.

H2: Ethnic and partisan identities do <u>not</u> influence performance perceptions

An intact sanctioning mechanism requires confirmation of both hypotheses. Voters should vote based on performance, and performance perceptions should not be biased by ethnic and partisan identities.

3.4.1 Implications for Distributive Strategies

How would retrospective voting affect the distributive strategies of chief executives in Africa's new democracies? The effect described by theories of electoral accountability is, in fact, two-fold. First, the fear of losing office should reduce the temptation of elites to exploit the public hand for personal gain. Secondly, it should drive politicians towards economic- and welfare-enhancing policies that help to develop the entire nation.

The first assumption is a relatively direct consequence of the electoral oversight, which raises pressure on leaders to distribute resources to the public instead of misappropriating them for private purposes. The latter assumption, however, is more complicated and requires a deeper discussion of distributive strategies. Would electoral sanctioning induce Africa's leaders to pursue

universalistic policies that foster the national interest?

The question of distributive strategies is of particular relevance for the developmental context of African states because developmental strategies are generally a mix of diverse local projects. Typical investments such as new roads, schools, or hospitals are not pure public goods. Although they are non-excludable for the regional population, they are difficult to access from distant locations. Governments will hence face some tough decisions about where to implement projects. Likewise, for sanctioning voters who judge developmental performance, the local situation is likely to be more relevant than the overall national situation. Ideally, a government should choose their projects by bureaucratic criteria such as necessity and impact to the benefit of the nation-at-large. The local-public-good nature of developmental projects, however, may also lead to deviant distributive strategies.

Distributive strategies can be distinguished by the categories of programmatic and non-programmatic distribution (Stokes 2013). Programmatic distribution is characterized by formal and public criteria. Non-programmatic distribution, by contrast, describes a mode where such criteria are absent, and officeholders decide who gets what for personal or strategic reasons. Non-programmatic distribution is generally less efficient in fostering national development because the absence of technocratic criteria implies that policies are not in line with the specific developmental needs of a country (cf. Stokes, et al. 2013: pp. 249 - 260). It can also be unjust if certain constituents are targeted while others are overlooked. At worst, it may lead to a winner-takes-all scenario where electoral defeat equals the exclusion from state benefits and trigger civil conflicts (Cheeseman 2015: pp. 143-170). The undisputed normative ideal of democratic theory is, therefore, programmatic distribution, whereas non-programmatic distribution is the typical mode of clientelist politics.

The literature on African politics is somewhat divided over the toxicity of non-programmatic distribution. Some scholars deem local public goods as positive developmental contributions – even if they are allocated without formal and public criteria. Weghorst and Lindberg (2013: 722), for instance, argue: "Providing small-scale collective goods like a community well or a school building are targeted but not personal private goods and as such is not clientelism". It has, furthermore, been highlighted that the benefits of local public goods tend to spill over to the general population – regardless of group affiliation (Isaksson and Bigsten 2017). Other authors are sceptical. LeVan (2015) views spending on local goods as an indicator of developmentally hazardous clientelist distribution. Similarly, Nathan (2019a) categorizes local public goods, including roads and schools, as particularistic goods which may reinforce patronage and undermine national development. Either way, it holds that programmatic distribution is more efficient, whereas non-programmatic distribution is potentially destabilizing.

Generally, retrospective sanctioning should draw governments away from non-programmatic

distribution, especially in the context of presidential elections with a single national constituency. Under such conditions, every vote count, and a government may earn its decisive edge just as well in opposition stronghold as in government strongholds. Governments who choose to primarily target core and loyal supporters' risk being sanctioned in other places. If swing and oppositional regions are targeted, vote shares may drop in strongholds. Rising sanctioning pressure should thus drive a national government towards more programmatic distributive strategies. By relying on formal technocratic criteria in the allocation of projects, a government can achieve a maximum of developmental success to satisfy the expectations of as many voters as possible.

There is nonetheless a certain risk that despite electoral sanctioning, African leaders still resort to non-programmatic modes of distribution. The history of clientelist politics means that there are pre-existing clientelist relationships in most systems. The regional concentration of ethnic groups, moreover, allows for precise targeting (cf. Ejdemyr, et al. 2018). A government may thus seek to form a loyal winning coalition through a core voter strategy, whereby it provides developmental goods first and foremost to core supporters. By focusing on core voters, an administration can maintain existing political coalitions in exchange for continued political support, and it may deem such investments more secure than appealing to swing regions or opposition supporters (Cox and McCubbins 1986). Indeed, some publications suggest that core voter strategies that involve non-programmatic targeting remain the dominant mode of distribution in Africa's new democracies (e.g. Rosenzweig 2015, Kramon and Posner 2016, Mason, et al. 2017, Nathan 2019a, Anaxagorou, et al. 2020).

However, a pure core voter strategy is only efficient if two conditions are fulfilled. First, the coalition needs to be large enough to secure a majority. Second, it needs to be loyal enough to be certain about the electoral support of core voters. In reality, few administrations in Africa can rely on clientelist coalitions that are sufficiently big and stable to secure re-election. Most groups do not constitute a majority, and cross-ethnic coalitions are difficult to build because candidates cannot credibly commit to sharing the benefits of power equally among groups (Posner 2005: p. 105).

With rising and more widespread sanctioning, a core voter strategy gets riskier. The proportion of the electorate that needs to be satisfied may easily outnumber the clientelist coalition (cf. Bueno De Mesquita, et al. 2002). Under such pressures, a government is likely to seek technocratic advice to maximize the reach of its policies, which represents a shift towards programmatic distribution. This is not to say, a government will not, to a certain extend, maintain clientelist relationships through targeting, but with stronger retrospective voting, programmatic distribution should increasingly become a central mode of distribution – at least in the context of presidential elections.

To factor in potential clientelist winning coalitions, a special focus in this book is on the loyalty and the size of relevant identity groups. Both hypotheses are not only studied at the national level but also at the level of ethnic and partisan groups. By disaggregating the electorate and investigating in-group dynamics of relevant sub-samples, it is possible to assess the loyalty of groups and the potential for clientelist winning coalitions. The group-level results yield unique insights on how widespread and how feasible such coalitions are and, most importantly, whether they are loyal enough to thwart the pressure for programmatic distribution from sanctioning voters.

4 Research Strategy, Data, and Case Selection

The following pages lay down fundamental decisions regarding research design and discuss the overall research strategy, data, measurement of performance perceptions, case selection, and the identification of relevant ethnic groups. Not covered are the statistical models, which I specify in the succeeding chapters immediately before the corresponding results.

4.1 Research Strategy

Based on a retrospective sanctioning model of electoral accountability, the previous chapter has derived two guiding hypotheses on electoral accountability, which can be restated as questions:

Do ethnic and partisan identities influence performance perceptions?

Do voters consider performance in their vote choices?

The book dedicates a separate investigation to each of the two questions. Note that both are x-centred, i.e. seek to establish whether different values of the independent variables (x) make a difference for the outcome (cf. Blatter and Haverland 2012: 23). Independent analyses for both research questions allow quantising the degree of covariation across different units of analysis, which is particularly important as the study involves three levels of analysis. While covariational evidence is established at the individual level, results are aggregated at the group and country level. Although the study consists of two independent parts, both follow a joint research strategy with two pillars. Firstly, a combination of small and large-N perspective, and secondly, the observation of both spatial and temporal variation.

4.1.1 Case Studies and Comparative Perspective

Throughout the study, I combine two intensive country studies of Ghana and Uganda with a cross-country comparison across a set of 16 African democracies. Such a mix of small-N and large-N perspective has clear advantages. Case studies allow observing causal processes in detail, while a large-N perspective can verify the generalizability of findings for the full universe of cases (Lieberman 2005, Rohlfing 2012).

The intensive country studies are essential, considering the complex interactions between identity, performance, and voting, which characterise accounts of electoral accountability in Africa. For a conclusive assessment of accountability, it is accordingly necessary to trace the behaviour of specific identity groups. Such an assessment is difficult from a large-N perspective, as it requires knowledge on the specific situation of a country's relevant sub-groups (Fearon 2003, Wimmer, et al. 2009, Houle, et al. 2019). Accordingly, it is necessary to break down the primary unit into sub-units, which is precisely what case studies are good for (Gerring 2004).

Likewise, a comparative or large-N perspective is highly desirable. Most studies on African voting are single-country studies. While authors routinely draw inferences to Africa as a whole, few verify their findings beyond the country under investigation. Due to the shortage of

comparative designs, it remains unclear whether inconsistencies across publications are owed to differences between countries (Briggs 2017, Basedau 2020).

To mitigate the small-N problem, I put the results from the intensive country studies in a comparative perspective by calculating results for altogether 16 emerging democracies in Africa. Although the cross-country perspective lacks the detail of the in-depth studies, it allows assessing the generalizability of findings from Ghana and Uganda. Furthermore, chapter 7 tests hypotheses on the reasons for cross-country variation in the strength of retrospective voting and the prevalence of identity bias in a survey-year dataset. With only 16 countries covered, the inferential leverage is limited, but the data helps to verify and better understand the reasons for differences between the two focus countries.

4.1.2 Levels of Analysis: Individual-, Group-, and Country-Level

A second pillar of the research design is the consideration of three levels of analysis: individual, group, and country-level. Covariational evidence is generated at the individual level by testing hypotheses on the associations between identity, performance perception, and vote choice in survey data. Meanwhile, results are aggregated at the group- and country-level by calculating effects not only for the national sample but also for subunits of politically relevant identity groups.

Group-level effects represent a critical enhancement compared to previous similar studies.[13] To draw inferences about electoral accountability in Africa, it is essential to factor in the dynamics of ethnic and partisan groups. Whether retrospective voting effectively motivates leaders depends not only on the presence of performance voting but also on a critical share of groups participating in the sanctioning game. Otherwise, leaders might ignore performance reactions and seek to build a coalition of loyal core supporters through the informal distribution of patronage. The group-level effects allow assessing whether the sanctioning pressure is sufficient to incentivise policies in the best interest of citizens, or at least some majority thereof.

Finally, the country level constitutes an important reference point. As the focus is on executive elections, conclusions generally require a national perspective. The intensive country studies make an overall assessment of the state of electoral accountability based on individual and group-level results. For the cross-country perspective, individual- and group-level results are, moreover, summarised to compare retrospective voting and identity bias at the country level.

4.1.3 Temporal Variation

Beyond the spatial variation, the design includes temporal variation with several data points over an observational period of more than ten years, exploiting the fact that multiple surveys are available for the focus countries. Two reasons justify the increased complexity of studying a time

[13] Especially studies on performance voting (Posner and Simon 2002, Youde 2005, Bratton, et al. 2012, Weghorst and Lindberg 2013, Long and Gibson 2015) are contested for not being able to rule out the possibility that sample-level links between performance perceptions and vote choice reflect group rivalries instead of retrospective voting. Group-level effects resolve this problem as they hold group constant (cf. Chapter 5.1).

series of surveys instead of focusing on one cross-section. First, attitudes may change over time. The salience of identities may wax and wane, and performance orientation may become more or less important. Especially campaigning may change what matters to voters (Eifert, et al. 2010, Horowitz 2015, Conroy-Krutz 2016). As most studies in African politics do not feature temporal variation, it often remains unclear to what extent the findings are representative of voter behaviour on election day. The two intensive case studies follow relevant groups over a full electoral cycle to draw more reliable conclusions about a group's political preferences and performance sensitivity.

Furthermore, the inclusion of intertemporal comparison provides valuable pieces of evidence to draw descriptive inferences based on real-world events. Comparing survey patterns to actual election outcomes allows for assessing whether respondents' intentions to sanction eventually translate into gains and losses. Moreover, it can be described how economic downturns and developmental backlashes affect performance perceptions and performance voting. The temporal dimension hence substantively enhances the external validity of the study.

4.2 Data: Afrobarometer and Pre-Election Surveys

The primary data source are public opinion polls from the Afrobarometer (AB)[14]. The AB is an African-led, non-partisan research network that, since 1999, has carried out eight waves of public opinion surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in more than 30 countries in Africa. A consistent set of questions ensures comparability across countries and over time. The AB conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice. Nationally representative samples of all citizens above 18 are drawn through a clustered, stratified multistage sampling procedure. The sample size is 1,200 or 2,400, corresponding to a margin of sampling error of ±2.8 and ±2.0 percentage points, respectively.

The study includes 55 AB surveys from 16 countries gathered between 2005 (AB Round 3) and 2016 (AB Round 6). The country-set comprises states that experienced an uninterrupted series of ordered elections throughout the observational period. States that experienced civil wars, democratic breakdown, or major episodes of electoral violence are not included. See section 4.3.3 for further details on the selection and an overview of sample characteristics. The final list encompasses Benin, Botswana, Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia (4 surveys), Liberia (3), Cameroon, Niger, Sierra Leone, and Togo (2) — 87,566 observations in total.

Beyond the regular Afrobarometer, the study draws upon four pre-election surveys, two for each of the focus countries, Uganda and Ghana. The Ugandan pre-election surveys were also organised by the Afrobarometer network and are listed as AB surveys 4.5.1 and 4.5.2. Both were conducted ahead of the February 2011 general election and have a sample size of 2000

[14] Data: www.afrobarometer.org

respondents. The Ghanaian pre-election surveys were carried out by the Ghana Centre of Democratic Development (CDD)[15] in July and Oct/Nov 2016, a few months ahead of the December 2016 general elections and feature 2400 and 2680 face-to-face interviews, respectively. The pre-election surveys were developed based on the Afrobarometer questionnaire. They contain identical items on all relevant concepts and follow the same sampling procedure. We can thus largely rule out that different survey methodologies cause artefacts of temporal variation.

The public opinion surveys of the AB and its partners are widely acknowledged as a reliable and high-quality source of data and play a prominent role in the creation of knowledge on African voters.[16] The sampling process and the conduct of face-to-face interviews by well-trained interviewers ensure a representative sample and generally attentive respondents.

It is, nonetheless, important to be aware that the survey methodology is prone to certain types of error. A disadvantage of face-to-face interviews is that sensitive questions may suffer from social-desirability biases. Especially in less liberal regimes, people may hide negative views and overreport incumbent support (Weghorst 2015, Carlson 2018a). Similarly, respondents may consider ethnic vote preferences unwanted and report a vote in accordance with their performance perceptions instead (Carlson 2015, 2016b). Finally, AB data are usually gathered off campaign times, which raises doubts about whether the results can represent election day behaviour (Eifert, et al. 2010, Carlson 2018a).

The study applies several techniques to mitigate the risks of measurement errors. Where appropriate and possible, I statistically control for social-desirability biases. Moreover, the in-depth observation of identity groups throughout the study provides a sound basis to assess the validity of responses and rule out alternative explanations as identity is held constant. In chapter 5, identity biases are the subject of investigation, yielding a comprehensive picture of the actual prevalence of biases and some new insights into patterns of misreporting in Afrobarometer data.[17] As the study features temporal variation with surveys gathered on and off campaign periods, it is also possible to control the impact of electoral proximity. Proximity effects are found indeed and contribute to the studies' leverage in drawing conclusions about the behaviour of African voters on election day.

It is finally worth pointing out that some of the concerns in the literature seem somewhat exaggerated in light of this project's experience with the AB data. For the overwhelming

[15] Ghana CDD is an independent non-profit organization based in Accra, Ghana. Homepage: www.cddgh.org

[16] Key and recent publications drawing upon Afrobarometer data include: Mattes and Bratton 2007, Eifert, et al. 2010, Ichino and Nathan 2012, Ferree and Long 2016, Isaksson and Bigsten 2017, Harding and Michelitch 2019, Houle, et al. 2019, LeBas 2020, Robinson 2020

[17] While most oppositional groups disclose negative leanings, some discriminated ethnic groups stand out with excessively positive views of the incumbent. Other indicator of ethnic salience or political fear do not show peculiarities for these groups, which renders biases a promising indicator to uncover and measure ethnic exclusion and polarization (See Chapter 6.4.3).

majority of samples and sub-samples, responses seem to be genuine. Across surveys, voting preferences are plausible compared to the relative strength of political actors in a country. Ghana's pre-election survey predicts the election result almost perfectly, not only at the national but also at the regional level. Likewise, the case studies observe reasonable covariation between performance perceptions and objective developments such as poverty rates and GDP growth over time.

Moreover, many individuals belonging to oppositional groups are not shy to express discontent with the incumbent government, as the analysis of biases in chapter 5 shows. Fear of repression is even associated with negative performance perceptions. On this matter, a replication of Carlson's (2018a) finding of increased overreporting of incumbent support during election time revealed that her result is partly owed to inconsistent coding.[18] While her concern remains relevant, my own investigations of the datasets used in this study did not indicate problems of misreporting in surveys gathered during campaign times.

4.2.1 Measurement of Performance Perceptions

A crucial question for this study is the measurement of performance perceptions. Whereas identity and vote choice are based on clear-cut categories, performance perceptions can be understood and operationalised in manifold ways. This requires the researcher to think carefully about the study's concept of performance and the context under scrutiny.

Conceptually, it is important to note that theories of electoral accountability (Barro 1973, Ferejohn 1986, Fearon 1999, Besley 2006) inherently understand performance in terms of common interest and public goods. Elections are supposed to incentivise political elites to choose programmatic policies that are in the interest of most citizens by holding governments responsible for related outcomes. An operationalisation of performance in an electoral accountability framework should hence seek to exclude perceptions about non-programmatic aspects of governance, such as the supply of informal cash handouts, even if some voters value patronage higher than universalistic policies (Cheeseman, et al. 2021).

It follows that the operationalisation of performance perceptions needs to be as specific as possible. Generalised items, such as presidential approval, are not ideal as they do not define criteria for the assessment. At the same time, we need to capture governance areas that are salient to voters and attributable to the government. A government has a wide array of responsibilities of which only a few may be genuinely salient in voters' minds. If the measurement of performance perceptions is based on topics that voters do not really care about, it may underestimate the relevance of performance perceptions in presidential elections.

Empirical investigations of electoral accountability usually focus on assessments of the economy

[18] Carlson's (2018a) reports a ten-fold increase in wary voters ahead of the election but the surge is owed to the inclusion of an additional category in the coding of wariness in the second surveys. Once coding is held constant, the share of wary voters is nearly identical in both surveys.

to operationalise performance perceptions. The underlying assumption is that a country's macro-economic situation is of such outstanding importance that it outweighs other issues in a voter's utility calculation. The link between the economy and voter utility is easy to draw because a good economy will likely translate into more welfare for everyone.

In the context of Africa's new democracies, however, a purely economic conception of voter expectations may be misguided. The formula that a better economy improves the living conditions cannot be taken for granted in Africa, as impressive GDP growth rates often fail to translate into better living standards for ordinary people, benefitting only tiny elites (Lewis 2008, Whitfield, et al. 2015). Economic growth may thus not even form an especially salient issue for average voters in Africa (cf. Long and Gibson 2015: 6).

The theory chapter has argued that government performance in Africa needs to be understood as developmental performance, which may include economic prosperity but also the provision of urgently needed public services. Low development is inherently linked to chronic problems in the delivery of essential services such as health and education for large parts of the population. Several investigations indicate that public service topics account for a high share of programmatic appeals in African elections (Elischer 2012, Bleck and van de Walle 2013, Bentley, et al. 2015, Travaglianti 2016). It is thus desirable to cover both the economy and public service to measure how people assess the quality of governance in developing settings.

The Afrobarometer features an item that allows measuring performance perceptions for specific topics. Respondents are asked: *Now let's speak about the performance of the present government of this country. How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters?* The questionnaire mentions 13 policy areas, and respondents rate the government's handling on a 4-point scale between *very badly* and *very well*.

To build an indicator of developmental performance, I pick four topics: *Creating jobs*, *Addressing educational needs*, *Improving basic health services*, and *Maintaining roads and bridges.* I then create a count-index, which counts how many of the four policy fields are rated *fairly well* or *very well*. The result is a 5-point indicator ranging from 0 to 4. A value of 0 indicates all negative ratings, a value of 4 all positive marks.

The four policy areas are selected because they represent the major demands of citizens and are relevant across countries. When Africans are asked what the government should address, jobs, education, health, and roads are by far the most frequently mentioned topics. Across the 36 Afrobarometer countries, each issue is mentioned by more than 20% on average. (Bentley, et al. 2015, Dome 2015). Likewise, investigations of party competition across Africa find that statements on public service provision and job opportunities account for the largest proportion of programmatic appeals (Bleck and van de Walle 2018: 208f). Likewise, the four topics align

with expert definitions of development, such as the UN Human Development Index.[19] Hence, an indicator composed of job opportunities, health, education, and infrastructure combines the most salient and the most recognised responsibilities of governments in low-income settings.

The question directly requests people to assess the national government, and the responsibility for the four policy fields is indeed chiefly at the national level. Economic policies related to job creation, such as trade and industrial policies, are generally under national control. Responsibilities for Education, Health, and Roads are sometimes shared between national and local levels of government. However, control over policies and planning remains chiefly on the side of national governments, whereas local governments are involved in the implementation.[20] Africa's constitutions are generally characterised by a dominance of national executive power, which many analysts see as a problem (Gyimah-Boadi 2015, Bleck and van de Walle 2018: 9, Mensa-Bonsu 2021). It is also important to note that the survey instrument explicitly requests respondents to assess the management of the national government. Attribution is accordingly implicit.

The counting approach is chosen because it provides a clear and meaningful piece of information by indicating how many of the four developmental policy fields are viewed as handled well. As all four policy areas are salient across populations, developments in any of them should constitute relevant signals to individuals to infer whether the incumbent is a good or a bad type. Counting the number of positive ratings is an excellent way to summarise positive and negative performance impressions towards a plausible reflection of an individual's overall image of the incumbent's developmental capacities. It is preferable to an additive scale that sums and averages the individual items' scores because of the ordinal coding of the underlying scale. The step from *fairly bad* to *fairly well* at the middle of the scale is more critical than the next step from *fairly* to *very well*. Averaging the scores of the individual items would obscure the more relevant information of a positive or negative rating.

A count index does not necessarily assume that the items are one-dimensional. It is nonetheless insightful to investigate underlying dimensions. Applying factor analysis to the four selected items yields only a single dimension.[21] However, a principal component analysis of all 13 policy fields

[19] See: http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev; Only infrastructure is not explicitly covered by the HDI but often mentioned regarding the creation of opportunities (cf. https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/infrastructure)

[20] This is clearly the case in both focus countries. In Uganda, sections 30,31 in the second schedule of the Local Governments Act 1997 allocate to the national government the competence for economic policies (e.g., banking, trade and commerce, industrial policy, currency, energy) as well as education policy, health policy, and transport. Road maintenance is the responsibility of the national government for national roads and shared for local roads (Uganda 1997, CLGF 2018). Similarly, in Ghana the government has full control of economic, education, health (including the full delivering authority over hospitals), and infrastructure policies, while sharing some implementation responsibilities with regions and districts (CLGF 2019).

[21] A principal component analysis retained a single factor (Eigenvalue = 2.221), which explains 55.5 percent of the variance.

Table 4-1: Principal Component Analysis of Afrobarometer Performance Issues

Variable	Factor 1 Loading *Economy*	Factor 2 Loading *Public Service*	Uniqueness
Managing the economy	0.60	0.33	0.53
Improving Living Standards	0.73		0.41
Creating jobs	0.71		0.45
Keeping prices down	0.73		0.45
Narrowing gaps between rich and poor	0.74		0.43
Reducing crime	0.36	0.46	0.66
Health services		0.74	0.42
Educational needs		0.75	0.41
Water and sanitation services		0.66	0.52
Ensuring everyone has enough to eat	0.53	0.39	0.56
Fighting corruption	0.52	0.36	0.60
Roads and bridges		0.61	0.57
Providing electricity		0.58	0.59

Note: Principal Components Analysis with orthogonal varimax rotation. Extraction of factors with Eigenvalues greater 1. Loadings smaller 0.30 not displayed. N=87566, Data: 16-Country Dataset, Afrobarometer Round 3-6

covered by the questionnaire detects two factors.[22] Table 1-1 shows the loadings of the individual items on the two dimensions. Issues related to the macro-economy, especially jobs, living standards, inequality, and inflation, show higher loadings on Factor 1. The second factor correlates with a wide range of public services, with particularly high loadings of health, education, and water supply. However, the two factors explain only 49% of the variance across the 13 items. The economic factor accounts for 26%, and the public service dimension for 23%. Hence, there is a lot of variation beyond the two dimensions.

The factor analysis shows that the index has a stronger emphasis on public service than on the economy. Three of the four components correlate with the public service dimension, specifically health, education, and roads. Job creation represents the economic dimension. The higher weight of public service in the index is intentional, reflecting that public service matters outweigh macro-economic appeals in African political debates (Elischer 2012, Bleck and van de Walle 2013, Bentley, et al. 2015, Travaglianti 2016). Given the outstanding importance that people ascribe to health, education, and infrastructure and the fact that we can assume distinct government policies in each field, it is sensible to include all three.

An alternative would be to create two indices of economic and public service-related topics. However, the comparative design of the study, with its multiple group- and country-level results, requires a single performance indicator which can universally tab relevant issues across contexts. While it would be interesting to study the relative influence of the different issues or dimensions, this is not the aim of this work and splitting up the results into two performance dimensions would substantially reduce clarity.

The distribution of the 5-point count index suggests that many respondents evaluate each of the four policy areas separately. Figure 4-1 gives the percentages for the different Afrobarometer

[22] Using principal factor instead of principle component analysis yields the same two-factor solution. The result is also robust against restricting sample to single survey waves or excluding respondents with partisan identity.

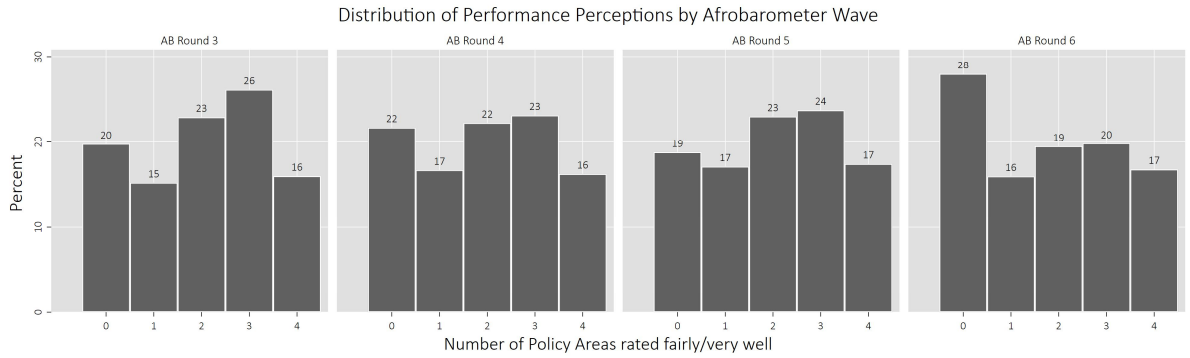

Figure 4-1: Distribution of Performance Perceptions by Afrobarometer Wave. Datasets reduced to 16 countries under investigation in the present study.

waves. Across waves, the majority of respondents fall into the middle categories, which means they rate the government well in some policy areas but give bad marks in others. The nuanced distribution indicates that the counting approach produces a meaningful scale of developmental performance. That said, the distribution also gets quite polarised in individual surveys, especially in Ghana, which, as the analysis in chapter 5 demonstrates, is a consequence of partisan biases.

The index is well suited for both parts of the analysis. For the first part, it provides an ideal basis to disclose identity biases in performance perceptions. Respondents whose assessments are guided by identity alignments should stand out with all positive or all negative ratings, whereas neutral voters can be expected to exhibit more nuanced and issue-specific views. For the second part predicting vote choices, the count-index is well suited to capture the balance between positive and negative performance signals. It is reasonable to expect that the likelihood of casting a vote for the incumbent increases gradually with more issue areas handled well; hence it is theoretically and statistically appropriate to treat it as a continuous predictor variable.

4.3 Case Selection

Case studies are intended to provide insights into a larger population, which implies a pre-defined universe of cases (Gerring 2004). Although this study's theoretical framework may well apply to all emerging and developing democracies, the primary population are the 48 states of sub-Saharan Africa. Before turning to the selection of cases, it is useful btiefly recap the historical trajectory which induces scholars to treat Africa as a distinct universe of cases and has led to the rise of an entire sub-field of African politics within the discipline of political science.

4.3.1 The historical Trajectory of African States

Despite significant cultural and geographic diversity, African societies share specific characteristics due to continent-specific critical junctures in the genesis of states on the continent. To appreciate this trajectory, it is useful to start from the pre-colonial situation. In the early and high middle ages, only a few trade routes connected sub-Saharan Africa with the Mediterranean world. The widths of the Sahara Desert limited cultural and economic exchange to a minimum. Low population densities led to a high fragmentation of political order. Apart from some larger

kingdoms, most people lived in small groups that did not feature the administrative structures defining statehood. Power was generally understood in terms of rule over people and resources, whereas land borders played a subordinate role in defining spheres of influence (Thomson 2016).

From the fifteenth century onwards, European advancements in shipbuilding put an end to sub-Saharan isolation. The consequences for societies were calamitous and shook up social orders. First, the transatlantic slave trade eroded the population and the authority of Africa's kingdoms (Hochschild 1998, Nunn and Wantchekon 2011, Whatley 2014). Later, colonialism created states with arbitrary boundaries caging different cultures and languages into one polity. The inevitable lack of cohesion was exacerbated by practices of indirect rule, which often played off ethnic groups against each other, thereby ingrafting deep divisions into societies (Mamdani 1996, Blanton, et al. 2001, McNamee 2019).

It took some time until Africans realised the new realities of nation-states. When they did, calls for independence rose quickly and eventually led to a process of decolonisation starting in 1957 with Ghana's independence. The euphoria about independence, however, did not last long. In many ways, the post-colonial states were dysfunctional with insufficient bureaucracies, asymmetric infrastructures designed primarily to exploit resources and political elites who neither had experience in running large-scale polities nor viable programmatic concepts beyond independence (Hyden 2010a: 52/117). The consequences were political instability and economic decline. Soon after independence, most states discarded multiparty politics in favour of a one-party state, and the military coup became the primary mode of power transfer (Hyden 2010a: 20). Economically, the continent experienced a dramatic decline. Especially during the 1980s, many states suffered an ongoing recession with substantive declines in GDP per capita of up to 30% (Cheeseman 2015: 88).

The economic collapse of the 1980s was the overture for the most recent turning point – a rapid wave of democratisation starting in the early 1990s. Internally, the crisis of the state combined with widespread economic hardship led to rising pressures from below and the emergence of a vibrant civil society. Churches, trade unions, and community groups took to the streets, calling for democratic reform. Externally, the end of the cold war reduced the availability of authoritarian partners and increasingly made democratic reforms a condition for economic cooperation. The intensity of external and internal pressures varied (Cheeseman 2015: 93f), but democratic transitions were triggered almost everywhere. Between 1989 and 1994, more than thirty sub-Saharan countries reintroduced multiparty elections. Many more should follow later in the 1990s and the 2000s. Whether Africa's recent wave of democratisation is successful and sustainable is subject to lively debates.[23] This study's investigation of electoral accountability is

[23] Some notable contributions to the wider debate include: Lindberg 2006, Eifert, et al. 2010, Cheeseman 2015, Gyimah-Boadi 2019, Carbone and Pellegata 2020. Cheesenan (2015: 171f) provides a good

part of scholarly efforts to understand the repercussions of democratisation for the continent's future development.

The unique historical trajectory of the nations south of the Sahara leads to a shared set of characteristics, which are relevant for political analyses. The list includes limited statehood, a coexistence of modern and traditional institutions, politicisation of ethnicity, low levels of development, a history of instability and authoritarian rule, and finally, the recent introduction of multiparty politics. All these issues may be found elsewhere, but the concentration in Africa makes it reasonable to conceive of the states south of the Sahara as a distinct population for inferences in political research. This does not rule out that findings may also apply to similar contexts beyond Africa but increase clarity regarding the immediate spatial scope of conclusions.

4.3.2 Focus Cases: Ghana and Uganda

The reference population for this study are African states holding multiparty elections. Formally, this includes all sub-Saharan states except eSwatini, Eritrea, and Somalia (cf. Cheeseman 2015: 234). In the selection of cases for intensive study, we are looking for two countries that are representative of this population. Having two intense studies is clearly preferable over a single-country study, as it minimises the risk of unnoticeably drawing conclusions based on an extreme case (cf. Yin 2014: 81). For the research context of this study, two cases are also chosen to represent two different basic types of democracies in Africa.

Specifically, I select Ghana and Uganda as focus cases for this study. Both countries are typical African states in terms of size, economy, historical trajectory, demography, and ethnic make-up. Ghana has a population of roughly 30 Million, while Uganda has roughly 40 Million citizens. Both feature presidential systems that elect the president in a single national constituency via a two-round system. Ghana is economically more advanced, with a GDP per capita of roughly 1600 USD compared to 900 in Uganda in 2014.[24] However, both remain developing countries, and the related problems remain the same, including substantive shares of the population under the poverty line and deficits in health, education, and infrastructure.

There is, however, one decisive difference: Ghana and Uganda represent two distinct regime types within the wider set of Africa's transitional democracies.[25] On the one hand, there is a group of competitive democracies with keenly contested elections, turnovers of power, and a high level of political rights and civil liberties. On the other side, there are hybrid regimes or partial democracies. These states generally feature multiparty elections and an open public sphere but have a dominant party that has never lost power. Elections are free but not necessarily fair in terms of representation, with oppositional parties, critical journalists, and civil society groups

overview of the debate.

[24] GDP per capita (constant 2010 US$). See: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD?locations=GH-UG

[25] See Carbone and Pellegata 2020:70 for a current overview of democracies and partial democracies in Africa

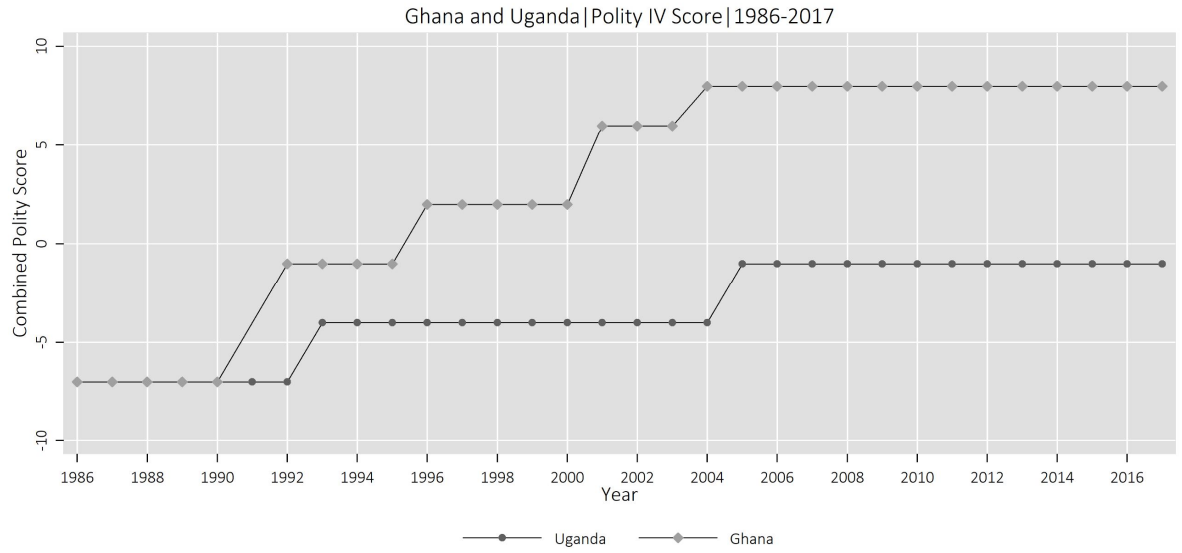

Figure 4-2: Level of Democracy in Ghana and Uganda 1986 - 2017

often facing subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) harassment from the regime and related actors.

Ghana represents a democracy, whereas Uganda is a typical semi-democratic state. This is illustrated by Figure 4-2, which compares the Polity IV democracy score for both countries between 1985 and 2010. In the late 1980s, both countries were governed by military rulers in a one-party state, manifest in a score of -7, designating an authoritarian regime close to the index's minimum of -10. In the early 90s, both military rulers started making concessions. Uganda's Museveni first allowed other presidential candidates to run in a no-party democracy and later introduced multiparty politics. Ever since the democratic transition has been stagnating, and as of 2020, Museveni is still in power after the removal of age and term limits initially written into the 1995 constitution. In Ghana, military ruler Jerry John Rawlings introduced a new constitution with multiparty politics and a presidential term limit of two terms in 1992 and Ghana's democracy has continuously improved since then. A critical juncture was the first democratic turnover in 2000, which saw Rawlings and his party conceding defeat and stepping down after 18 years in office. Ghana is now a full democracy with a score of 8, close to the maximum of 10. Uganda, by contrast, has a score of -1, indicating a hybrid regime with authoritarian tendencies.

The case selection strategy aligns with the typical case approach (Gerring 2008: 648). However, if turnovers are viewed as the outcome of electoral accountability, one may also conceive of the two cases as a diverse case design exemplifying two different values on y (Seawright and Gerring 2008). That said, the absence of turnovers does not logically rule out electoral sanctioning. Even without a turnover, substantive losses may send a strong signal to an incumbent that she must improve her developmental performance or risks being voted out of office in subsequent elections. Likewise, does the occurrence of turnovers not automatically confirm electoral

sanctioning. Only the individual-level analysis can determine whether electoral fluctuations are a reaction to incumbent performance. It should not go unmentioned that pragmatic reasons also played a role in the selection of the two focus cases. The availability of a full series of 6 surveys, including two pre-election surveys, has led to the favouring of Ghana and Uganda over other typical democratic/semi-democratic sets.

4.3.3 Cases in Cross-Country Comparison

The cross-country comparison includes 16 countries. Afrobarometer polls are available for 31 of 48 sub-Saharan countries[26] , but I limit the sample to countries with an uninterrupted series of ordered elections throughout the observational period. States that experienced a democratic breakdown, civil wars, or major episodes of electoral violence are not considered.[27] First, because this book's accountability argument clearly assumes a certain degree of stability with regular ordered elections. Secondly, surveys gathered during episodes of political turmoil showed unusual response patterns with extreme, sometimes odd and inexplicable distributions on key variables. Therefore, it was decided that it is more in line with the research interest to confine the analysis to countries with stable electoral institutions to avoid distortion from countries in a political crisis in the comparative analysis. In addition, I limit the investigation to countries with a population of more than 2 million[28] as the organisation of democracy in small states cannot be readily compared to the challenges of large-scale multi-ethnic societies (Anckar 2004, Sanches, et al. 2022).

Table 4-2 gives an overview of key political features of the 16-country sample. During the colonial era, ten states were under British, five under French rule. While this means a minimal overrepresentation of former British colonies, the sample generally covers both legacies. In terms of population, most states are undoubtedly large-scale democracies, with 11 societies exceeding ten Million people. The following columns show economic data. Most states are categorised as low or lower-middle-income countries. Only the southern states of South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana fall into the upper-middle category. Data on GDP per Capita reveals that they are outliers with an income above 6000$. The remaining countries are below 3000$, seven countries even below 1000$. The minimum poverty ratio is 13% in Ghana. In most states, more than one quarter live below the poverty line of 1,90$ a day. Examples such as South Africa and Nigeria illustrate that even a relatively high-income level may leave many citizens in poverty. In light of the poverty rates, it is reasonable to characterise all countries in the sample as developing countries and assume that peculiarities of low-income settings pertain to each case in the sample.

[26] The Afrobarometer is the only available source for survey data of scientific quality for most countries of the continent. In those countries that are not covered, there are usually insuperable political or logistic barriers to carrying out a nationally representative survey.

[27] Excluded because of political turmoil in observational period: Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Zimbabwe

[28] Excluded by population criterion: Cabo Verde, eSwatini, Gabon, Mauritius, São Tomé and Príncipe

Table 4-2: Key Political Features of 16-Country Sample

Country	Colonial Power	Pop Mio[a]	Income Level[b]	GDP per Cap[c]	Poverty Ratio[d]	System	Multiparty Elections since[e]	Polity IV[f]	FH Rating[g]	Electoral Margin of Victory[h]		Electoral Transfers of Power[i]	Electoral Integrity[j]
										min	max		
Benin	French	9.9	Lower middle	1140	50	Presidential	1991	7	F	12	18	Y (1991, 1996, 2006, 2016)	High
Botswana	British	2.2	Upper middle	7864	15	Parliamentary	1965	8	F	26	31	N	Moderate
Cameroon	French	23.1	Lower middle	1402	26	Presidential	1992	-4	NF	67	67	N	Low
Ghana	British	27.5	Lower middle	1628	13	Presidential	1992	8	F	1	8	Y (2000, 2008, 2016)	High
Liberia	-	4.4	Low	586	44	Presidential	1997	6	PF	9	11	Y (2017)	Moderate
Malawi	British	16.5	Low	508	69	Presidential	1994	6	PF	8	36	Y (1994, 2014, 2020)	Low
Namibia	British	2.2	Upper middle	6113	14	Presidential	1994	6	F	64	69	N	High
Niger	French	18.7	Low	519	45	Presidential	1993	6	PF	13	13	N	Moderate
Nigeria	British	176	Lower middle	2550	39	Presidential	1999	4	PF	27	51	Y (2015)[k]	Moderate
Senegal	French	14.3	Lower middle	1339	39	Presidential	1978	7	F	8	41	Y (2000, 2012)	High
Sierra Leone	British	6.6	Low	568	43	Presidential	2002	7	PF	6	21	Y (2007, 2018)	Moderate
South Africa	British	55	Upper middle	7583	19	Assembly-Elected Pres	1994	9	F	40	57	N	High
Tanzania	British	49.5	Lower middle	846	49	Presidential	1995	-1	PF	36	69	N	Low
Togo	French	6.6	Low	612	51	Presidential	1994	-2	PF	27	27	N	Very Low
Uganda	British	37.4	Low	890	41	Presidential	2006	-1	NF	22	42	N	Very Low
Zambia	British	15.4	Lower middle	1644	59	Presidential	1991	7	PF	2	14	Y (1991, 2011)	Low

Note: All Data reflects the state of 2014 to align with Afrobarometer Round 6, which marks the end of the observational period in all countries except Ghana (2016). [a] Population in Million. [b] Income Level World Bank Classification. [c] GDP (constant 2010 US$), World Bank. [d] Poverty headcount ratio at $1.90 a day (2011 PPP) (% of population), World Bank. [e] Begin year of uninterrupted series of Multiparty elections. [f] Combined Polity Score ranging from +10 (strongly democratic) to -10 (strongly autocratic), Center for Systemic Peace, Polity Project. [g] Freedom House Status of political rights and civil liberties (F=Free, PF=Partly Free, NF=Not Free). [h] Margin of victory is the difference between the vote share of the winner and the vote share of the second-place finisher in the last executive election. Data from Daxecker, et al. 2019. Updated by Author. Minimum and Maximum margin in elections during observational period 2005 – 2015 [i] A transfer of power refers to a change in the party of the president in presidential systems and a change in the prime minister's party in parliamentary systems after electoral defeat. Data from Cheeseman 2015: 234-236. Updated by author. [j] Classification of Perceptions of Electoral Integrity Expert Survey Index (PEI) on five categories (Norris, et al. 2014). [k] Note that Nigeria's turnover happened shortly after the observational period. Thus, the margin of victory in the table does not include this election.

The vast majority of states have presidential systems and directly elect their executive leaders in a two-round system. Only South Africa and Botswana are parliamentary democracies. However, none of the two has seen a coalition government so far, as huge electoral margins of victory also indicate. Until now, they accordingly share with presidential systems the high clarity of responsibility, often seen as a catalyst of retrospective voting behaviour.The current era of multiparty politics started in most states in the 1990s. Only Senegal and Botswana look back at a long history of multiparty democracy, whereas Sierra Leone (interruption by Civil War) and Uganda returned only in the 2000s to full multiparty democracy. As for the quality of democracy, Table 4-2 shows a great variety of configurations in the 16-country sample. On the polity scale, 11 of 16 countries are above the democracy threshold of +6. Four countries are leaning toward Authoritarianism, as indicated by negative scores. Freedom House rates six states as free, eight as partly free, and two as not free.

Half of the sample has seen electoral turnovers in recent years, six even more than one, which makes them 'consolidated democracies' by the standards of the two-turnover test famously defined by Huntington (1993: 266-67). Other states such as Cameroon, South Africa, and Tanzania have not seen close electoral races yet, as can be seen from gaps of more than 50% between the winner and the second-place finisher in the electoral margins of victory.

Interestingly, several states that experienced turnovers are only partly free according to their Freedom House rating. The list includes Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Zambia. Also, turnovers occurred in several states where the integrity of electoral institutions is low, according to the expert survey based Perceptions of Electoral Integrity Index (Norris, et al. 2014). There is generally room for improvement regarding elections as only five states get a high rating, and none achieves the classification of very high electoral integrity.

Overall, the sample represents a good cross-section of African democracies to examine whether regular multiparty elections lead African citizens to hold leaders to account effectively. French and British colonial heritage are both represented. Economically, we have the typical range from low to upper middle income. Likewise, all countries can be characterised as developing countries, given that even in economically more advanced states, significant proportions still live below the poverty line. In terms of political systems, the sample is very homogenous, with mostly presidential systems. Regarding the quality of democracy, the sample is rather heterogeneous but, interestingly, on multiple dimensions with different configurations in terms of freedom, competition, and electoral integrity.

4.3.4 Selection of relevant Ethnic Groups

An important pillar of the research design are group-level effects. But which ethnic groups should be studied? Most societies in the sample feature many different ethnicities. Studies in the field of African politics usually focus primarily on the coethnics of the incumbent. However, practical and theoretical reasons speak against this approach. Practically, coding incumbent coethnicity for

the 59 surveys proved next to impossible. In several cases, the incumbent originated from different groups. In others, she was a member of a minor group of minimal size. Sometimes, the ethnic affiliation of the incumbent also stood in stark contrast to the traditional ethnic links of her party. With all these ambiguities, the coding of a unified incumbent coethnicity variable seemed not to produce a sound indicator. A second reason to depart from the coethnicity criterium is that it inevitably misses relevant groups. Ethnic politicisation is often a matter of opposition between several groups or marginalisation of certain ethnicities. Oppositional and marginalised groups may hence also have extremely strong and fixed preferences but no apparent links to the government.

Instead of defining relevance in terms of coethnic political personnel, I treat groups as relevant that have a history of political competition and/or conflict. This may include ties with a particular ruler or the ruling party, ties to an oppositional party or politician, but also a general history of dominance, marginalisation, or conflict. My primary source to identify groups with a history of competition and conflict is the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) Dataset (Vogt, et al. 2015). The EPR data helps identify politically relevant groups broadly. However, the analysis will not consider a group's status as listed in the EPR datasets as the indicated status does not reflect recent electoral trends but long-term positionings.[29] As an additional source, I review academic publications and analyse the datasets for groups that systematically deviate from other voters in terms of political behaviour.

Overall, 42 groups are considered across 16 countries.[30] For these groups, I calculate group-specific effects in the case studies and the comparative perspective. A full list, including EPR status and group size, is displayed in Appendix 1.11. Not included are ethnicities who make up less than 5% of the population, as the samples would be too small to carry out meaningful group-level analyses.

The coding based on the EPR dataset and country-specific literature should identify all major relevant groups. However, the politicization of ethnicity is a complex phenomenon, often rooted in arbitrary decisions by colonial administrations to promote or discriminate against a particular group. A historical review of ethnic politics in each country is beyond the scope of this work. However, even if some politicised ethnicities are omitted from the study, the results should be valid. In the analysis of biases in chapter 5, I use partisan identities as a proxy for omitted ethnicities and compare the size of ethnicity effects with and without partisan identity to validate observed biases. The analysis of vote choices in chapter 6 draws mainly on within-group effects

[29] In Ghana, for instance, both major groups are coded as junior partners throughout the observational period, despite of an alternation in power.

[30] Note that Tanzania does not have politicised groups because of high ethnic fragmentation with no group exceeding 3% of the population but also because of a historically grown coherent national identity (see: Cheeseman 2015: 39 – 44; Ndulu, et al. 2019).

that do not depend on the set of groups considered in the analysis.

For the small-N perspective, which seeks to provide a complete snapshot of the electorate, it is, however, sensible to be aware of the specific political history of relevant groups. Therefore, the following two sections detail out the selection of ethnic groups for the two in-depth country studies.

4.3.4.1 Ethnic Groups in Ghana

For Ghana, two groups are considered: Akans and Ewe. The Akans represent Ghana's biggest ethnic group accounting for about 40% of Ghana's population. Their political significance is rooted in the Ashanti Kingdom, which was a late (founded in 1697) but strong pre-colonial state with an elaborate system of governance (Shoup 2011: 8). When the British invaded, they faced heavy resistance by the Ashantis. Only after five Anglo-Ashanti wars, the dispute was settled as the British began to acknowledge the Ashanti kingdom (Wasserman 1961, Ukpabi 1970). Until today, the Ashanti king (Asantehene) remains an influential institution; his responsibilities, however, are confined to Ashanti cultural life and traditional institutions. The contemporary political significance of the Ashantis in modern Ghana rests on a strong and stable link to one of Ghana's two major parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The NPP is historically rooted in Ashanti elites and has consistently been the preference among Akans with constituency-level vote shares of up to 90% in the Ashanti heartland (Fridy 2007, Whitfield 2009).

A challenge in studying Akans is that the group comprises various sub-groups. One of those, the Fante, are said to deviate from the political leaning towards the NPP and to prefer the other major party (Ichino and Nathan 2012, Michelitch 2015). The surveys available for this study do not disaggregate the Akan. However, Fantes can be identified by geography since they live primarily in Ghana's Central Region and constitute the majority of Akans here. To exclude the Fantes from the Akan-sample, I exclude all Akans from Central Region in the coding of the Akan variable. Moreover, I create an Ashanti variable that includes only Akans who live in the group's heartland, the Ashanti region. Throughout the study, all Akan-related results are robust against the latter restrictive coding.

The second group associated with ethnic voting in Ghana are the Ewe. The Ewes live mainly in Ghana's eastern Volta Region and account for 11% of Ghana's population. Their current political relevance is a consequence of the fact that long-standing military ruler Jerry John Rawlings was born and raised in the Volta Region and built close ties with the Ewes during his 18 years in power. After JJ Rawlings stepped down in 2000, the ties between his party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the Ewe people subsisted. Until now, the NDC can win up to 90% of vote shares in certain Ewe-dominated constituencies.

Some publication also associates other groups, most notably the Ga, with ethnic voting in Ghana (Fridy 2007, Michelitch 2015). However, a careful exploration of voting preferences and

political attitudes of all Ghanaian groups of considerable size across surveys neither found a stable leaning nor other abnormalities that would hint at systematic group effects. Given that the inclusion of non-politicised identities would unnecessarily dilute the analysis, I do not consider other groups beyond Ewe and Akan.

4.3.4.2 Ethnic Groups in Uganda

In Uganda, three ethnic groups are under intense scrutiny. The first two, Bakiga and Banyankole, represent coethnics of long-term ruler Yoweri Museveni and opposition leader Kizzy Besigye. Moreover, the analysis covers the Acholi people, a marginalised group from northern Uganda.

The Banyankole (singular: Munyankole) account for roughly 10% of the country's population. Belonging to a larger family of Bantu people in Uganda, the group's identification has its roots in the pre-colonial Ankole kingdom, which was only abolished in 1967 by then-president Obote. The contemporary political relevance of the group is owed to the fact that Uganda's long-term president Museveni, in power since 1986, is a member of the group and also grew up in the southwestern heartland in western Uganda. The group has widely been described to vote as a bloc for Museveni, and there are also reports about Museveni favouring his people in the allocation of resources (Conroy-Krutz 2012, Carlson 2015). A comprehensive empirical investigation, however, was not able to confirm the latter claim (Kim 2014). Nonetheless, the belief in ethnic favouritism alone may powerfully impact political behaviour, and Ugandans are certainly aware of Museveni's Banyankole roots.

The Bakiga (singular: Mukiga) are another Bantu people making up about 7% of Uganda's population. Kizzy Besigye of the oppositional Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) is viewed as a Mukiga. He has been a key figure and the only relevant challenger to Museveni throughout the observational period, with more than 95% of the popular vote share going to Museveni or Besigye in all presidential elections since 2001. However, the matter of his ethnicity is complicated because Besigye does not explicitly refer to himself as Mukiga. It is, moreover, contentious whether the Bakiga are an independent group as their language is almost identical to the Banyankole (Kim 2014: 94, Carlson 2015: 359). However, in the eyes of Ugandans Besigye is widely considered a Mukiga and ordinary people also often self-identify as Mukiga (Asiimwe 2015, Carlson 2015). It is thus reasonable to treat the Mukiga as an independent and relevant ethnicity in the analysis.

The third group under scrutiny in Uganda are the Acholi from Uganda's north. About 5% of Ugandans belong to the Acholi group. Their remote location in northern Uganda has allowed the Acholi to maintain traditional structures, but they are also the least economically developed people in Uganda (Shoup 2011, Laruni 2015). However, the British considered the Acholi Uganda's martial race, which led the colonial administration to recruit a disproportional share of the northerners for the colonial army (Amone 2014). The ensuing influence in the military

combined with a lack of trust between Acholi and the southern Bantu majority led to reoccurring violence. In 1972, 10 years after independence, the regime of Idi Armin killed an estimated 5000 Acholi soldiers because of fears of a coup (Van Acker 2004, Shoup 2011). Later in 1985, it was, indeed, an Acholi general named Tito Okello, who overthrew Milton Obote's government in a coup. Just six months later, Museveni's national resistance movement marched on Kampala and ousted Okello (Ofcansky 1999). The surviving Acholi soldiers fled to their homeland in the north, where some of them formed the Lord Resistance Army in 1986, sparking a long, violent conflict that lasted in the 2000s and is still not officially settled. The Acholi hence remain at enmity with Museveni and are coded as powerless in the EPR Dataset.

Uganda is ethnically more fragmented than Ghana, with the largest group – the Baganda – only accounting for 16% of the population. Several other groups could be considered as politically relevant for different reasons. However, most of those coded as relevant in the EPR data are too small to run meaningful statistical analyses. As in the case of Ghana, I also explored voting intentions and attitudes of other major groups carefully for signs of systematic group behaviour but found no signs of political alignments. Hence, I stick with the three groups, whose relevance is well-founded on coethnicty or systematic marginalisation.

5 Identity, Information, and the Formation of Performance Perceptions

Chapter Summary

Retrospective accountability assumes a critical evaluation of government performance. Africa's developing democracies are characterised by strong particularistic identities and information scarcity, which is why many analysts fear that performance perceptions are heavily influenced by identities. However, few works have empirically investigated the incidence of such biases. This chapter presents an analysis of identity bias in Afrobarometer survey data. In two case studies of Ghana and Uganda and a comparison across 16 countries, I study the strength of ethnic and partisan leanings and investigate whether better-informed voters are less biased. Partisan identities turn out to be more influential than ethnic identities in conditioning the evaluations of African citizens. Especially in Ghana and Malawi, the analysis documents high partisan polarization cutting across ethnic identities. While media consumption and political interest do not reduce biases, exposure to poverty leads to critical performance perceptions, irrespective of ethnic and partisan affiliations. The finding highlights an often overlooked mechanism. Poor people are inevitably confronted with the consequences of governmental management in their everyday lives, which provides them with no-cost information on a government's handling of developmental affairs.

5.1 Introduction

Retrospective models of electoral accountability expect voters to punish and reward leaders for their past performance (Barro 1973, Ferejohn 1986, Fearon 1999). Implicit is the assumption that citizens are able and willing to critically review a government's record and form objective performance perceptions (Soroka and Wlezien 2022). Individual errors and incomplete information are not necessarily a problem. As long as people seek to make an objective assessment, errors cancel out each other in the aggregation of votes so that national election results provide the desired feedback on a government's true performance (Stimson 1991, Page and Shapiro 1992, Lupia 1994, Soroka and Wlezien 2009). However, if identity biases lead to systematic and widespread errors, the performance signal may get weakened or entirely muted even if vote choices are tied to performance perceptions.

The risk of systematic identity biases is deemed extremely high in Africa's emerging democracies. First, because societies are generally made up of different sub-national groups with competing solidarities between ethnic and national attachment (Lemarchand 1972, Ekeh 1975, Posner 2005). Secondly, because the developing context makes it difficult and costly to obtain reliable information on policies and outcomes (Conroy-Krutz 2012, Mattes and Shenga 2012, Gottlieb 2016).

A growing body of literature is concerned with the impact of identity on political attitudes in Africa. Recent experimental evidence suggests a strong influence on how people rate the developmental record of governments. Not only ethnicity (Conroy-Krutz 2012, Carlson 2015, Adida, et al. 2017) but also partisanship (Michelitch 2015, Carlson 2016a) has been found to

shape political judgements. Evidence on the moderating role of information is mixed. On the one hand, many studies find that better knowledge induces people to punish and reward politicians for their performance (Conroy-Krutz 2012, Casey 2015, Gottlieb 2016, Brierley, et al. 2020). Other publications, however, find that ethnic and partisan biases are quite persistent and argue that people largely ignore any information that clashes with their political allegiances (Carlson 2015, 2016a, Adida, et al. 2017).

However, we have little knowledge about the incidence and the magnitude of identity biases in Africa's new democracies. Most insights come from small-scale experimental designs. While respective studies have produced important causal evidence of the existence of partisan and ethnic reasoning, they do not provide a basis to draw inferences to the national level. Interestingly, very few studies have systematically investigated performance perceptions in nationally representative survey data. As a consequence, we neither know the true incidence of biases nor can we say whether citizens with better access to information form more accurate performance perceptions.

This chapter presents the first comparative analysis of identity biases in Afrobarometer survey data and investigates if information access reduces identity biases. In two intensive case studies of Ghana and Uganda, I investigate the strengths of partisan and ethnic biases and test whether media consumption, political interest, and exposure to developmental shortages moderate identity bias. To document the incidence of biases across Africa, I, moreover, investigate performance perceptions of altogether 32 partisan and 42 ethnic groups across 16 countries.

The chapter provides three important contributions to studies on African voter behaviour. First, it highlights partisanship as an independent category of identification. The documentation of powerful partisan biases cutting across ethnic divisions adds new compelling evidence to an emerging literature suggesting that partisan alignments are becoming an increasingly relevant category of political identification in Africa (Hoffman and Long 2013, Michelitch 2015, Carlson 2016a, Conroy-Krutz, et al. 2016, Harding and Michelitch 2019).

Second, the analysis provides another strong testimony that the relevance of ethnicity in African politics is somewhat exaggerated. Consistent coethnicity biases occur only in 3 of 16 countries: Ghana, Sierra Leone, and South Africa. In the remaining cases, relevant groups' leanings are weak and/or unstable over time, further underlining that the explanatory value of ethnicity is limited in many African settings (Dunning and Harrison 2010, Basedau and Stroh 2012, Elischer 2013, Koter 2016, Aryeetey and Aikins 2019).

Thirdly, the chapter contributes to the literature on voter information, highlighting an often-overlooked source: Daily experiences of poverty. In low-income settings, governance has immediate effects on the livelihoods of poor people. The analysis demonstrates that exposure to shortages in basic necessities leads to bad ratings for the incumbent and overrides strong ethnic

and partisan group biases. The literature on information and voting in Africa, usually confines attention to news media and public debates (Casey 2015, Bidwell, et al. 2020, Borzyskowski and Kuhn 2020, Brierley, et al. 2020), thereby overlooking the informational content of daily experiences in low-income settings. The critical assessments of the incumbent by the most vulnerable people, moreover, challenge modernization arguments that expect accountability pressures primarily from middle-class voters (Lipset 1959, Moore 1966, Inglehart and Welzel 2005). And indicate that poor people should not be underestimated as a critical and potentially well-informed force on election day.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The next section discusses identity bias in Africa and formulates hypotheses on the influence of identity on vote choice and the role of information. Section 5.3 outlays the empirical strategy to trace identity biases in Afrobarometer surveys. The results section starts by studying ethnic and partisan biases in Ghana (5.4.1) and Uganda (5.4.2). Section 5.4.3 tests whether different sources of information moderate the influence of identity on performance evaluations. Section 5.4.4 presents the comparative perspective of ethnic and partisan biases across 59 surveys from 16 countries.

5.2 Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Moral hazard models of electoral accountability assume that voters can motivate politicians by punishing and rewarding leaders for their past performance at the ballot box (Barro 1973, Ferejohn 1986, Fearon 1999, Ashworth 2012). A critical point is the ability of individuals to form accurate perceptions about how an incumbent is handling public affairs. Most actions of politicians are hidden; voters hence often rely on indirect information, such as media reporting and political outcomes, to evaluate their leaders. The ambiguity of such sources is not a problem per se. If people objectively process the information available, individual errors can be expected to be random so that they cancel each other out in the aggregation of votes (Page and Shapiro 1992).

A serious predicament for electoral accountability, however, is systematic identity bias. Politicised group identities can influence how people evaluate their leaders and induce people to ignore or misperceive performance information. Such identity-driven biases may weaken or entirely obscure the performance signal that elections are supposed to send. If they are widespread, election results will contain little information about an incumbent's recent performance, even if performance is an important consideration in vote choices (Bischoff and Siemers 2013).

Scholars distinguish a rationalist and a psychological mechanism to explain how identities shape judgements. The rationalist argument suggests that identities serve as heuristics, used instrumentally to determine the ability or political preferences of candidates without having to compile and process all relevant information (Brady and Sniderman 1985, Lupia 1994, Bowler

and Nicholson 2019). Heuristics save effort and resources in decision-making processes, but they are also prone to errors in the identification of the optimal choice (Kuklinski and Quirk 2000, Lau and Redlawsk 2001, Dancey and Sheagley 2013).

The second mechanism focuses on the psychological implications of group boundaries. Following social-identity theory (Tajfel 1974, Turner 1975), biases in performance perceptions are attributed to the desire of individuals to retain a positive image of their own group in comparison to relevant outgroups. Through biased information seeking, motivated reasoning and differential attribution, achievements of outgroup members are diminished, while negative information about in-group members is discarded or attributed to other causes (Rudolph 2003, Taber and Lodge 2006, Druckman, et al. 2012).

Both mechanisms cause systematic biases in performance perceptions, but there is a crucial difference regarding the moderating impact of information (Conroy-Krutz 2012, Adida, et al. 2017). If biases are owed to instrumental identity cues to fill information gaps, individuals can be expected to update their beliefs when they get better access to information. By contrast, if biases are a consequence of motivated reasoning, even perfect information may not prevent people from overrating in-group members and underrating outgroup members.

5.2.1 Identity Bias in Africa

Identity bias is a particularly relevant issue in Africa's new democracies. Many authors argue that informational barriers coupled with strong particularistic identities make an objective evaluation of incumbent performance difficult (Conroy-Krutz 2012, Gottlieb 2016). Weak media structures, low transparency, and low average education make it costly to monitor leaders. The low availability of reliable information leaves room for identity markers to influence perceptions. Likewise, identity is believed to be extraordinary salient in African politics. Most societies in the region are made up of different language groups. Divide-and-rule politics by colonial powers manifested these identities in the minds of the people (Ekeh 1975, Ranger 1993). After independence, clientelist distribution along ethnic lines (or believes thereof) further intensified the politicisation of identities (Lemarchand 1972, Franck and Rainer 2012). Ethnic identities are hence considered a prime category in African politics (Posner 2005, Eifert, et al. 2010, Hyden 2010c).

To investigate identity biases in Africa's new democracies, the analysis is concerned with three questions. Do identity biases exist? Are they driven by ethnicity, partisanship, or both?, and does access to information reduce identity bias?

Ethnicity may influence performance perceptions, both psychologically and instrumentally. Psychologically, a sense of competition between ethnic groups may induce voters to engage in motivated reasoning so that the group of which one is a member of appears in a positive light (Horowitz and Long 2016, Adida, et al. 2017). Portraying one's group as successful can raise

self-esteem, especially in an environment where colonial powers established evaluative attributes such as backward and advanced in the juxtaposition of groups (Horowitz 1985: 141f). Likewise, there are good reasons to expect an instrumental ethnic bias. It is a common belief among Africans that politicians tend to favour their ethnic groups (Posner 2005, Ichino and Nathan 2012). Following these beliefs, individuals are likely to resort to ethnicity when evaluating the achievements of elected officials, especially if there is little other information available (Conroy-Krutz 2012). The first hypothesis thus states:

H1: Ethnic Identities shape performance evaluations of the incumbent President

Studies of western democracies usually focus on partisanship as the most important source of bias (Rahn 1993, Bartels 2002, Gerber and Huber 2009, Achen and Bartels 2017). In Africa, the existence of partisan identities has long been discounted with reference to young and volatile party systems (cf. Baker, et al. 2006). Furthermore, African parties hardly feature ideological labels (Bleck and van de Walle 2013), which are seen as a central driving force behind partisan identification (Campbell, et al. 1960). However, there are signs that partisan identities, nonetheless, influence political behaviour. Ghanaians appear to achieve better deals in market price bargaining if they share the same partisan preference (Michelitch 2015) and Ugandans with pre-existing partisan identities under- or overestimate what they have received from the government (Carlson 2016a). Such behavioural patterns strongly indicate that partisanship represents an independent social identity. Against this background, partisan identifications may trigger motivated reasoning and systematically colour performance perceptions. Likewise, partisan labels may serve as heuristics if voters rely on previous performance experiences with the respective party or if parties signal opportunities for patronage under the party flag (Conroy-Krutz, et al. 2016, Croke 2016, Platas and Raffler 2021). H2 thus states:

H2: Partisan Identities shape performance evaluations of the incumbent President

An open question is the relative strengths of partisan vs ethnic biases. It was long assumed that partisan identification in Africa if it exists, overlaps with ethnic party preferences. Recent evidence, however, confounds such claims as ethnicity seems to have little explanatory power in predicting partisan attachments (Harding and Michelitch 2019, Mattes and Krönke 2020). Indeed, partisan groups in the two focus cases, Ghana and Uganda, exhibit high ethnic and regional diversity and even accommodate people from ethnic groups that traditionally stand in opposition to the respective party. To disentangle the impact of ethnic and partisan identity in the formation of performance perceptions, I am especially interested in voters with conflicting partisan and ethnic identities. Following the default position that ethnicity is the dominant political identity in Africa, the corresponding hypothesis states:

H3: In cases of conflicting partisan and ethnic identities, biases will follow ethnicity

5.2.2 Influence of Information on Biases

A central discussion point is whether information makes a difference and reduces identity-related leanings in performance perceptions. On this matter, the rationalist and the psychological view on biases arrive at different predictions. If people use identities as heuristics helping them to form expectations about the performance of candidates in the absence of other reliable sources of information (Lupia 1994), better-informed voters should be less biased. However, if biases are rooted in psychological processes of motivated reasoning, they are unlikely to change with new facts. Instead, social identity theory (Tajfel 1974) predicts that people only consider information that is in line with their allegiances and ignore facts that would portray members of their groups negatively.

Most publications in the field of African politics indeed ascribe biases to identity cues and argue that performance information induces voters to update their beliefs (Conroy-Krutz 2012, Casey 2015, Conroy-Krutz 2016, Gottlieb 2016, Brierley, et al. 2020, Platas and Raffler 2021), yet some publications have also presented evidence for ethnic- and partisan-motivated reasoning (Carlson 2015, 2016a, Adida, et al. 2017). Hence, the role of information ranks high on the research agenda to better understand the nature of biases. If information makes no difference, biases are likely psychological. A moderating impact would, in turn, suggest that they are rooted in informational deficits.

Most theoretical accounts view news from the media as the decisive intermediary between government management and voter information. Journalists monitor the government, document political outcomes, and provide a broader national perspective on development. I thus expect a moderating impact of media consumption:

H4A: Media consumption reduces partisan/ethnic biases in performance perceptions

However, media consumption does not necessarily imply that people are informed about political affairs. Whether people take up relevant facts crucially depends on their cognitive engagement with public affairs. If a person has an intrinsic interest in politics, he is likely to follow policy debates and understand governmental procedures. A politically interested person is also likely to discuss matters of governance with family and friends. Frequent exchange can accumulate knowledge and different perspectives about the state of current affairs (Lewis-Beck, et al. 2008: 70). Accordingly, I expect interest in public affairs to reduce bias in performance perceptions:

H4B: Interest in Public affairs reduces partisan/ethnic biases in performance perceptions

A final, often overlooked source of information are daily experiences. In low-income settings, public management has immediate and far-reaching consequences in the lives of ordinary people (Singer 2016). Economic downturn leads to soaring prices for everyday needs and immediate losses of jobs in the informal sector. Mismanagement in state-owned utility companies causes outages in water and electricity, and disregard of chronically underfinanced education and health

sectors becomes painfully visible through shortages and strikes at clinics and schools. Positive changes can, in turn, tremendously improve everyday life. New roads transform the economy of entire communities. Reforms in the education and health sector lead to apparent improvements in service delivery. And general prosperity quickly creates new employment opportunities in the informal sector allowing more people to generate some cash on a day-to-day basis.

Daily experiences inevitably confront voters in developing economies with information on a government's management. Especially poor people who are struggling to access basic needs on a day-to-day basis should experience a direct fallout of good or bad governance. Middle- and upper-class voters, by contrast, may receive less direct information because social advancement in Africa also brings private solutions for public goods in short supply. The best examples are generators and water tanks that ensure reliable power and water supply, but one can also think of private schools and clinics. Although only a tiny upper-class can afford to escape the challenges of the developing state completely, the informational content of everyday life can be expected to decrease gradually with more social security. Accordingly, I expect that people who are affected by poverty on a daily basis are less biased because their daily experiences supply them with immediate information to what extent the government is doing a good job.

H4C: Daily experiences of poverty reduce partisan/ethnic biases

5.3 Data and Estimation Strategy

To investigate whether ethnic and partisan groups are systematically biased in their evaluations of governmental performance, I draw on country-level survey data. Two countries are under in-depth scrutiny: Ghana, representing a competitive democracy and Uganda, a semi-democratic state with a dominant-party system. A series of 6 representative surveys is available for each case, consisting of Afrobarometer rounds 3-6 and two pre-election polls in each country gathered before the 2011' Ugandan and the 2016' Ghanaian elections, respectively. In addition, I compare the findings against other Afrobarometer surveys from 14 African countries. Countries that experienced a democratic breakdown, a failed election or civil war in the observational period are not considered as the theoretical argument of the study is focused on states that are characterised by general stability and regular ordered elections.

In most general terms, identity bias is understood as a group's deviation from other voters in the sample. Ethnic and partisan groups with biases should stand out with systematically better ratings if they have links to the government. Oppositional groups should, in turn, be identifiable by disproportionally bad ratings for a president's handling of developmental affairs. A group bias is accordingly confirmed if a group shows a significant upward or downward deviation in performance perceptions.

A challenge for a survey-based analysis is to distinguish cognitive biases from an actual unequal

Table 5-1: Frequencies of politicised Partisan and Ethnic Identities in Ghana, PES II (Oct 2016)

	Partisanship			
Ethnic Group	Independent	NDC	NPP	Total
Other	440	354	252	1,046
Akan	410	122	558	1,090
Ewe	139	171	29	339
Total	989	647	839	2,475

distribution of resources along the line of ethnic and partisan identity. Suspiciously positive performance perceptions indicate biases, but they may also occur if government supporters receive more developmental goods than oppositional groups. Distribution cannot be held constant without external objective data, which is hardly available at the national level for the countries under scrutiny.

However, the research design allows drawing inferences about the spatial concentration of identity bias. I test various combinations of ethnic and partisan identities (cf. Equation 2). The primary purpose is to distinguish partisan from ethnic biases, yet the results also provide insights into the geographical concentration of biases. For selected groups, I also test whether leanings are robust if the subsample is reduced to members who live outside the group's geographic centre. Furthermore, the temporal dimension allows observing how biases develop over time on and off campaign. General stability of biases and rising intensity ahead of elections are strong hints at cognitive roots.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable are individual perceptions of an incumbent's developmental performance. For the measurement, I rely on a survey item that asks respondents to rate the government's handling of various issues on a 4-point scale from *very badly* to *very well*. Based on the item, I calculate an additive 5-point index, which counts the number of positive ratings (fairly or very well) for the incumbent across four developmental key issues (jobs, health, education, and infrastructure). A score of 0 indicates negative ratings across the board and a score of 4 signifies all-positive ratings. The four policy fields represent the top priorities of African citizens[31] and are at the core of definitions of development.[32]

The count approach is especially useful for an analysis of performance biases and preferable over a more general item such as presidential approval. A strong cognitive predisposition should produce all-negative or all-positive ratings, whereas independent voters will often give varying marks across the different policy fields so that biases become distinguishable. The distribution of the index in Ghana and Uganda (see Appendix 1.4) confirms that many people give nuanced ratings. At the same time, the distribution gets quite polarised at certain points, especially in

[31] In most African countries, Jobs, Health, Education, and Infrastructure are the issues mentioned most frequently when survey respondents are asked about which problem the government should address (Bentley, et al. 2015).
[32] The list of topics corresponds closely to the operationalization of development in the Human Development Index (cf. http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev). Only infrastructure is not explicitly covered by the HDI but a common feature the development discourse (cf. https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/infrastructure)

Ghana, which is indeed a consequence of strong identity bias, as the following analysis reveals.

Independent Variable

The independent variables are based on indicator variables for relevant ethnic and partisan groups. Relevant ethnic groups are groups with a history of political competition, identified on the basis of scientific literature and data from the Ethnic Power Relations Dataset (Vogt, et al. 2015). Two ethnic groups from Ghana and three from Uganda are under in-depth scrutiny in the main part of the analysis. For the cross-country perspective, I code 37 additional groups from the 14 incoming countries. [33] Ethnicity is coded based on an open-ended question asking respondents: *What is your ethnic community, cultural group or tribe?*

In terms of partisan groups, I create variables for respondents who say they feel close to the incumbent party and respondents who indicate they feel close to the main opposition parties in Ghana and Uganda.[34] Both countries have relatively stable 2-party systems, and the share of third parties is marginal. For the cross-country comparison, I do not create a variable for the main opposition party but merge people feeling close to any party in opposition in one category since the opposition is more fragmented in some cases.

However, ethnic and partisan identities are not mutually exclusive and may occur in diverse combinations. To distinguish ethnic and partisan bias, I thus use exclusive indicator variables for each possible combination of identities in the case studies of Ghana and Uganda. Across surveys, the number of observations in each category is large enough to calculate group-specific effects (cf. Appendix 5.4). Table 5-1 provides an example by showing a crosstab of ethnic and partisan identities in Ghana's Pre-Election Poll. All possible combinations mean identity dummies are created for each cell of the table, except the upper-left cell, with the 440 observations who neither belong to a politicised group nor indicate a partisan affiliation serving as a reference group of independent voters. Disaggregating the identities allows understanding how partisanship and ethnicity interact, and which one prevails in cases of competing identities.

Moderating Variables: Information

To test the moderating impact of information, I operationalise three concepts: Exposure to mass media, political interest, and daily experiences of lived poverty. Mass media exposure is measured with two dummy variables that take the value 1 if a respondent gets news from the radio or newspapers *every day* or *few times a week*, respectively. Radio continues to be the primary news source for the overwhelming majority of citizens, with 80% of respondents coded as 1 in my 14-country dataset. It is thus a broad proxy for general exposure to political news. Newspaper consumption captures a smaller group of highly informed voters; only 22% are coded as regular

[33] See Chapter 4.3.1 of this book for details on the selection procedure. A list of all coded groups by country can be found in Appendix 1.11.

[34] The coding is based on two survey questions asking respondents *Do you feel close to any particular political party?* and *Which party is that?*.

newspapers readers.

As for indicators of political interest, I use self-reported interest in politics and an indirect item asking about political discussions. *Political Interest* assumes the value 1 for respondents who describe themselves as *somewhat* or *very interested*. *Discuss politics with others* is based on a question asking: *When you get together with your friends or family, would you say you discuss political matters?* The variable is coded 1 if a respondent chooses the answer *frequently*. Within the full 14-country dataset, 58% describe themselves as politically interested, while 23% say they discuss politics frequently. The indirect discussion variable hence represents the more restrictive indicator of political interest.

Finally, to measure daily experiences, I use the *Afrobarometer Lived Poverty Index* (LPI) (Mattes, et al. 2016, Meyer and Keyser 2016). The scale consists of five statements about shortages of basic needs. Respondents are requested to indicate on a Likert scale from 0 to 4 how often in the last year, they went without enough food to eat, clean water, medical treatment, cooking fuel, and cash income. The answer values are averaged into a continuous index, which takes the value 0 for individuals who did not experience any shortages and ranges to 4 for respondents who report constant deficits in all basic needs. A higher value hence indicates a higher exposure to poverty. The questions do not call for evaluations but facts, and they are asked right at the beginning of Afrobarometer surveys before the questionnaire mentions the government or political parties. This makes the LPI an ideal proxy for unbiased information on an individual's exposure to everyday consequences of governmental (mis)management.

Models:

To estimate identity biases in performance perceptions, I use Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression models. From a purely statistical point of view, an Ordered Logit Model would be preferable as the dependent variable, performance perceptions, is a discrete 5-point scale. However, an OLS model allows for a much more straightforward interpretation as coefficients correspond to the estimated deviation of group members on the 5-point performance scale, making it substantively easier to understand the impact of biases and their real-world implications.

The case studies draw on two regression models. The first one predicts the effect of identity on performance perceptions based on the fine-grained indicators of all possible identity configurations. The second model tests how information access affects identity biases using interaction effects between identity and information. Throughout the analysis, I calculate separate models for each survey because they represent independent snapshots of the political mood at a particular time. The consistency of group leanings over time is an essential indicator of cognitive biases, and in some cases, group biases turn around from one poll to another. A model which calculates a single effect across several surveys would accordingly be at odds with

the empirical realities of the data.

Equation 1 gives the first model. y_i is the 5-point indicator of performance perceptions. β_1 to β_8 are model parameters for disjunct dummy variables of individual ethnicity/partisanship configurations. The equation pertains to a setting with two ethnic groups, as in Ghana. Hence, there are three parameters for both ethnic groups: One without partisan identity, one with government partisanship, and one with opposition partisanship. β_7 and β_8 predict the bias of partisans from other ethnic groups. The Uganda Model contains three more predictors to accommodate an additional ethnicity across different partisan states. β_9 to β_{13} are the coefficients of the five indicators of an individual's informational base. β_{14} to β_{17} measure political fear to control for falsely positive performance perceptions by respondents feeling intimidated by the government. $GovSurv_i$ is a dummy and assumes the value 1 if respondents believe the government sent the interviewer. $Wary_i$ indicates that a respondent was not at ease during the interview and is 1 for voters whom interviewers perceived as suspicious or in-between. $FearViolence_i$ and $NotFree_i$ are two items directly asking whether respondents fear political violence or believe they are not free to say what they think. $\boldsymbol{X_i}$ is a matrix of standard individual-level control variables containing indicators for youth, female, urban dwelling, Muslim, and a 4-point indicator of education.

$$(1)\ y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 eg1noP_i + \beta_2 eg1govP_i + \beta_3 eg1oppP_i + \beta_4 eg2noP_i + \beta_5 eg2govP_i + \beta_6 eg2oppP_i + \beta_7 govP_i + \beta_8 oppP_i + \beta_9 Radio\ News_i + \beta_{10} Newspaper\ News_i + \beta_{11} Interest_i + \beta_{12} Discuss\ Politics_i + \beta_{13} Lived\ Povery_i + \beta_{14} GovSurv_i + \beta_{15} Wary_i + \beta_{16} Fear\ Violence_i + \beta_{17} Not\ free_i + \boldsymbol{X_i}\delta + \epsilon_i$$

The second model (Equation 2) adds interaction effects between identity and information. Instead of the disjunct identity variables of Equation 1, it draws upon overlapping indicators of ethnicity and partisanship. Otherwise, the number of observations per group category would be too low to obtain meaningful results from the interaction terms, which effectively split up the identities along different levels of the informational indicators. β_1 to β_4 are the effects of two ethnic groups as well as partisans of the government and the opposition. The parameter β_5 corresponds to the main effect of information, while β_6 to β_9 represent the interactions to investigate if the effect of identity on performance perceptions varies with exposure to information. $Information_i$ represents a wildcard for the five informational indicators, which are inserted in successive regressions.

$$(2)\ y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 eg1_i + \beta_2 eg2_i + \beta_3 govP_i + \beta_4 oppP_i + \beta_5 Information_i + \beta_6 eg1_i * Information_i + \beta_7 eg2_i * Information_i + \beta_8 govP_i * Information_i + \beta_9 oppP_i * Information_i + \beta_{10} GovSurv_i + \beta_{11} Wary_i + \beta_{12} Fear\ Violence_i + \beta_{13} Not\ free_i + \boldsymbol{X_i}\delta + \epsilon_i$$

For the cross-country comparison, I calculate 271 group effects for all ethnic and partisan groups in every survey. The performance perceptions of ethnic groups are compared against the rest of the sample; partisan groups are compared against voters with no party ID. Equation 3a gives the regression model calculated for ethnic groups. It includes only one ethnicity per estimation (β_1) alongside indicators of political fear (β_1- β_4) and the matrix $\boldsymbol{X_i}$ of demographic control variables.

The partisan effects are calculated based on Equation 3b. Here, both government and opposition partisans are included in one model, given that the reference category for partisans is straightforward (respondents without partisan identity) and large enough across surveys to estimate meaningful partisan effects.

The large number of independent regressions does justice to the challenge that the size of relevant ethnicities varies enormously across societies. Testing the impact of various ethnicities and partisan groups in a single model may produce misleading results. Without an in-depth case study perspective, the composition of the remaining respondents in the reference category is hard to oversee. Therefore, I focus on the deviation from the rest of the sample in the case of ethnic groups and from independents in the case of partisan identities. This approach is an appropriate way to reliably detect group biases since a group leaning should usually become statistically visible compared to all other voters, even if the reference group is relatively heterogeneous.

$$(3a)\ y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 eg1_i + \beta_2 GovSurv_i + \beta_3 Wary_i + \beta_4 FearViolence_i + \beta_5 NotFree_i + \boldsymbol{X_i}\delta + \epsilon_i$$

$$(3a)\ y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 govP_i + \beta_2 oppP_i + \beta_3 GovSurv_i + \beta_4 Wary_i + \beta_5 FearViolence_i + \beta_6 NotFree_i + \boldsymbol{X_i}\delta + \epsilon_i$$

A risk of testing only one group at once is omitted variable bias (King, et al. 1994: 168-176). The existence of an oppositional ethnic group which does not get controlled will increase the effect size for government coethnics or copartisans. Likewise, independent partisan identities may inflate ethnicity effects. To address this problem, I re-calculate all ethnicity effects with partisan controls (Equation 3c). Controlling partisanship should reveal an omitted variable bias even in cases of primarily ethnic divisions because a clear-cut antagonism between ethnic groups should partly overlap with partisan identities. Appendices 5.6.3 and 5.6.4 compare the size and significance of ethnicity effects calculated with and without partisan controls. In most cases, controlling partisanship does not affect the ethnicity coefficients. Where it does, it is discussed in the result section, providing additional insights into the 'partisan content' of ethnicity effects and vice versa.

$$(3c)\ y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 eg1_i + \beta_3 govP_i + \beta_4 oppP_i + \beta_{10} GovSurv_i + \beta_{11} Wary_i + \beta_{12} FearViolence_i + \beta_{13} NotFree_i + \boldsymbol{X_i}\delta + \epsilon_i$$

5.4 Results: Ethnicity and Partisan Bias in Performance Perceptions

This section presents the results. The first two parts investigate the prevalence of ethnic and partisan bias in Ghana and Uganda. The third subsection analyses whether access to information reduces biases. Section 5.4.4 is dedicated to the 16-country. comparative perspective

5.4.1 Identity Bias in Ghana

Ghana is a competitive democracy with a well-institutionalised two-party system and regular turnovers of the presidency between the two major parties National Democratic Congress (NDC) and New Patriotic Party (NPP) (Whitfield 2009). Two ethnic groups, the Ewe (14% of Ghana's population) and the Akan[35] (30%), are associated with ethnic voting (Fridy 2007,

[35] Note that the Akans are made up of different subgroups. To exclude the Fante sub-groups which does not share

Nugent, et al. 2010). Ethnic alignments in Ghana do not centre on co-ethnic personnel but on party labels, with Ewes being associated with the NDC party, whereas Akan are linked to the NPP party. Almost half of Ghana's electorate report a partisan identity, with roughly 30% favouring the NPP, and about 20% feeling close to NDC. Both partisan groups are regionally diverse, multi-ethnic and have been relatively constant in size over recent years.[36] Based on these contextual characteristics, I expect to find both ethnic and partisan bias in the performance perceptions of Ghanaians. Since the NDC took over the presidency from NPP in 2009, biases should turn around after 2008.

Figure 5-1 presents the bias of Ghana's identity groups over time. All results stem from regression models that predict performance perceptions based on indicator variables of ethnic and partisan affiliation (cf. Equation 1). The values are the OLS-regression coefficients of eight politically relevant identity configurations.[37] Since the model is linear, the values represent the average deviation of group members on the 5-point performance scale. The reference group are individuals who belong to non-politicised ethnicities and do not hold a partisan identity. The figure is organized like a crosstab: The columns keep ethnicity, the rows partisanship constant.

The first thing to take from Figure 5.1 is that both ethnic and partisan biases are prevalent in Ghana. This can best be assessed by looking at voters who are either partisans or belong to one of the (politicised) ethnic identities but not both. Plots 7 and 8 represent Ewes and Akans without partisan preferences. Although not all coefficients reach significance, it is visible that the two groups constantly disagree about the incumbent's developmental management. Under NPP rule (until 2008), Ewes give significantly lower grades, whereas the estimate for Akans is slightly above the reference group (albeit insignificant). After 2008, the electoral victory of an NDC president turns around the ratings, especially Akans give rather bad grades to the incumbent. In the last survey gathered in October 2016, the gap between Ewe and Akan amounts to 1.33 (0.7 + 0.63), illustrating fundamentally different views on President Mahama's record in delivering developmental progress.

Partisan biases are also clearly visible. Plots 3 and 6 of Figure 5-1 represent NPP and NDC partisans with non-politicized ethnic identities and follow the same pattern observed for Ewe and Akan, with significant upward and downward deviations from non-partisans. The reversal of leanings after the turnover of 2008 is also clearly visible. It is worth noting that the partisan-only gap is much larger than the ethnicity-only gap ahead of the election in October 2016. An

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the political preference for NPP (cf. Michelitch 2015, Nathan 2016), the coding excludes Akans from Central Region.

[36] Especially NDC partisans show a high level of ethnic diversity with as many as 74% belonging to other ethnicities than the traditionally NDC-affiliated Ewe. NPP partisans are somewhat more homogenous as ethnic Akan make up 67% of the partisan group. Still one-third of NPP partisans is recruited from diverse ethnic groups including Ewe. See Appendix 1.7 for the ethnic and regional composition of partisan groups.

[37] Models control for information, political fear, and demographics. See Appendix 5.1.2 for regression tables.

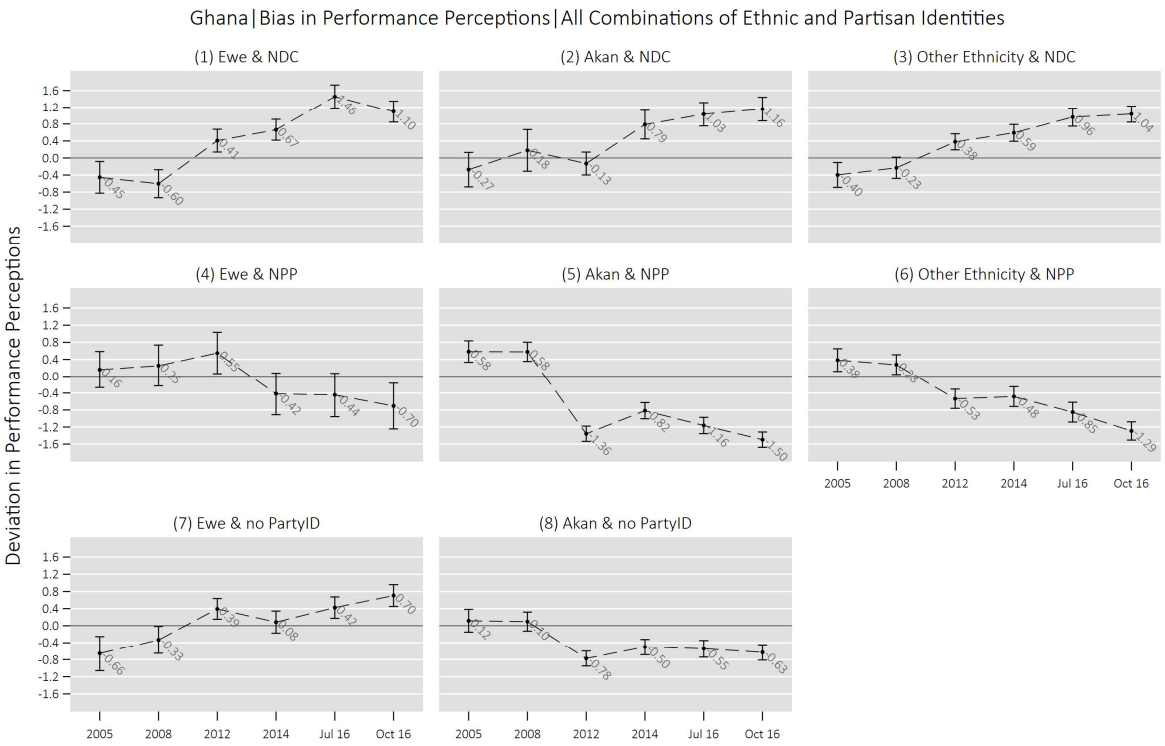

Figure 5-1: Bias in Performance Perceptions in Ghana by Survey, all Combinations of Ethnic and Partisan Identities. Values are coefficients of identity dummies from OLS regression models predicting performance perceptions and correspond to each group's average deviation from independent voters on the 5-point performance scale. Error bars give the 95% confidence interval. X-axis corresponds to the different survey waves. A separate model was calculated for each survey. Regression tables: Appendix 5.1.2

estimated deviation of 1.04 (NDC) and 1.29 (NPP) for the two camps in October 2016 indicates a difference of more than two in the average number of positive ratings between the two partisan camps. We do not see a similar pre-election spike in ethnic polarization. For Akan (Plot 8), the 2016 values are indistinguishable from earlier surveys. In the case of Ewe, a leap towards the end of the observational period is visible, but the estimated upward deviation is noticeably lower compared to NDC partisans (0.7 vs 1.04).

Based on these clusters of citizens with single identities, we can confirm H1 and H2 for Ghana, i.e. the existence of independent ethnic and partisan biases. Members of Ewe and Akan significantly deviate from other ethnicities in their assessments of incumbent performance, even if they do not report feeling close to a particular party. Likewise, NPP and NDC partisans over or underrate the handling of developmental matters even if they do not belong to a politicised ethnic group.

But what if voters hold competing ethnic and partisan identities? The key strength of the model is that it allows disentangling the impact of partisanship across different ethnicities and vice versa. H3 expects that ethnic biases override partisan leanings, as ethnicity is widely seen as the dominant identity category in African politics. Interestingly, the data tells a different story.

Figure 5.1 reveals that partisan leanings consistently prevail over ethnic biases in Ghana. Going

through the rows, it can be seen that partisan leanings remain pretty constant across all ethnicities. During the campaign period, the effect for most partisan clusters significantly exceeds the deviation of Ewe and Akan without partisan identities in the bottom plots. Especially remarkable is the fact that this is also true for individuals with competing allegiances, i.e. opposing political alignments of ethnic and partisan identity. Such competing combinations are Akan & NDC (Plot 4) and Ewe & NPP (Plot 2). In both cases, the partisan identity overrides the leaning of the ethnic group. The upward deviation for Akan & NDC ahead of the election in October 2016 is even slightly higher compared to other NDC partisans.

Different reactions to the 2014' economic crisis corroborate the image that partisanship has a more substantial impact on political perceptions than ethnicity. In 2014, Ghana experienced the lowest GDP growth since 1984 and the only rise in the poverty rate on record.[38] The crisis occurred under an NDC administration after the party had reclaimed the presidency in 2008, and the reactions of ethnic and partisan support groups are quite distinct. While the effect for Ewe turns insignificant in 2014 (Plot 7), the positive bias among NDC partisans (Plots 1-3) remains high. Ewes accordingly become more critical and realistic upon the visible fallout of the crisis, seemingly updating their beliefs in the face of economic hardship and public service problems. In contrast, NDC partisans continue to give positive ratings to the incumbent, apparently not blaming the copartisan President for a poor record.

A relatively constant size and high regional diversity of partisan camps indicate that the observed leanings in Ghana are not driven by short-term orientations or patronage. The size of both party's support groups has hardly changed since 2012 (cf. Appendix 1.7), indicating we are dealing with durable social identities. Likewise, the regional distribution speaks against clientelism and regional targeting of strongholds as the main root of partisan identities. Generally, both parties' supporters are scattered across all of Ghana's regions. As part of the robustness check, I also calculated models in which the Akan Group is restricted to individuals from the Akan-dominated Ashanti region, still observing strongly biased NDC partisans among the Akans (cf. Appendix 5.2). Accordingly, even where the prospects for patronage from an NPP administration are highest, some individuals develop an NDC partisan identity and henceforth deviate heavily from the performance ratings of the Akan majority around them.

To summarise the results for Ghana, we can confirm that ethnic and partisan identities impose a bias as expected by H1 and H2, respectively. However, contrary to the expectation of H3, the impact of partisanship is much stronger than the impact of ethnic identities. The magnitude of partisan biases exceed ethnicity bias, and they also clearly prevail in cases of opposing loyalties. Confronted with a massive crisis in 2014, incumbent coethnics, moreover, stopped overrating the president. In contrast, copartisans from all ethnic groups continue to rate the president much

[38] An overview of economic trends in Ghana over the observational period can be found in Ch 6, Figure 6-2.

better than the reference group of voters without partisan identity.

The results signify the emergence of independent affective partisan identities in Ghana, which transcend old ethnic alignments. The magnitude of partisan biases, the fact that they cut across ethnic identities, and their resilience to a deep economic crisis hint at psychological processes of motivated reasoning. Voters with partisan alignment seem to systematically ignore and misinterpret political information to retain a positive image of the supported party and keep competitors in a negative light. All evidence points to affective orientations as described by psychological and social identity theories of partisanship (Campbell, et al. 1960, Greene 1999, Green, et al. 2002).

5.4.2 Identity Bias in Uganda

Uganda represents a semi-democratic state. Since 1986, the country has been under the rule of President Yoweri Museveni and the National Resistance Movement (NRM). The NRM has, over time, developed from a rebel group into a large party and dominates the public sphere. A second relevant party is the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), which was established soon after the reintroduction of multipartyism in 2005 by an NRM renegade, Kizzy Besigye. In all presidential elections during the observational period, more than 95% of the popular vote went either to Museveni or Besigye.

Regarding ethnicity biases, the analysis focuses on three groups. First, the Munyankole, who are Museveni's coethnics and account for ca. 13% of Uganda's population. Second, the Mukiga who are the coethnics of the President's main challenger Besigye (7%). Finally, the Acholi (5%), who have been traditionally in opposition to Museveni because an Acholi president was ousted when Museveni and the NRM took power in a military coup.

There are also reasons to expect independent partisan biases in Uganda. Some recent studies suggest that partisanship constitutes a relevant social identity (Carlson 2016a, Conroy-Krutz, et al. 2016, Platas and Raffler 2021). The proportion of respondents who say they feel close to a party is high. Up to 62% identify with Museveni's NRM, while the share of FDC partisans ranges from 5 to 17% across the six surveys. Both partisan groups are multi-ethnic and regionally diverse[39], but the size of partisan camps is relatively volatile (cf. Appendix 1.7).

Figure 5-2 gives an overview of ethnic and partisan biases in Uganda over time. The values are OLS coefficients (See Appendix 5.1.4 for full regression tables) from models that predict performance perceptions based on indicator variables of each combination of the five identities under scrutiny; the reference group are individuals from other ethnic groups without partisan identity. The values represent each group's estimated deviation from the reference group in the number of positive ratings for the incumbent across four developmental key issues. The figure is

[39] Both partisan groups resemble the regional distribution of Uganda's population. Regarding ethnicity the ethnic groups of the Museveni and Besigye are only slightly overrepresented withing NRM and FDC partisans, respectively. See Appendix 1.7 for detailed graphs on the ethnic and regional composition of partisan groups.

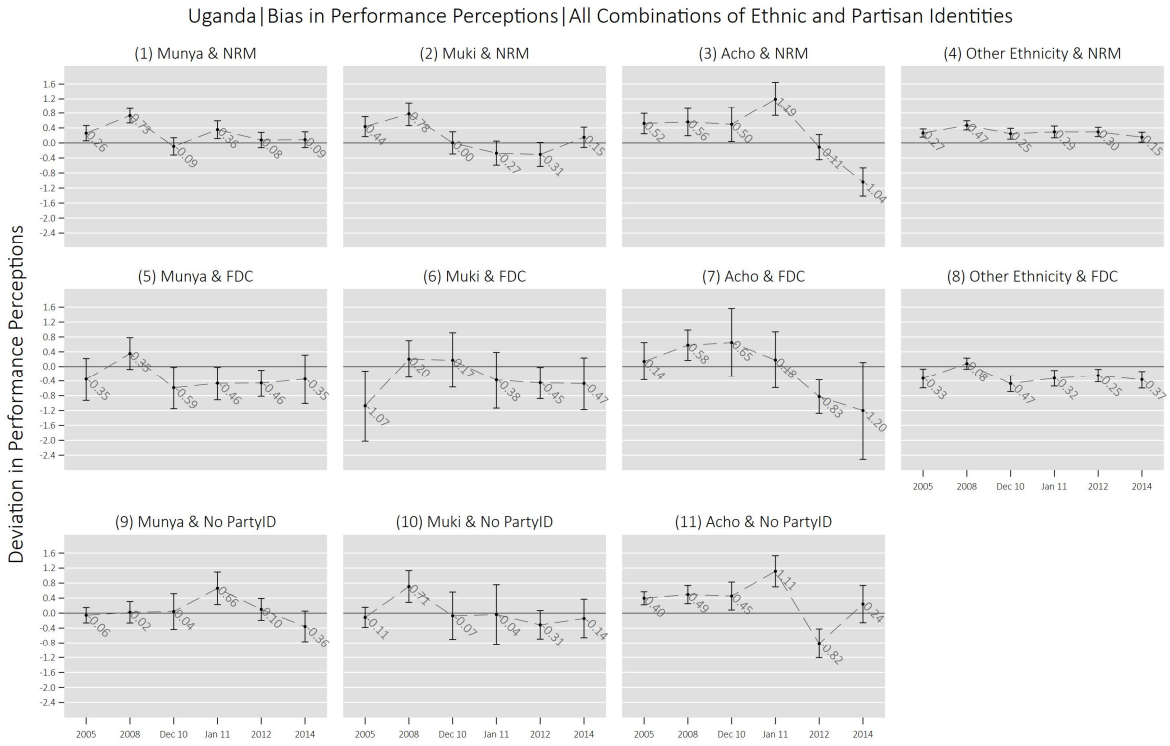

Figure 5-2: Bias in Performance Perceptions in Uganda by Survey, all Combinations of Ethnic and Partisan Identities. Values are coefficients of identity dummies from OLS regression models predicting performance perceptions and correspond to each group's average deviation from independent voters on the 5-point performance scale. Error bars give the 95% confidence interval. X-axis corresponds to the different survey waves. A separate model was calculated for each survey. Regression tables: Appendix 5.1.4

organized like a crosstab: The columns show performance biases of ethnic groups across different partisan identities; the rows pertain to the partisan camps across ethnic groups.

Interestingly, there is little evidence of coethnicity biases in the results. The bottom plots (9 and 10) give the results for Munyankole and Mukiga without partisan preference. Against expectations, there are no relevant public opinion differences between the coethnics of President Museveni (Munyankole) and those of opposition leader Besigye (Mukiga). Neither do the two groups systematically deviate from the reference group nor do we see significant opinion gaps between the two. Most coefficients are insignificant, and the confidence intervals of the two groups overlap throughout the observational period. The heated competition between the two politicians seemingly does not translate into diverging performance evaluations between their ethnic groups. The only sign of a coethnicity bias is an upward deviation among the Munyankole in January 2011, ahead of the election. Museveni's coethnics may be more willing than other groups to adopt the positive image of presidential performance drawn by the electoral campaign.

A puzzling case are the Acholi. The group has been in fierce opposition to Museveni for decades. Still, the results indicate that members expressed extraordinarily high satisfaction with the president's developmental record for most of the observational period. Plot 11 (Fig 5.2) gives the coefficients for Acholi without partisan identity and indicates an upward deviation in the first four surveys. Especially in the Jan 11 pre-election survey, the Acholi evaluate Museveni

remarkably positively. Only in the 2012, we see the expected negative bias towards Museveni's developmental record. Taking into account the entire column (Plots 3 and 7), we find very similar patterns among Acholi identifying with the major parties. The coherence across partisan identities indicates an ethnicity effect, notwithstanding the unexpected direction.

A potential explanation for the favourable ratings by the Acholi is clientelism. Indeed, the president sought to improve the relationship with the group in the late 2000s, and direct patronage to Acholi chiefs was part of the strategy. The sudden change to below-average ratings in 2012 could be a consequence of problems in the delivery[40] coupled with a national economic downturn. Another possible reason for the positive Acholi ratings is measurement error. Political fear and subtle intimidation by the ruling NRM are common in Uganda, which may lead oppositional groups to report overly optimistic grades (Carlson 2018a). However, all models control for direct and indirect indicators of political fear and the respective coefficients indicate a consistently negative impact on performance perceptions (cf. Appendix 5.1.4). Accordingly, Ugandans who sense political intimidation rather tend to express dissatisfaction with Museveni towards Afrobarometer interviewers.[41] Clientelist relations thus seem to be the more plausible explanation here.

Turning to partisan biases, we find opinion gaps between NRM and FDC supporters in Uganda. On the right side of Figure 5.2, the results for partisans who do not belong to the three politicised ethnic groups are displayed in Plots 4 and 8. With one exception, the estimates are significant throughout the observational period, and the direction is in line with expectations. Individuals feeling close to NRM rate the government on average more favourably, whereas FDC supporters give more negative ratings to the President's handling of developmental affairs than the reference groups. Comparing the estimates in both plots, a significant gap between both groups is visible throughout the six surveys, as the confidence intervals do not overlap.

The strength of partisan biases, however, is not especially impressive. The divide between NRM and FDC supporters in the average number of positive ratings for the incumbent hovers around 0.5 – 0.7. This is low compared to Ghana, where the partisan gap reaches values greater than 2 (cf. Figure 5.1). Unlike in Ghana, there is also no rise in partisan polarisation during the campaign – the magnitude of biases in the two pre-election surveys (Dec 10 and Jan 11) is similar to the other waves.

H3 expects that ethnicity will be the dominant influence in cases of competing identities. Indeed,

[40] See: Acholi Palaces: Are they fit for the chiefs' habitation? *In:* Daily Monitor Uganda. Available from: https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/lifestyle/reviews-profiles/acholi-palaces-are-they-fit-for-the-chiefs-habitation--1534982. [May 31, 2022].

[41] Contrary to this assessment, Carlson (2018a), using the same datasets, finds that wary voters are more likely to support the incumbent, especially in the 2011 pre-election survey. A replication of her analysis, however, revealed that the reported increase in wary voters ahead of the election is owed to a different coding of wariness in the two surveys. Once coding is held constant, there is no rise in wariness ahead of the election.

sometimes ethnic leanings prevail over partisan allegiances in Uganda. Most notably – as discussed above – the Acholi seem to follow ethnically-motivated evaluations. The consistent patterns across plots 3, 7, and 11 indicate that reported partisan preferences have no impact on the group's performance evaluations. An ethnicity effect also occurs for Mukiga & NRM (Plot 2). The negative point estimates in Jan 2011 and 2012 indicate that the ethnic link to the opposition leader induces some Mukiga to express dissatisfaction with the presidential performance, even if they feel close to the ruling party. However, the effects miss the 95% significance level, and in other surveys, most clearly in 2005, the performance evaluations of the Mukiga people diverge along partisan lines.

Likewise, there are strong signs that partisan identities cut across ethnic boundaries. In the case of Munyankole & FDC (Plot 5), feeling close to the opposition tends to outweigh coethnic loyalty to the president when evaluating incumbent performance. The negative coefficients show a constant downward deviation from the reference group. In the Jan 2011 pre-election survey, the gap is also significant in comparison to all other Munyankole (Plots 1 and 9). Hence, the campaign produces a certain split among Museveni's coethnics. Another hint at relevant partisan identities is the fact that in 2012, during a time of economic downturn (cf. Figure 6.-10), FDC partisans from any ethnicity rate the government worse than the reference group. Accordingly, a link to the opposition makes people more likely to attribute the responsibility for problems to the sitting president, irrespective of their ethnic identity.

To sum up results on bias incidence in Uganda, we can put on record that coethnicity biases are hardly detectable. Neither do coethnics give particularly favourable ratings to Museveni, nor do members of his main challenger's ethnic group rate him conspicuously negatively. Only ahead of the election, Munyankole evaluate their coethnic president's performance somewhat better than other groups. Moreover, an ethnicity effect is found for the marginalized Acholi people whose performance ratings follow a certain pattern over time irrespective of partisan affiliations. However, the direction is puzzling as group members overrate Museveni in most surveys despite a history of political opposition. Potential explanations are clientelist relations and measurement errors due to political fear. All in all, H1 cannot be confirmed for the Ugandan case. The lack of coethnicity biases in most surveys contradicts the underlying assumption that candidate ethnicity determines how voters perceive developmental performance.

Partisanship seems to have a more decisive influence on popular perceptions of government performance in Uganda. Among minor ethnicities, the analysis has revealed a constant gap between supporters of NRM and FDC. In several surveys, partisan attachments were found to outweigh the supposed ethnic preference of the major groups Munyankole and Mukiga. Most notably, ahead of the 2011 election, a significant partisan split was observed in the performance ratings of the incumbent's coethnics (Munyankole). H2 is thus to be confirmed. Partisan

attachments seem to have an influence on how Ugandans perceive the developmental record of their president. The results lend further support to the notion that partisanship is an independent and sometimes powerful category of political identification in Uganda.

That said, the impact of partisanship in Uganda is much weaker compared to Ghana, and there are higher fluctuations in the relative size of partisan camps over time (cf. Appendix 1.7). This indicates that the partisan camps in Uganda are more heterogenous regarding their 'closeness'. Some people may have stable attachments as described by social-psychological and expressive accounts of party identification (Campbell, et al. 1960, Huddy, et al. 2015). In other cases, the statement of feeling close to a party may instead be driven by short-term preferences or – in the case of the ruling party – political fear. The descriptive distributions (Appendix 1.4) reveal that performance ratings within both partisan camps are pretty mixed. Surprisingly few NRM partisans give all positive ratings. Oppositional FDC partisans are relatively unified in negative views in the surveys of Jan 11 and 2012 but show incoherent ratings in the other waves.

Comparing Ghana and Uganda, it can be stated that identity biases are generally stronger in Ghana. This is most strikingly visible in the model fit statistic R^2, which gives the proportion of the variance in performance perceptions that is explained by the predictor variables. As can be seen from the regression tables in Appendix 5.1, identities alone explain up to 32% of the variance in performance perceptions in Ghana, whereas the maximum is 6% in Uganda.

One reason is the exceptional influence of partisan identities in Ghana. About 55% feel close to a party, and the performance perceptions among partisans are extremely skewed in either direction. Ahead of the 2016 election, 70% of opposition partisans rate all areas negatively, while 62% of government partisans rate all areas positively. In Uganda, ahead of the 2011 election, only 18% of government partisans and 33% of opposition supporters give all positive and all negative ratings, respectively (cf. Appendix 1.3/1.4). A relatively high level of party system institutionalization in conjunction with the free and open political sphere has led to the development of stable and highly salient partisan identities in Ghana.

Another potential explanation is that the developmental issues of jobs, infrastructure, education, and health are simply more salient in Ghana. The analysis of the following Chapter 6 indicates that performance generally plays a subordinate role in the considerations of Ugandan voters. People may not view developmental progress as a dimension of political competition and hence be less inclined to adjust their assessments to their identity.

5.4.3 Does Information moderate Identity Bias?

A critical question regards the nature of biases. If they stem from informational deficits, better-informed voters should be less biased. If, by contrast, biases are rooted in in-group and out-group dynamics of affective, social identities, new information is unlikely to change the mindset

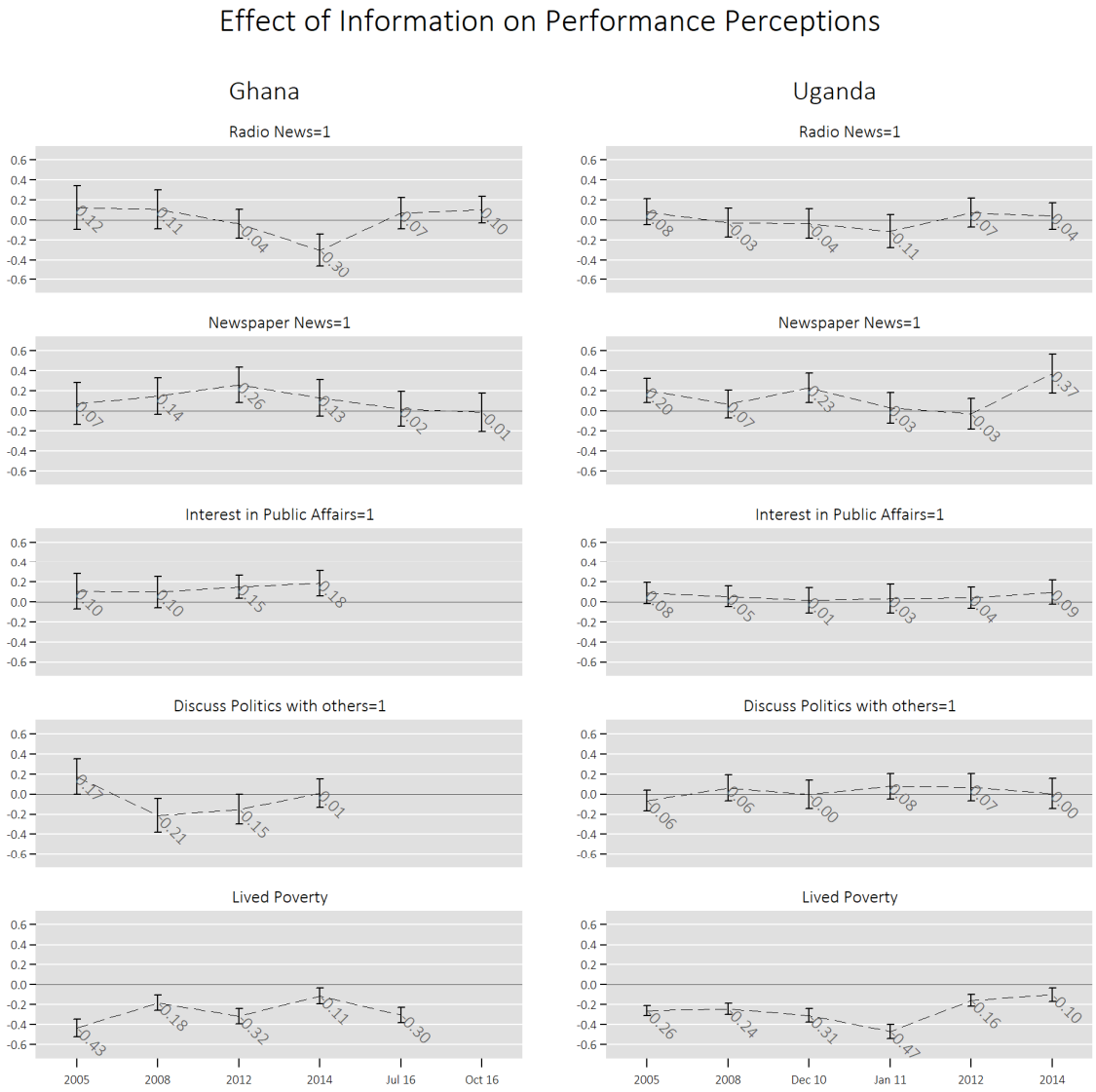

Figure 5-3: Effects of Informational Variables on Performance Perceptions. Values are coefficients from OLS regression models predicting performance perceptions. Error bars give the 95% confidence interval. A separate model was calculated for each survey. X-axis corresponds to the different survey waves. See Appendix 5.1.4 for the regression tables.

of people who are guided by ethnic and partisan identities in the formation of their opinion. In this section, I test whether information reduces biases to establish which theoretical account is more consistent with the biases found in Ghana and Uganda.

Before turning to the moderating effect of information, it is useful to briefly check the immediate impact of the informational variables on performance perceptions. Are informed voters more critically and give worse ratings to the government? Figure 5-3 presents the effects of the informational indicators on performance perceptions, as calculated by the regression models of Equation 1. The left side displays the estimates for Ghana, the right for Uganda.

Media consumption seems to hardly affect average performance perceptions. In Ghana, people who listen to the radio and read newspapers are mostly indistinguishable from people who do not get media news. An exception worth mentioning is a significant negative effect for radio

listeners during the crisis of 2014, indicating that those 20% who do not listen to radio news were a bit less aware of the crisis and remained more positive towards the government. In Uganda, radio has no impact, but newspaper readers are sometimes rating the government more positive, which may be due to the dominant newspapers on the Ugandan market being government-friendly organs. The comparatively robust positive effect of newspaper readership in the last survey of 2014 may bear witness to shrinking media freedom in Uganda.[42] The direction is also a hint that newspaper consumption may not alleviate but exacerbate biases among government supporters in Uganda. Regarding political interest, we see no direct impact on performance perceptions. The few narrowly significant effects in Ghana are negligible since they are tiny with high confidence intervals.

A remarkable finding is the consistently negative effect of the Lived Poverty Index (LPI) on performance perceptions. In both countries, people who experience shortages of basic necessities rate the government significantly lower. It can be inferred that personal experiences of poverty get attributed to the government and enter evaluations of an incumbent's handling of key developmental areas. Exposure to the consequences of governmental management is, accordingly, a relevant source of information in the formation of performance perceptions.

To investigate whether identity biases are moderated by information, I regress performance perceptions on identity again but add interaction terms between identity and the indicators of information (cf. Equation 3). By including interactions, a separate effect of information is calculated for each identity group, allowing us to determine whether the performance ratings of group members with high information are distinct from those with low information. If information has a moderating impact, we would expect to see negative interaction terms for groups in power, as their positive bias should decrease with better information. Groups in opposition should, in turn, have positive interaction terms, which would indicate that better-informed members are less hostile towards the government.

Since the varying expectations for different groups can quickly lead to confusion in an interpretation based on regression tables, I present the results as predicted values. Based on the previously fit models, I estimate conditional performance perception for the relevant groups at fixed values of the informational variables. This approach allows us to immediately see whether polarisation between groups decreases or intensifies with more information. I also confine the presentation to selected results that are indicative of core findings. The complete regression tables and predictions are displayed in Appendix 5.5.

So, are better-informed voters less biased? As far as radio and newspaper consumption is

[42] Cf. Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index. Data available at: https://tcdata360.worldbank.org/indicators/h3f86901f?country=UGA&indicator=32416&viz=line_chart&years=2001,2019

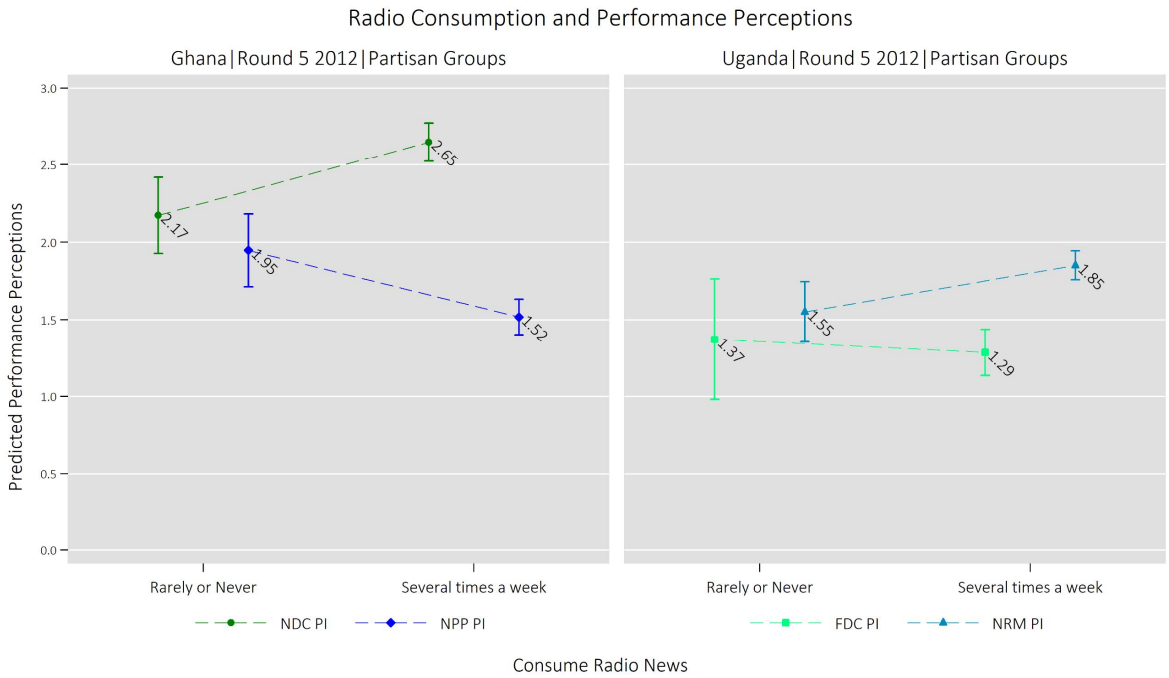

Figure 5-4: Radio Consumption and Performance Perceptions. Values give estimated level of performance perceptions (Y-axis) based on radio consumption (X-Axis). Error bars are 95% confidence intervals. The underlying model is an OLS regression predicting performance perceptions, which includes interaction effects between Identity and Lived Poverty.

concerned, the answer is no. Across the 12 surveys from Ghana and Uganda, both media sources fail to reduce the magnitude of identity bias. Where effects reach significance, they instead hint at an intensification of identity bias because of media consumption, especially among partisans.

Figure 5-4 visualises two such cases where partisan polarisation is more intense among people who regularly listen to radio news. The left plot shows an example of Ghana's partisan camps in the 2012 Afrobarometer. The lines for both groups diverge, which indicates higher polarisation among informed partisans. Supporters of the oppositional NPP (blue line) rate the government significantly worse if they listen to the radio, whereas adherents of the incumbent NDC become more enthusiastic about the President as they hear radio news. The same effect is visible in the right plot for Uganda's main partisan camps in the 2012 Afrobarometer. Here, the effect is smaller, and the difference is only significant for people identifying with President Museveni's NRM, but again, a partisan gap is only visible among radio listeners.

It is essential to point out that the examples of Figure 5-4 represent the most straightforward cases of a rising partisan gap amid media consumption. For most surveys, the difference between partisans who consume media and those who do not is insignificant. Nonetheless, we frequently find diverging partisan lines for both newspaper and radio consumption, including ahead of Ghana's 2016 election, where partisan polarization is at its peak (cf. Figure 5.1). On this basis, it can be firmly rejected that news consumption reduces partisan biases. Instead, we see a weak tendency of rising partisan biases among people following news in the media.

For ethnic groups, there is no tendency, neither towards intensification nor moderation of biases by media consumption. Comparing the lines of opposing ethnic groups across surveys, they

sometimes converge, sometimes diverge, but in most cases, simply run evenly, i.e. they are not only insignificant but also do not indicate a trend in terms of changes in performance perceptions (see Appendix 5.5). It should not go unmentioned that in two surveys, oppositional groups are less biased if they consume news. This is true for the Ghanaian Ewe in the 2005 Afrobarometer and the Ugandan Mukiga in the Pre-Election Survey of 2010. However, the two examples are only narrowly significant, and in the latter case, the direction turns around in the subsequent pre-election survey conducted only one month later. They are thus rather artefacts that do not affect the overall impression that media consumption does not influence ethnicity bias.

Similarly, political interest seems to have no moderating influence on both ethnicity and partisan bias. Members of politicised groups who describe themselves as politically interested or discuss politics with family and friends are in the vast majority of models not distinguishable from people uninterested in public affairs. In one instance, oppositional FDC partisans in Uganda are less negative if they describe themselves as politically interested. For discussion with family and friends, we find not a single significant effect. In conjunction with overall negative main effects, everyday political discussions are accordingly a negligible source of information in the moderation of ethnicity and partisan biases in particular.

While media consumption and political interest show no moderating impact on biases, daily experiences of poverty seem to matter. In the theory section, I have argued that everyday experiences may provide citizens with information about how well or badly an administration is handling its responsibilities because in developing economies, governmental management often has immediate effects on living conditions, especially for those who are vulnerable. The results on the moderating effect of the Lived Poverty Index support this image. Coethnics and copartisans of the incumbent are significantly less biased if they are confronted with shortages in basic necessities in their everyday lives.

Figure 5-7 presents three examples of how poverty affects bias in Ghana. A first thing to note is that all lines decrease. Lived poverty accordingly translates into lower performance perceptions across all groups. The information of everyday poverty does hence not drive performance perceptions closer to the population average but leads to consistently lower perceptions. The group-specific findings echo the robust negative main effect of the LPI discussed above.

Particularly astonishing is how the biases of incumbent-affiliated groups diminish with higher exposure to poverty in Figure 5-5. On the left, we see the situation for Ghana's ethnic groups in 2005. By then, the presidency was in the hand of the Akan (red line), while the Ewe (yellow line) were in opposition. At zero poverty, we see a significant gap between both groups, yet the red line drops more sharply due to a negative interaction term $Akan * LPI$ in the model. As a consequence, the difference between the opposing groups vanishes with higher poverty, and both groups rate the government equally bad at an LPI value of 4 (high poverty).

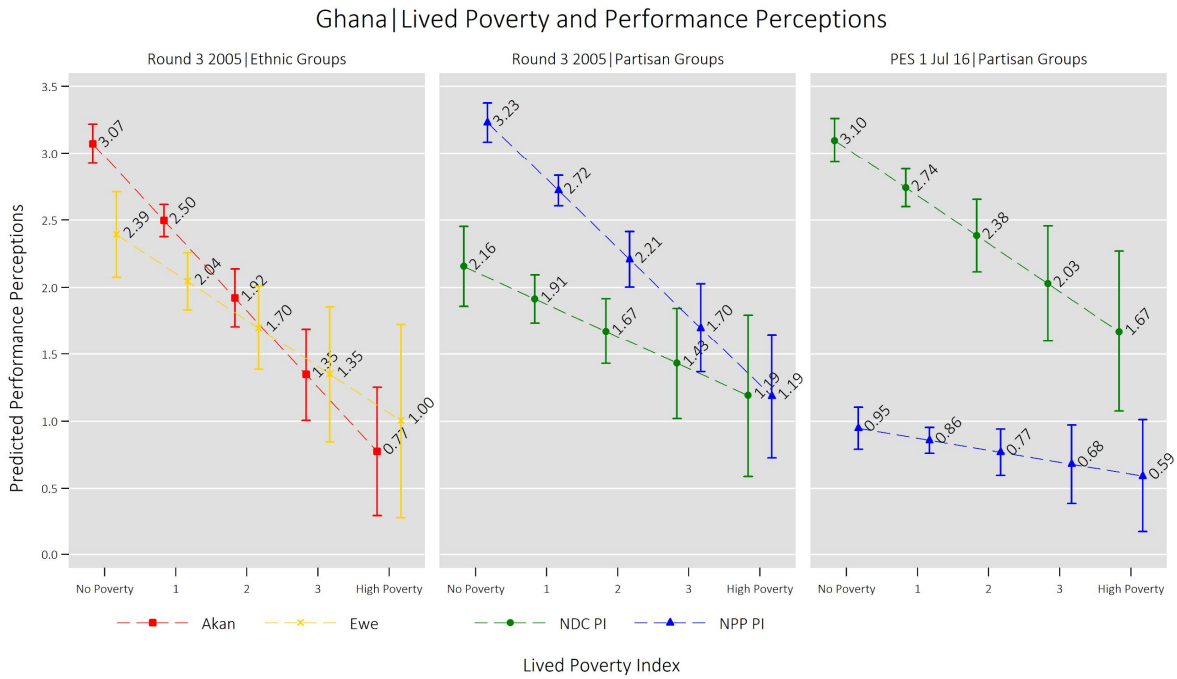

Figure 5-5: Lived Poverty and Performance Perceptions in Ghana. Values give estimated level of performance perceptions (Y-axis) at different steps of the Lived Poverty Index (X-Axis). Error bars are 95% confidence intervals. The underlying model is an OLS regression predicting performance perceptions, which includes interaction effects between Identity and Lived Poverty.

The two other plots show the same phenomenon for Ghana's highly polarised partisan groups. In 2005 (middle plot), the NPP is in power, and the predicted number of positive ratings by NPP partisans (blue line) at zero poverty is as high as 3.23, but a steeply falling line for the President's copartisans eradicates polarisation as poverty rises. The final example in the left plot stems from the pre-election survey of Jul 2016, when partisan biases are at their peak. At this point, an NDC-president is in power, and again, incumbent partisans (green line) are significantly less biased if they face shortages in basic necessities. Although the partisan gap prevails ahead of the election in 2016, it is significantly smaller among poorer partisans. And this is not only true for extreme values of the poverty scale – NDC partisans with at an LPI value of 1 are already significantly less biased than the ones who are not affected by poverty.

Bad performance ratings for the incumbent by poorer coethnics and copartisans are equally visible in Uganda as Figure 5-6 reveals. The left and the middle plot show the performance perceptions of Uganda's partisan groups in 2005 and ahead of the 2011 election. In both cases, the performance perceptions of President Museveni's NRM partisans (blue line) decline sharply with rising poverty. Partisan differences are only significant for people who do not experience poverty. With higher poverty, both partisan camps converge towards equally bad ratings for the president.

The red line on the right demonstrates that coethnics of the president also formulate critical views when confronted with shortages in basic necessities. The numbers pertain to the pre-election poll ahead of the 2011 election, one of two instances where the analysis found a significant coethnicity bias (cf. Figure 5-2). Museveni is rated extremely well by fellow

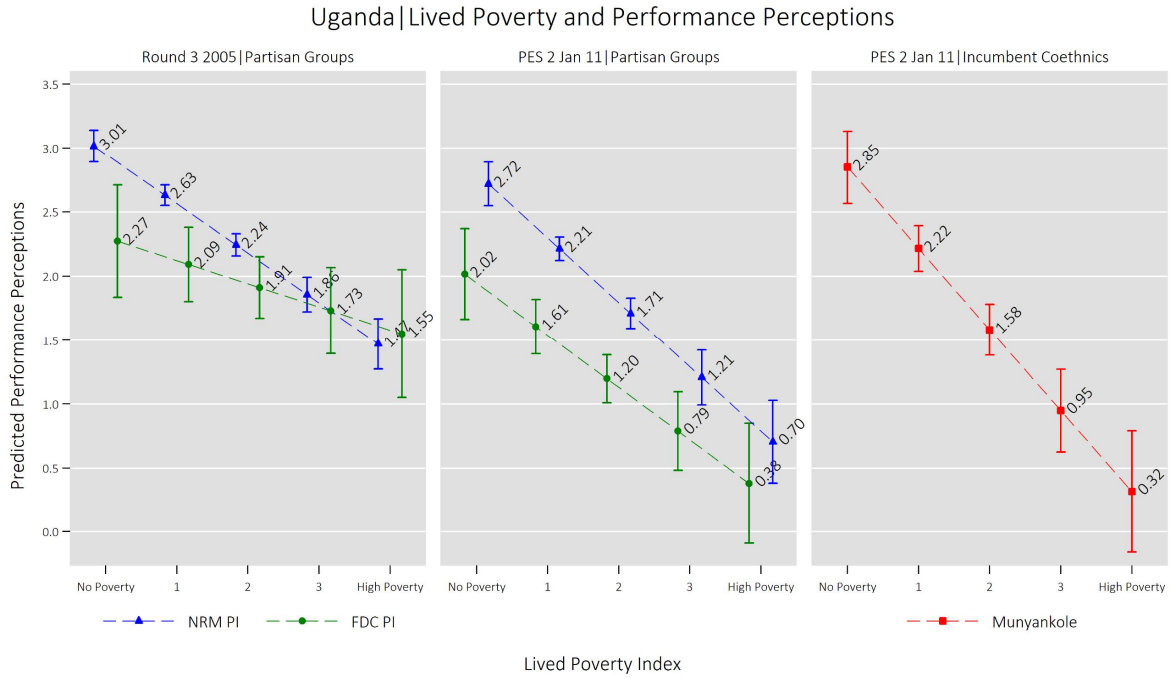

Figure 5-6: Lived Poverty and Performance Perceptions in Uganda. Values give the estimated level of performance perceptions (Y-axis) at different steps of the Lived Poverty Index (X-Axis). Error bars are 95% confidence intervals. The underlying model is an OLS regression predicting performance perceptions, which includes interaction effects between Identity and Lived Poverty.

Munyankole who live in relative social security. These are the voters who account for the group bias. With exposure to poverty, the enthusiasm quickly turns into discontent, as the sharp decline of the red line indicates. Notwithstanding coethnicity, poor Munyankole attest to the president a dismal performance. Already at the middle of the scale, the number is below the sample average of 1.8, and the estimate goes as low as 0.32 for Munyankole facing high poverty.

The study of information as an intervening factor in the formation of performance perceptions has brought surprising results. While media consumption and political interest show no effect, daily experiences of lived poverty substantially reduce ethnic and partisan biases. People who regularly consume news and have a high interest in public affairs are just as biased as people without access to related information sources. H4A and H4B are firmly rejected, with some data even indicating that media consumption may aggravate predispositions. A moderating effect is, however, found regarding daily experiences. H4C is robustly supported by the results.) When confronted with shortages in basic necessities, Afrobarometer respondents give very bad ratings to the government, irrespective of whether the incumbent is a coethnic or a copartisan. With few exceptions, the effect is visible across surveys (cf. Appendix 5.5.5). The effects are, moreover, robust against using a categorical coding of lived poverty (cf. Appendix 5.5.6)

Concerning the sources of bias, the observed reactions to information are more consistent with a mechanism of motivated reasoning. The fact that newspaper readership and cognitive engagement show no moderating effect on identity bias, indicates that information is filtered, and facts are disregarded if they are unsuited to reaffirm ethnic and especially partisan allegiances.

Especially the results for partisanship indicate strong psychological attachments as described by social identity theory (Tajfel 1974). Beyond the nonreaction to media consumption, this is evident in Ghana's soaring partisan biases ahead of the 2016' election. If partisanship were just an information cue, we would unlikely see such a sudden extreme polarization between partisan camps. However, while biases persist over access to classical information sources, things change when it comes to lived experiences of poverty. If people face shortages in necessities, they outgrow identity biases and blame the government for problems.

The strong moderating effect of lived poverty sheds light on an important and often overlooked information acquisition mechanism in low-income environments. Daily experiences of poverty provide, first of all, poor citizens with valid information on whether an incumbent is handling developmental key issues well. Public management has immediate repercussions for poor people's livelihoods, which depend heavily on public services and economic prosperity. The results demonstrate that related experiences feature high in the formation of performance perceptions and override partisan and ethnic leanings. With rising income, the informational content of daily experiences decreases. Africans who enjoy relative social security are less vulnerable and often resort to private solutions to evade unreliable public services (e.g. generators for reliable electricity).

5.4.4 Comparative Perspective: Identity Bias across Africa

How do the biases in Ghana and Uganda compare to other African countries? For a cross-national perspective, I add 47 Afrobarometer surveys from 14 additional countries leading to a set of 59 surveys, including the ones from Ghana and Uganda. To identify relevant ethnic and partisan biases, I calculate separate regression models for each group and each survey (cf. Equation 3). The effects are merged into a group-level dataset with 153 ethnic group survey observations and 118 partisan group survey observations.

Table 6-2 gives an overview of the incidence of ethnic and partisan biases across the 59 surveys. 55% of ethnicity and 61% of partisan coefficients reach statistical significance. A significant effect indicates that a group systematically deviates from the rest of the sample in their verdict on the incumbent's handling of developmental matters. The 55%-rate for ethnic groups is a sign that ethnicity remains a relevant factor, even though it was found to have less weight than partisan leanings in Ghana and Uganda. The proportion of 61% for partisan groups is lower than expected, given that partisanship had a consistent influence in Ghana and Uganda.

The right side of the table shows summary statistics for those effects that reached significance. The average effect size is slightly higher for ethnic identities with 0.46 compared to 0.43 for the partisan results. Given that we saw group deviations as high as 1.17 in Ghana, the averages are relatively low. As the numbers are based on a linear OLS model, the value indicates that the average group deviation on the 5-point scale of developmental performance is around 0.4. Another lesson from the sum stats is that partisan effects vary more than ethnicity biases, as

indicated by a higher standard deviation and a wider range. This is mainly owed to some outliers within the partisan results.

To give an overview of biases across countries, Figure 5-7 plots the strength of ethnicity against partisan effects for each survey. Individual group effects can be found in Appendix 5.6. For the figure, I have averaged the estimated deviation across partisan groups and ethnicities in every survey. This approach provides a good proxy for the intensity of ethnicity and partisan bias in a given survey, even though it disregards group-specific values and statistical significance. As higher coefficients also tend to reach significance, a higher average value indicates statistically meaningful effects. Generally, all effects higher than 0.3 are significant (cf. Appendix 5.6.3).

In addition, Table 5-3 reports significant effects by country for both group types. On the left are statistics for ethnic groups; on the right are the data for partisan identities. The table is arranged in descending order of a country's total share of significant bias effects. For each group type, the table shows the total number of coefficients (N), the number of 95% significant effects (Sig), the significance rate (% Sig) and the average deviation on the 5-point performance scale of significant effects (Mean Sig).

The first important finding from Figure 5-7 is the outlier character of Ghana's deep partisan divide ahead of the 2016 election. The Ghanaian pre-election polls are represented by the two green points to the right and easily exceed all other surveys on the x-axis. The polarisation in performance perceptions between government and opposition supporters (cf. Figure 5.1) is unparalleled in Africa.

Beyond Ghana, two surveys from Malawi (Round 6) and Sierra Leone (Round 5) rank high on the partisan axis. Like Ghana's Round 6.2, both fall into the campaign period with interviews conducted ahead of Malawi's 2014 and Sierra Leone's 2008 presidential election. And in both cases, we find a deep divide between opposition and government supporters. The coefficient for government partisans in the Malawian survey is even the highest group deviation recorded in the analysis. The rift in average performance ratings between the camps amounts to 1.5 in Sierra Leone and 1.49 in Malawi on the 5-point performance scale (cf. Appendix X). Although lower than in Ghana (2.16 in Round 6.2), the magnitude of the divide still indicates that psychological ties to political parties influence information processing. Ghana may be the most polarized environment but seemingly not the only African country where affective partisanship (Campbell, et al. 1960, Huddy, et al. 2015) is in the ascendant.

A caveat concerning the partisan divide in Sierra Leone is an overlap with ethnic polarisation. Sierra Leone's Round 5 is also the survey with the highest average ethnicity bias in Figure 5-7. Moreover, adding partisan controls alongside ethnicity to the prediction of performance perceptions reduces the size of the ethnicity effects in Sierra Leone substantially (cf. Appendix). In Ghana and Malawi, partisan effects are more robust against different model configurations.

Table 5-2: Significant Effects of Identity on Performance Perceptions in 59 Surveys: Summary Statistics

	Total	Significant		Sum stats of 95% sig coefficients		
		Sig 95	%	Mean	Std. Dv.	Range
Ethnic Group Effects	153	84	55%	0.46	0.20	0.20-1-04
Partisan Group Effects	118	72	61%	0.43	0.23	0.13-1.21

Unlike in Sierra Leone, the partisan value markedly exceeds the biases among ethnic groups in Figure 5-7, which is a clear indication that partisan identities represent an independent political identity (which for Ghana has also been proven in detail in the case study section).

Other nations with a high rate of significant partisan coefficients in Table 5-3 are Nigeria, South Africa, Cameroon, and Togo. However, the surveys from these countries are clearly behind Ghana and Malawi on the x-axis in Figure 5-7. It would require a closer investigation to establish to what extent these biases stem from independent partisan identities, as in Ghana and seemingly also Malawi. Regarding South Africa, it has been argued that partisanship is driven by racialized party images (Ferree 2006). The fact that 8 of 8 ethnicity effects are significant signifies that ethnicity remains the primary driver of political alignments in post-apartheid South Africa. Moderate partisan biases are found in most countries, as the clustering of averages between 0.2 and 0.3 on the partisan scale in Figure 5-9 indicates. However, as already argued in the in-depth study of Uganda, reported partisan feelings in those cases are likely a mix of short-term orientations and affective identity links. The Afrobarometer generally records high levels of partisanship even in extremely volatile settings (Mattes and Krönke 2020), but the psychological ties that induce partisan reasoning may be weaker when parties are less established.

The only country where feeling close to a party has next to no effect on performance perceptions is Benin, with only 1 of 8 effects reaching significance, which is likely a reflection of a fractionalized and volatile party system (Gisselquist 2014). It is also worth mentioning that 40 of 72 (56%) significant partisan effects pertain to respondents who identify with the ruling party, which can be attributed to the lower stability of opposition parties. Ghana and Malawi are, on the other hand, characterized by very stable party systems (Whitfield 2009, Daddieh and Bob-Milliar 2014, Young 2014, Patel and Wahman 2015). The intensity of partisan polarization in these two countries shows that, once parties are established, partisanship can quickly become an independent category of political identification in Africa's new democracies and even outrank ethnicity in conditioning political perceptions.

Turning to ethnicity biases, three countries stand out with high ethnic biases on the y-axis of Figure 5-7. These are Ghana, Sierra Leone, and South Africa. Ghana has been extensively discussed in the case study. The opposition between Akan and Ewe is relevant but increasingly transcended by partisan identities. The country with the strongest ethnic polarisation in performance perceptions is arguably Sierra Leone. Popular performance perceptions in Sierra Leone are a clear reflection of the long-standing ethnic divisions between Mende in the south and Temne and Limba in the north, which has also produced a stable two-party system with

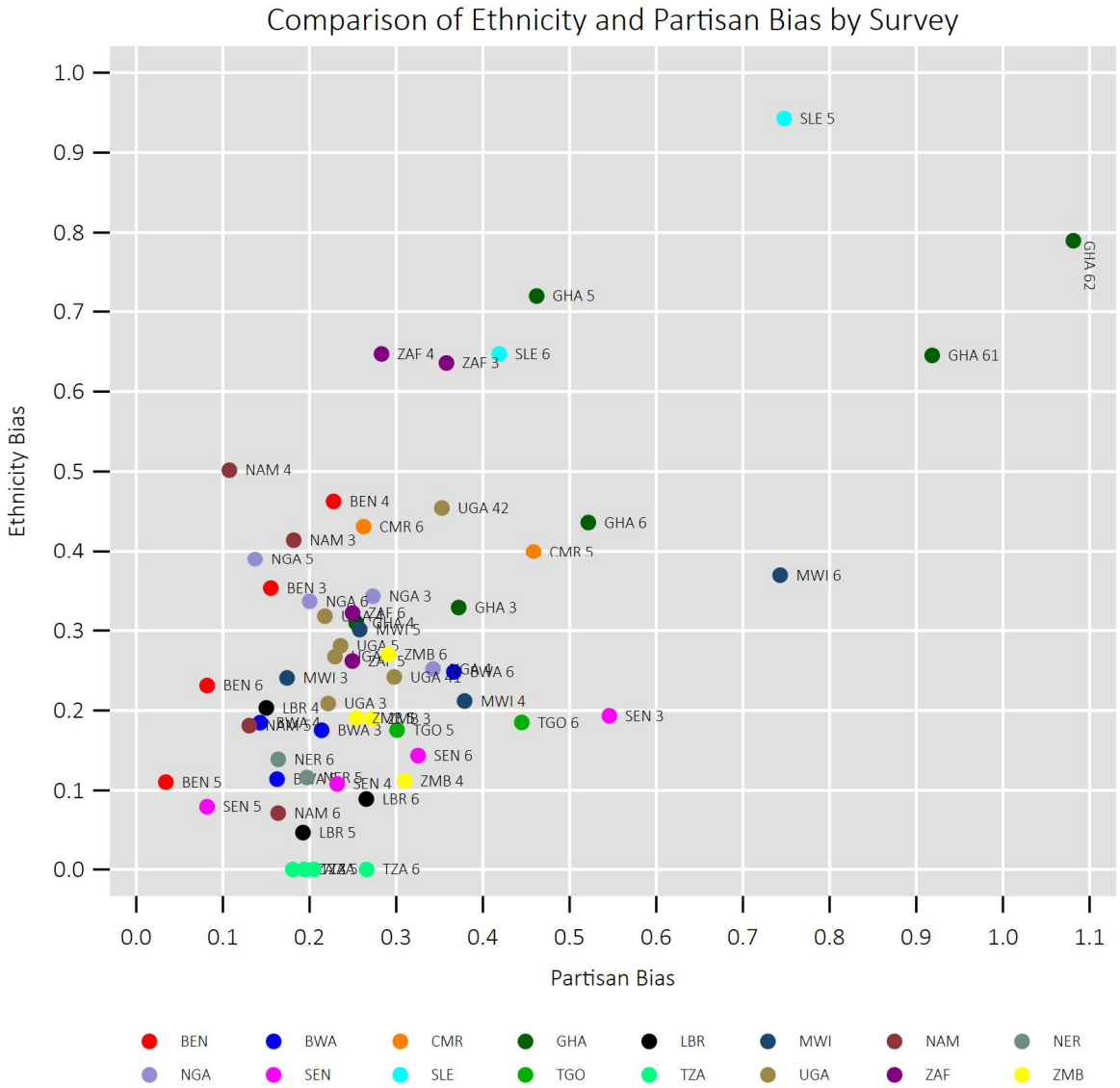

Figure 5-7: Average Size of Ethnic and Partisan Bias by Survey. Results based on OLS-models regressing performance perceptions on identity. Separate Models for each survey. Values average the predicted deviation in performance perceptions of a country's relevant ethnic and partisan groups, respectively. Data: Afrobarometer Round 3-6. Marker labels show ISO country code and Afrobarometer round.

well-known ethnic allegiances (Casey 2015). As the two surveys were gathered, the presidency was in the hand of the All People's Congress (APC), which is associated with the northern ethnicities. In line with expectations, Mende depreciate the administration's developmental performance, while Temne and Limba are enthusiastic about the government. The difference in estimated performance perceptions between Mende and Temne in Round 5 reaches 2.0 in Round 5, which is by far the highest division among two ethnic groups observed in the study.

Similarly, in South Africa, race influences not only voting behaviour (Ferree 2006, McLaughlin 2007, De Kadt and Sands 2021), but also political perceptions. Especially in survey rounds 3 (2006) and 4 (2008), a marked divide is visible between black and white voters. The gap between the group-level point estimates (Appendix 5.6.1) is 1.3 on the 5-point indicator for both surveys, with black voters rating the developmental performance of the African National Congress

Table 5-3: Significant Effects of Identity on Performance Perceptions by Country

		Ethnicity Effects				Partisan Effects				
Country	Surveys	N	Sig	% Sig	Mean Sig	N	Sig	% Sig	Mean Sig	Total Sig %
Sierra Leone	2	6	6	100%	0.79	4	4	100%	0.58	100%
Ghana	6	12	11	91%	0.57	12	11	92%	0.65	91%
South Africa	4	8	8	100%	0.47	8	5	63%	0.4	81%
Nigeria	4	12	9	75%	0.43	8	6	75%	0.3	75%
Malawi	4	12	9	75%	0.33	8	6	75%	0.46	75%
Cameroon	2	6	4	67%	0.58	4	3	75%	0.47	70%
Togo	2	4	2	50%	0.28	4	3	75%	0.44	63%
Uganda	6	18	8	44%	0.51	12	8	67%	0.36	53%
Benin	4	12	8	67%	0.39	8	1	13%	0.45	45%
Namibia	4	12	6	50%	0.49	8	3	38%	0.23	45%
Zambia	4	12	4	33%	0.36	8	5	63%	0.41	45%
Liberia	5	9	2	22%	0.27	6	4	67%	0.27	40%
Tanzania	4	0	-	-	-	8	3	38%	0.39	38%
Botswana	4	12	3	25%	0.33	8	4	50%	0.3	35%
Senegal	4	12	3	25%	0.28	8	4	50%	0.49	35%
Niger	2	6	1	17%	0.21	4	2	50%	0.3	30%

(ANC) government significantly better than white voters. After 2009, when Jacob Zuma took over the ANC presidency, the gap narrowed to 0.5 in Round 5 (2011) and Round 6 (2012). The Zuma era was characterized by scandals and widespread dissatisfaction with developmental output (Mlambo 2019), which finds expression in increasingly critical performance ratings by black voters in the respective surveys. Still, race remains a significant predictor of performance perceptions; hence, South Africans continue to exhibit a clear-cut ethnic division.

However, in the remaining 13 countries, ethnic biases are surprisingly weak and unstable. The high share of 58% significant ethnicity effects across all groups is somewhat deceptive; the direction is often at odds with the notion of a preference for coethnics. For Nigeria, for instance, Table 5-3 reports that 9 of 12 effects reach significance, but a closer look at the effects in Appendix 5.6.1 reveals the direction of biases is upside down. All four surveys were collected while the People's Democratic Party's (PDP) was in power. The party is associated with southern Christian voters. Yet, above-average grades come from the Muslim Hausa people in the north, whereas southern Yoruba – the natural allies - attest to the PDP government a dismal performance. The surprising direction may reflect a widespread distrust in political elites among Yoruba (cf. Achebe 1984). Interestingly, the northern Hausa seem somewhat less disillusioned, even in opposition. Only for the third group under scrutiny, the Igbo, a negative bias meets expectations reflecting the lingering secessionist ambitions of the Biafra dispute (Nwakanma 2018).

In Benin and Namibia, a closer examination also invalidates the notion of stringent coethnicity biases. Two of Benin's major ethnic groups, Yoruba and Adja give bad marks to President Thomas Boni Yayi (2006-2016) in the first survey but then above-average marks in later surveys.

Yayi's coethnics[43], the Yoruba, account for the highest negative deviation recorded in Benin over time, thereby contradicting the logic of coethnic loyalty. Similarly, Namibia's high values in Rounds 3 and 4 in Figure 5-9 are owed to positive and negative biases by the same group (Kavango) under the same administration.

In 5 countries (Botswana, Liberia, Niger, Senegal, Tanzania), ethnicity rarely predicts performance perceptions. Regarding Senegal, Koter (2016) has compellingly shown how the intermediary role of local leaders has moved the society beyond ethnic politics. The absence of ethnic divisions in Tanzania is attributed to the efforts of independence leader Julius Nyerere to build a coherent national identity (Ndulu, et al. 2019, Cheeseman 2015: 40-44). In Botswana, the long-term developmental success story may have dissolved identitarian divisions (Hillbom 2012). In Liberia, unlike in neighbouring Sierra Leone, the war in the early 2000s was not fought along ethnic divisions but characterized by shifting coalitions (Hegre, et al. 2009). There is little research on ethnic cleavages in Niger, but the absence of biases suggests that ethnicity is hardly politicized in the Sahel country.

Another important observation regarding ethnic polarization is that some ethnic groups with a history of conflict against an incumbent give excellent marks to their enemy in office. The phenomenon is observed in Cameroon's English-speaking minority and among the Acholi in Uganda (see also Section 6.2.1), who, surprisingly, account for the first and third highest upward deviations of all 153 ethnic group effects. Cameroon's relatively high position on the ethnicity scale in Figure 5-7 is owed to English speakers. Likewise, Uganda would rank considerably lower without the Acholi effects. Control variables of political fear, intimidation, and wariness during the interview do not detect anxiety among group members, yet the significant positive effects indicate a strong response bias. This tells us that deep distrust may find expression in positive biases, even if there are no hints of political fear. While in such cases, the estimates disguise a group's real disposition, they still unveil ethnopolitical dividing lines that other indicators miss.

It is a bit surprising that we do not see more pronounced ethnicity biases in performance perceptions across the 16 countries. Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Ghana are the only cases with a consistent line of division between ethnic identities. Furthermore, the just discussed effects for two marginalised groups in Uganda and Cameroon as well as consistently positive biases among blacks in South Africa, may count as unambiguous ethnic biases. Beyond that, we find few instances where ethnicity has a predictable influence on performance perceptions. In several cases, the leanings of relevant ethnic groups contradict theoretical expectations of coethnics' preference and turn around under the same administration. Given the outstanding role that scholars ascribe to ethnic identities in African politics (Posner 2005, Eifert, et al. 2010), one

[43] President Thomas Boni Yayi was from a multi-ethnic background but is viewed primarily as a representant of the Yoruba ethnic group(Adida, et al. 2016)

Figure 5-8: Scatterplot. Electoral Proximity and Identity Bias. Points are the estimated average deviation of ethnic and partisan groups (absolute values) from the rest of the sample Lines are linear predictions. All effects displayed are significant at the 95% level.

would expect to find some more groups with firm and consistent prejudice in their political evaluations. However, it should be noted that there may be a selection bias in the sample. By discarding countries that have experienced regime breakdowns or failed elections, I may have systematically sorted out societies with deep ethnic divisions.

Lastly, it is appropriate to quickly investigate the phenomenon of rising biases ahead of elections. This chapter has highlighted soaring partisan polarization in Ghana and Malawi in campaign surveys. Other publications have prominently argued that competitive elections increase the salience of ethnic identities (Eifert, et al. 2010, Gadjanova 2021a). Figure 5-8 plots the point estimates od all significant ethnic and partisan group effects (y-axis) against the days between the survey and the next presidential election (x-axis). For both group types, we see falling prediction lines. Accordingly, bias effects are larger during the electoral campaign. However, the correlation is driven by soaring biases in pre-election surveys from Ghana, Sierra Leone, and, in the case of partisan identities, Malawi. In Malawi, ethnic biases do not exhibit a similar rise, which signifies that partisanship represents an independent category of political identification. Beyond the mentioned cases, we find no signs of identity polarization in performance perceptions ahead of elections. Other pre-election effects stem from Uganda, Nigeria, and South Africa, but the group estimates are at the same level as in non-campaign times.

5.5 Conclusion

The analysis of ethnicity and partisan bias in popular performance perceptions in Africa has yielded some surprising results. Altogether, I have analysed 59 surveys from 16 countries and estimated the deviation from average voters for 32 partisan groups and 42 ethnic groups.

The first remarkable lesson is that partisanship seems more influential than ethnicity in the formation of performance perceptions. Not only do partisans deviate more strongly, but partisan biases also prevail over ethnic leanings in cases of opposing partisan and ethnic allegiances. This is most apparent in Ghana, where multi-ethnic partisan groups include a considerable number of people from allegedly rival ethnicities. In Uganda, partisan biases are less pronounced but significant throughout, whereas ethnicity shows virtually no influence on Ugandans' performance judgments. As partisan groups in both focus countries exhibit a relatively high level of ethnic and regional diversity, it seems unlikely that the leanings are merely a consequence of clientelist relationships and geographic targeting of core supporters. The comparative perspective shows that partisan biases are generally present across the continent and highlights Malawi as a second case beyond Ghana with intense polarization between supporters of the major parties.

The observations are more consistent with psychological accounts of party identification (Campbell, et al. 1960, Greene 1999, Huddy, et al. 2015) than instrumental theories (Fiorina 1981, Garzia 2013). Accordingly, partisanship is not merely a consequence of party promises and retrospective performance evaluations but a social identity that triggers psychological processes of motivated reasoning. The intensity of biases and soaring polarisation ahead of elections observed in Ghana and Malawi indicate that partisan feelings powerfully shape people's perceptions of the political world. The documented partisan sentiments add fresh and compelling evidence to a growing literature suggesting that partisan identities are on the rise in Africa (Hoffman and Long 2013, Michelitch 2015, Carlson 2016a, Conroy-Krutz, et al. 2016, Harding and Michelitch 2019).

Although the environment lacks some of the historical forces behind the emergence of partisan division in advanced democracies (ideological polarisation, social stratification, occupational identities), it is plausible that social-psychological ties between voters and parties emerge. Parties in new democracies may build emotional connections with voters by pointing to historical origins and achievements and by creating a party brand around symbols and rituals (Bolleyer and Ruth 2018). Such a process of 'value infusion' is indeed visible in Ghana. Parties not only try to invoke sketchy links to historical organisations but also excessively promote their symbols and flags during campaigns and beyond (Fridy 2007, Whitfield 2009). While the transcendence of particularistic ethnic divisions by national party identification is generally a positive development, the polarization in Ghana and Malawi raises concerns that parties may engage in confrontation rather than cooperation (Iyengar and Westwood 2015, Iyengar, et al. 2019).

A second important observation is that ethnicity biases are surprisingly unstable. Only in three countries, Ghana and Sierra Leone, and South Africa, did the study find consistent leanings of ethnic groups. In Ghana, however, the impact of multi-ethnic partisan identities is much more substantial. Concerning the 13 other countries, the numbers lend little support to the notion that

ethnicity informs voter perceptions (Posner 2005, Ichino and Nathan 2012, Carlson 2015). Consistent preferences for coethnics are hard to find. In several cases, the direction of effects contradicts expectations. In others, groups' leanings are unstable over time, turning around under the same administration.

In light of these results, the influence of ethnicity seems exaggerated in the literature. Experimental designs (e.g. Adida 2015, Carlson 2015) may overestimate the ethnic factor as participants may be more inclined to express ethnic allegiances under laboratory conditions compared to real-world scenarios (cf. Davis 2020). The low incidence falls in line with other works emphasizing that the explanatory value of ethnicity is very limited in many African countries (Dunning and Harrison 2010, Basedau and Stroh 2012, Elischer 2013, Koter 2016, Aryeetey and Aikins 2019).

The third and probably most exciting result is that personal experiences of poverty inform performance perceptions. The chapter has demonstrated that people confronted with shortages in basic necessities express dissatisfaction with the government irrespective of ethnic and partisan affiliations. Accordingly, everyday experiences of developmental deficits represent an essential and virtually costless source of information that ordinary citizens draw upon when they evaluate the government's handling of critical issues.

The link between poverty and performance perceptions indicates that the informational base of African voters is better than the literature suggests. Reliance on clientelist and ethnic cues has been prominently attributed to the absence of other information (Posner 2005: 153, Kramon 2016b: 399). Voter knowledge is generally a hot topic in African politics, yet attention is usually confined to news media and public debates, overlooking the informational content of daily experiences. (e.g. Casey 2015, Bidwell, et al. 2020, Borzyskowski and Kuhn 2020, Brierley, et al. 2020). Most scholars implicitly follow the notion that "National politics occurs at a level that is remote from most citizens, so people learn about it indirectly, through the media and other sources" (Lewis-Beck, et al. 2008: 116). However, low-income settings inevitably confront citizens with a government's management. Problems such as soaring prices, strikes at clinics or schools, or power and water outages threaten the livelihoods of vulnerable citizens. Good governance can, in turn, bring quick relief by improving public service delivery and generating opportunities in the informal sector.

The critical performance ratings by poor citizens also challenge modernization arguments, which suggest that it requires socially secure middle classes to hold the powerful to account (Lipset 1959, Moore 1966, Inglehart and Welzel 2005). In Africa, poor voters are apparently more likely to express discontent, whereas the judgements of many socially secure individuals are heavily influenced by identity. Although counterintuitive, disparities in exposure to public management provide a plausible explanation for the unexpected distribution of identity biases across social

classes. Africans who enjoy relative social security are less exposed to the problems of the developmental state, often building on private solutions to become independent from erratic public services. The finding aligns with other works indicating that Africa's growing middle classes may not behave as democratically as the classics suggest (Mattes 2015, Resnick 2015a, Nathan 2019a). Poorer voters should in turn not be underestimated as a critical force on election day.

Before turning to the next chapter, it is important to underline that the findings presented above are robust against excluding respondents without valid voting intentions. The following chapter investigates vote choice, which leads to a drop in sample size because about one-quarter of respondents do not say who they would vote for (see Appendix 1.12). To ensure comparability, I have recalculated this chapter's key results for respondents with valid voting intentions only (see Appendix 5.7). Despite the 25% decrease in sample size, the results remain stable. The distribution of biases and the moderating impact of poverty in Ghana and Uganda match the larger samples with almost identical point estimates.

6 Performance Perceptions and Vote Choice

Chapter Summary

Are African presidents held to account for their handling of developmental responsibilities on election day? The question is contentious among scholars of African politics, partly due to disagreement about survey-based evidence of retrospective voting. This chapter re-examines the relationship between performance perceptions and vote choice in two case studies of Ghana and Uganda and a comparison across 16 countries. To address doubts about previous publications, I calculate group-specific effects for ethnic and partisan constituencies and assume a time-series perspective. On the on hand, the results provide compelling evidence that retrospective voting can be a decisive force in African elections. In Ghana, performance is not only an excellent predictor of vote choice, but members of relevant groups also cross ethnic and partisan lines in response to performance perceptions. Uganda represents a stark contrast. Here, the president's developmental record seems to have very little influence on vote choices. The cross-country comparison draws on multi-level modelling and reveals that the magnitude of retrospective voting in Ghana is unique in Africa. But there are other countries with very reliable performance effects, including Senegal, Malawi, and Zambia. Cross-level interactions indicate that competitiveness and economic crises raise performance awareness among voters.

6.1 Introduction

An individual-level relationship between performance perceptions and voting intentions represents a core piece of evidence in studies of electoral accountability. If vote choices are linked to performance perceptions, it implies that voters consider performance when making up their minds. As a consequence, governments will gain and lose vote shares depending on how well they handle their responsibilities, which creates incentives to refrain from rent-seeking and to act in the best interest of the public (Key 1966, Barro 1973, Ferejohn 1986, Fearon 1999, Manin, et al. 1999b, Healy and Malhotra 2013).

This chapter re-examines the link between performance perceptions and vote choices in the context of Africa's democracies to clarify some rival interpretations revolving around survey-based evidence of retrospective voting. The core question is whether micro-level links can be expected to translate into relevant gains and losses at elections. The focus is on elections of the chief executive, which in most states means majoritarian presidential elections. Performance is understood as developmental progress and operationalised through ratings on an incumbent's handling of key developmental areas, including jobs, infrastructure, health, and education.

Previous studies have already reported statistical links between performance perceptions and voting intentions in survey data from Africa's new democracies. Posner and Simon (2002) find a small but robust impact of economic perceptions on vote choice in a post-election survey from Zambia. Long and Gibson (2015) identified performance to be an important driver of voting in an exit poll from Kenya. The most frequently studied country is Ghana, where researchers consistently find that perceptions about the economy and other developmental goods have a

strong influence on vote choices (Lindberg and Morrison 2008, Hoffman and Long 2013, Lindberg 2013, Weghorst and Lindberg 2013). Evidence of retrospective voting in Africa comes, moreover, from pooled cross-country analyses (Bratton, et al. 2012, Gélineau 2013). Not only vote choices, but also presidential approval ratings have been linked to performance perception and interpreted as evidence of retrospective voting (Youde 2005, Rhee 2021).

Many scholars, however, doubt that statistical links in survey data translate into effective accountability in elections. Consistent findings that ethnicity and patronage condition the voting behaviour of African citizens contradict the performance voting narrative (e.g. Carlson 2015, Kramon 2016b, Adida, et al. 2017, Gadjanova 2017, Nathan 2019a). In this light, the image that electoral accountability is effective in Africa seems at least overly optimistic. Some scholars entirely reject survey-based evidence, pointing to specific problems of data collection and methodology that may lead to false-positive results.

A first concern is social-desirability bias. The data is usually gathered in face-to-face interviews, and some respondents believe that government agencies are involved.[44] Especially in illiberal regimes, voters may be wary about monitoring and hence overreport performance perceptions and incumbent support (Weghorst 2015, Carlson 2018a). Africa's citizens are, furthermore, aware that 'tribalism' and ethnic voting are socially undesirable. Instead of disclosing ethnic political preferences, respondents may decide to report voting intentions that match their performance perceptions (Corstange 2009, Carlson 2016b). Both dynamics can inflate statistical performance effects as they improve the fit between performance and vote choice.

Another common objection is that performance perceptions could be endogenous to pre-existing political identities (Evans and Pickup 2010, Carlson 2015). If respondents with links to the incumbent make more positive assessments and those with attachments to the opposition rate the government poorly, the observed individual-level relationship will partly be an artefact of these biases. Especially ethnicity is a concern in this regard. While studies routinely control for co-ethnics of the incumbent, other ethnicities are usually disregarded, although they may have strong political leanings (Carlson 2015, 2020). Likewise, partisan biases are often not considered because African party systems are young and volatile (Lindberg and Morrison 2008, Basedau, et al. 2011, Ishiyama 2012), (Michelitch 2015, Carlson 2016a). However, as the previous chapter has demonstrated, partisan identities may have a powerful influence on public opinion.

Some scholars also question the external validity of survey responses on vote choice. Even if respondents answer genuinely, voters may deviate in the ballot booth. Campaigns may intensify ethnic and partisan cleavages (Eifert, et al. 2010, Michelitch 2015), and the election day setting

[44] For instance, about one-third of Afrobarometer Round 6 respondents assume that the government has sponsored the survey

may trigger social pressures to support the own people, for instance, through candidate images on the ballot (Moehler and Conroy-Krutz 2016). Supply of patronage around the election may further shift loyalties (Gadjanova 2017), especially when combined with systematic intimidation (Chaturvedi 2005, Rauschenbach and Paula 2019, Borzyskowski and Kuhn 2020). Widespread doubts about ballot secrecy may ensure that people reward electoral handouts at the ballot box (Ferree and Long 2016).

A final issue is the generalizability of findings, given that most studies on voting behaviour in Africa are single-country studies. Although similar political, social, and economic trajectories justify generalisations, some inconsistencies in the literature could be owed to systematic cross-national differences. Indeed, many positive results on electoral accountability in Africa stem from Ghana (Youde 2005, Lindberg and Morrison 2008, Lindberg 2013, Weghorst and Lindberg 2013, Harding 2015, 2020b). So far, there is little comparative research to assess how similar or different the strength of performance voting is across Africa's new democracies.

In the following analysis, I seek to reassess links between performance exceptions and vote choice in survey data in two case studies of Ghana and Uganda and a comparison across 16 countries. Several adjustments regarding research design and methodology reduce the uncertainties around existing evidence.

The most significant enhancement to previous studies is a group-level perspective. I disaggregate electorates into ethnic and partisan constituencies to investigate whether performance perceptions induce members to vote against the group's traditional preferences. Holding identity constant circumvents the endogeneity problem (Anderson, et al. 2004, Carlson 2015) as it rules out that observed associations are an artefact of unobserved identity bias. The group-specific results, taken together, provide a basis to assess the effectiveness of electoral accountability. Suppose several or all sub-groups punish and reward the government. In that case, leaders are likely to resort to common good-oriented policies that maximise the reach and the impact of investments because targeting all relevant constituencies becomes too expensive (cf. De Mesquita, et al. 2003).

A second insightful expansion is a time-series perspective, which mitigates concerns of external validity. In both case studies, I trace performance voting over a period of more than ten years across a series of surveys gathered on and off campaign times. By comparing results to real-world indicators and election outcomes, it is possible to assess whether survey effects translate into electoral feedback. Moreover, the temporal variation provides valuable insights into the loyalty of ethnic and partisan groups, as it allows to observe how micro-level links between performance and vote choice affect the distribution of votes within groups.

A final key addition to the existing research is a comparative perspective. This study is, to my knowledge, the first to systematically compare the strengths of retrospective voting across Africa.

Drawing on multi-level modelling, I highlight variation across 59 surveys from 16 countries and investigate whether the level of democracy and the economy influence the magnitude of performance voting.

The analysis makes important contributions to our knowledge of electoral accountability in Africa's new democracies. On the one hand, it provides persuasive evidence that performance voting can be a powerful force in the African context despite ethnic voting and clientelist appeals. In the case of Ghana, the association between performance perceptions and vote choices is not only impressively strong and consistent, but all subgroups are responsive to performance. The overall picture strongly indicates that performance voting is the driving force behind Ghana's regular turnovers. The second focus case, Uganda, represents a stark contrast. In the east African country, performance perceptions hardly predict vote choice, and ethnic and partisan groups show next to no response to the developmental record of long-term president Yoweri Museveni.

The 16-country comparison reveals that both focus cases are not exactly representative. Ghana is an outlier. Nowhere else are performance effects similarly strong; nowhere else is the responsiveness of ethnic and partisan groups equally consistent. Still, there are several countries where retrospective voting seems sufficiently strong, consistent, and widespread to expect a constant influence on election outcomes. Uganda, by contrast, belongs to a cluster of states with weak performance effects. Contextual effects in the multi-level model suggest that close elections and economic downturns may stimulate performance voting.

The chapter is organized as follows. Sections 5.2 outlines the sanctioning perspective, which provides the theoretical foundation of the analysis. Section 5.3 describes data and methods. In section 5.4, I present the results for Ghana, Uganda, and eventually, the cross-country comparison. Section 5.5 summarises the findings and discusses implications for our knowledge of electoral accountability in Africa.

6.2 Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

The analysis draws on a sanctioning model of electoral accountability (Barro 1973, Ferejohn 1986, Healy and Malhotra 2013). At its core is the assumption that voters reelect good performers and vote against bad ones based on a retrospective cut-off rule: If a threshold performance level is satisfied, a ballot is cast for the incumbent, otherwise for an oppositional candidate. Such retrospective sanctioning is a rational strategy to discipline politicians. The repeated electoral feedback conveys to political elites that rent-seeking and a neglect of the public interest may result in loss of office, thereby reducing the moral-hazard problem that arises from the fact that most actions of politicians are hidden from voter oversight (Barro 1973, Ferejohn 1986).

A sanctioning perspective is chosen for two reasons.[45] First, it isolates the core question of

[45] Sanctioning models are distinguished from selection models (Fearon 1999, Duch and Stevenson 2008: pp.10-17). See chapter 3 for a deeper discussion of the two approaches.

whether democratic elections can break the cycle of bad governance in Africa by dismissing leaders who use the state for self-dealing and rewarding those who pursue national development. Second, the model aligns well with the mode of chief executive elections in most African countries, that is, two-round presidential elections which require the winning candidate to receive more than 50% of the vote. Under such rules, the electoral choice usually comes down to re-electing the incumbent vs voting for the most promising oppositional candidate, which corresponds to the binary choice of reward or punish that characterises the sanctioning perspective. Direct presidential elections moreover mean a high clarity of responsibility, which is also conducive to retrospective accountability (Powell and Whitten 1993, Anderson 2000, Powell 2000).

Performance, in this work, is understood as the delivery of enhancements in developmental key areas. Usually, studies of retrospective accountability focus on macro-economic developments. However, such a concept could be misleading in a developing context, where economic growth often fails to improve the living conditions of ordinary people (Lewis 2008). I thus understand performance in terms of core areas of development, including job opportunities, infrastructure, health services, and education. The list of issues reflects the popular demands of African citizens (Bentley, et al. 2015) and dominates the programmatic appeals of parties (Elischer 2012, Bleck and van de Walle 2013).

Africa is generally seen as a low-information environment (Conroy-Krutz 2012), but there is performance information available to African citizens. Media structures may be weak, but one should not underestimate the flow of political information. African citizens express a high interest in public affairs and frequently discuss politics with family and friends.[46] One of the most popular side activities is listening to political talk shows on the radio[47] (Gunner, et al. 2012, Spitulnik 2017).

More importantly, in low-income settings, public management has immediate consequences on everyday life (Singer 2016). Examples are soaring prices for daily needs or workers' strikes at schools or hospitals. Likewise, positive developments often have a massive impact. New roads transform the economies of entire communities, good management can bring apparent improvements to chronically underfinanced health and education sectors, and economic prosperity quickly creates opportunities in the informal sector. Available information may be noisy, but as long as errors are not systematic, elections should aggregate valid feedback of an incumbent's real performance (Page and Shapiro 1992).

The risk of systematic errors is, however, high in the African context. Ethnic and partisan

[46] About 60% of respondents in the Afrobarometer data in this study say they are interested in public affairs and about 70% percent say they regularly discuss political matters with family and friends

[47] About 70% of respondents in the Afrobarometer data used in this study say they obtain news from the radio several times a weak.

identities may have a strong influence on how people evaluate the performance of leaders (Conroy-Krutz 2012, Carlson 2016b, a, Conroy-Krutz, et al. 2016). Identities may serve as cognitive shortcuts to save information costs, or citizens may over- and underrate performance to resolve cognitive dissonances between their identity and the political outcomes. Either way, the consequence would be significant distortions in public opinion as ethnic and partisan[48] labels are not likely to provide accurate information on an incumbent's actual performance (cf. Kuklinski and Quirk 2000).

It is, moreover, important to keep in mind that development is mostly about local public goods. Typical investments such as roads and schools have no immediate utility for people in distant locations, despite being public goods. This implies that government performance may vary across regions. If public and formal criteria guide the allocation of resources, a certain degree of regional disparity in the delivery of development is not at odds with serving the common interest (Hicken 2011, Stokes, et al. 2013). A national developmental strategy will distribute programs based on urgency and impact to achieve the best overall result for the country-at-large.

The local character of developmental goods, however, makes them prone to clientelist capture. Instead of using formal criteria, an administration may favour co-ethnics or co-partisans in the allocation of goods, and it may deem such investments more secure than a national development strategy (Cox and McCubbins 1986). Such an informal distributive strategy is not only inefficient for developmental progress; it may also fuel conflicts between groups and lead to a reversal of the accountability relationship where voters do not dare to sanction politicians but rather owe their loyalty (Stokes, et al. 2013). Africa's new democracies are especially prone to clientelist distributive strategies because of strong sub-national identities that interact with social norms of reciprocal exchange within personal networks (Lemarchand 1972, Posner 2005, Hyden 2010b).

A clientelist strategy is, however, only promising if a government can rely on a coalition that is large enough to secure a majority and loyal enough to be sure about their electoral support. If retrospective performance voting gets more widespread across different groups of the electorate, a core voter strategy gets risky. The proportion of the electorate that needs to be satisfied may easily outnumber available clientelist coalitions (cf. Bueno De Mesquita, et al. 2002). Under such pressures, a government is likely to increasingly resort to programmatic modes of distribution that maximise the reach and impact of developmental investments.

To consider problems of ethnic biases and potential clientelist capture, I formulate hypotheses at different levels of the electorate. The link between performance and vote choice is not only tested for the national sample but also for different sub-groups of the voters. To start with, H1 is at the national level and represents the central expectation derived from theories of retrospective voting, i.e. that performance perceptions affect the likelihood of voting for the

[48] Ideological partisan labels can be useful heuristics but the ideological distance in African party systems is low.

incumbent. Following the sanctioning model, the hypothesis distinguishes binarily between a vote for the incumbent or against her. Performance expectations and individual cut-off points may vary across voters, but we should see that the likelihood of re-electing the incumbent increases gradually with better performance perceptions.

H1: Better (worse) performance perceptions increase (decrease) the likelihood of voting for the incumbent

H2 is at the group level and states that a positive or negative developmental performance of the president induces members to cast a ballot against the group's traditional political affiliation. The group-level perspective mitigates concerns that vote choices are endogenous to identity (Evans and Pickup 2010, Carlson 2015). The risk of overstating relationships due to unobserved identity biases is massively reduced by holding identity constant and focusing on within-group variation. If performance perceptions predict vote choices within a single group, we can be sure that performance drives vote choices and rule out that both are endogenous to identity.

For groups in power, confirmation of H2 means that some members are ready to vote out their own people and waiver prospects for patronage in the hope of a better developmental record. For oppositional groups, it indicates that some members prefer to retain a government that delivers developmental progress over an affiliated candidate in power. The overall image across groups allows for juxtaposing sanctioning pressures vis-à-vis the potential for a clientelist winning coalition. With more groups responsive to performance, a government is likely to increasingly bet on programmatic strategies that maximise the impact and reach of available resources.

H2: Better (worse) performance perceptions lead members of politicised groups to vote against the group's preferred candidate/party

A central aim of this study is to investigate cross-country variation beyond the case-study perspective. Are the results from Ghana and Uganda generalisable across Africa's new democracies, or do other countries deviate significantly regarding the magnitude of performance voting? The corresponding hypothesis is expressed as a null hypothesis, stating that there are no significant differences in the strengths of performance voting across countries.

H3: The differences in the strength of performance voting between Africa's new democracies are equal to zero

Lastly, the chapter investigates whether country-level factors can explain different levels of performance voting. Political scientists usually attribute cross-national differences in retrospective accountability to institutional factors that obscure the clarity of governmental responsibility, such as parliamentary and bicameral systems or coalition and minority governments (Powell and Whitten 1993, Whitten and Palmer 1999, Anderson 2000, Van der Brug, et al. 2007, Duch and Stevenson 2008, Hellwig and Samuels 2008). However, within Africa's new democracies, there is hardly any variation in terms of clarity of responsibility. The overwhelming majority of systems are presidential. Minority rule or coalition governments are non-existent in the sample.

However, other contextual factors may account for different levels of performance voting across countries and time. First, a higher level of democracy may lead to stronger performance voting. Although all states in the sample conduct regular multi-party elections, the quality of democratic institutions varies substantially. While some countries feature a free and liberal political arena, others fall into the category of illiberal democracies with dominant party systems (Bleck and van de Walle 2018). A more open political space should lead to more critical public debates about performance, and higher competitiveness provides voters with a realistic prospect of actually replacing the incumbent. H4a accordingly states:

H4a: A higher level of democracy leads to more performance voting

Economic development is another potential reason for different levels of electoral accountability. My sample ranges from some of the poorest economies in the world, such as Sierra Leone and Malawi, to upper-middle-income countries like South Africa and Botswana. Modernization theorists, moreover, argue that citizens in low-income countries tend to be uncritical and hardly challenge political authority (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). Widespread poverty is, moreover, associated with vote-buying and more reliance on ethnic ties (Posner 2005, Stokes 2005, Ferree and Long 2016), which may systematically weaken the willingness of citizens to sanction politicians based on performance. It can thus be expected that higher economic development is associated with stronger performance voting, as indicated by H4B.

H4b: A higher level of development leads to more performance voting

Finally, the literature on economic voting has highlighted a grievance asymmetry, by which economic downturns raise performance voting (Nannestad and Paldam 1997, Park 2019b). This may be especially true within the context of low-income democracies, where economic crises can quickly lead to shortages even among citizens who have fared relatively well during prosperous times (Schotte 2020). Accordingly, H4C reckons that a lower growth rate is associated with stronger performance voting.

H4c: A lower growth rate leads to more performance voting

6.3 Data and Methodology

The study draws on representative country-level surveys from the Afrobarometer and selected pre-election surveys that have been gathered using the same methodology as regular Afrobarometer surveys. At the heart of the analysis are two case studies of Ghana and Uganda. Ghana represents a competitive democracy, Uganda a dominant-party system. Both case studies are based on six waves of survey data gathered over a period of more than ten years. The sets include Afrobarometer rounds 3-6, and two pre-elections surveys carried out shortly before the 2011' Ugandan and the 2016' Ghanaian presidential elections. To test the generalizability of the findings, the effects in Ghana and Uganda are compared to 47 additional Afrobarometer surveys from 14 countries in a multi-level analysis.

For the case studies, I calculate binary logistic regression models to test the link between performance perceptions and vote choice. The models predict the likelihood of casting a vote for the incumbent vs a ballot for any opposition party. For each survey wave, a separate model is calculated. An alternative approach would be to pool the datasets and include survey round fixed effects. However, each survey represents an independent snapshot of the political mood at a certain point, and a pooled analysis would make it more challenging to study the consistency of performance effects over time.

To disaggregate the effect of performance by identity groups, I include interaction effects for all relevant ethnic and partisan groups. Group affiliation hence represents a moderating variable which may modify the strength or the direction of the effect of performance on vote choice. Interactions are considered the best way to calculate group-specific effects when there is an assumption that the impact of the independent variable systematically deviates for the groups in question (Friedrich 1982, Berry, et al. 2010) and preferable over separate logistic regressions for each group (Jaccard 2001: 17).

Equation 1 gives the linear part of the logistic model. y is the outcome variable coded 1 for a vote for the incumbent and 0 for any oppositional candidate; $perf$ is the key independent variable and coded as an additive 5-point index, counting the number of positive ratings for the incumbent across four developmental key issues (jobs, health, education, and infrastructure).[49]

$$(1)\ \Pr(y_i = 1) = logit^{-1}\ (\alpha\ + \beta_1 perf_i + \sum_{j=1}^{n} \beta_{2j} g_{ji} + \sum_{j=1}^{n} \beta_{3j}(g_{ji} * perf_i) + \boldsymbol{X_i}\delta + \epsilon_i)$$

The two terms after the main performance effect $\beta_1 perf_i$ are the interaction effects for relevant ethnic and partisan groups. Given that the number of groups varies across the two case studies, the interactions are expressed as a summation with the letter j referencing groups. Interactions generally require the inclusion of all constitutive terms (Friedrich 1982); hence, there is a group indicator variable and a product term for each group. g_{ji} is a dummy variable coded 1 for members of group j, β_{7j} is the effect of group j and β_{8j} captures the change in the effect of *perf* on vote choice of group j.

α and ϵ_i represent the constant and the error term, respectively. $\boldsymbol{X_i}$ is a matrix of standard individual-level control variables, including indicator variables for stating one's own ethnic group is treated unfair, youth (age<30), gender, urban-dwelling, muslim faith, a 4-point indicator of education, and the Afrobarometer Lived Poverty Index (LPI). The LPI indicates exposure to poverty and is calculated from a survey item inquiring respondents how often in the last year they went without enough food to eat, clean water, medical treatment, cooking fuel, and cash income (Mattes, et al. 2016, Meyer and Keyser 2016).

[49] See chapter 4.2.1 for a detailed discussion on the measurement of performance perceptions

While this chapter's prime focus is on the link between performance perceptions and vote choice, the estimates for the LPI will be of special interest, as the previous chapter has indicated that exposure to poverty shapes negative performance perceptions. With performance in the list of predictors, including group-level interactions, we would expect to see no or even a positive effect of the LPI on incumbent vote, as it is commonly believed that poorer voters are more inclined to support incumbents because of higher susceptibility to clientelism (Stokes, et al. 2013, Jensen and Justesen 2014).

A disadvantage of interaction effects is that they are difficult to interpret in logistic models because a significant product term is neither necessary nor sufficient to determine whether a moderator variable meaningfully interacts with the independent variable. Most scholars recommend predicted probabilities and marginal effects with standard errors to interpret interaction effects in non-linear models (Brambor, et al. 2006, Berry, et al. 2010, Williams 2012, Hainmueller, et al. 2019). I will follow this strategy to analyse the effect of performance on vote choice within the group under scrutiny.

Specifically, for the interpretation of the interactions, I calculate average marginal effects (AMEs) for the full sample but also for each group in each survey. AMEs give the average change in the probability of casting a vote for the incumbent for a one-unit change in performance perceptions. They are calculated based on the observed values in the sample (cf. Hanmer and Ozan Kalkan 2013) and consider all variables and interactions of the underlying logistic regression. This makes them a good summary measure to break down the effects of an independent variable by samples and sub-samples (Mood 2010, Williams 2012, Long and Freese 2014: 245). An alternative is to compute the probabilities while holding other independent variables at their sample means, but using the observed values is preferable. It is more appropriate to make inferences about the real population and more robust to model misspecifications (Hanmer and Ozan Kalkan 2013). In the case studies, I also look at Marginal Effects at Representative Values (MERs) that give the probability of casting a vote for the incumbent at each step of the 5-point performance scale. [50]

Finally, to compare the strength of performance voting across a broader set of countries, I calculate Multi-level Mixed-Effects (MME) logistic models with random intercepts and random slopes for each survey. Such models allow the intercept and the coefficient to vary across groups to determine each group's deviation from the average (Steenbergen and Jones 2002, Gelman and Hill 2006). By the MME model, I can investigate whether and how the effect of performance varies across groups in a pooled dataset of 59 surveys from 16 countries. The data can be conceived of as a two-level structure. Individuals (Level 1) nested within surveys (Level 2). In the equations below, the letter i references individuals and the letter j surveys.

[50] I use Stata's margins command with the asobserved option. See the replication data for the full code. Detailed discussions of AMEs and MERs can be found in Williams 2012 and Long and Freese 2014: 242ff

The first MME model is a two-level model where intercepts and performance coefficients vary across surveys. The purpose of this model is to establish whether the effect of performance significantly varies across surveys. Accordingly, the focus is on the random coefficients. They represent each group's deviation from the average effect of performance and hence indicate which surveys significantly deviates from the average strength of retrospective voting within our sample of African democracies. Random intercepts are included to account for variation in baseline incumbent support across surveys but will play a subordinate role in the interpretation.

$$(2.1)\ \Pr(y_{ik} = 1) = logit^{-1}(\beta_0 + \beta_1 perf_{ij} + \mathbf{Z_{ik}}\delta + u_{0k} + u_{1j} perf_{ij} + \epsilon_{ij})$$

Equation 2.1 shows the two-level model. $\Pr(y_{ij} = 1)$ is the probability of respondent i in survey k to vote for the incumbent. β_1 is the mean effect of performance across all surveys. u_{0k} is the effect of survey k, i.e. the random intercept. u_{1k} is the effect of performance for survey k, i.e. the random slope. The effect of performance on the log-odds to vote for the incumbent for survey k can be expressed as $\beta_1 + u_{1k}$.

$\mathbf{Z_{ik}}$ is a matrix of control variables. The list of demographic controls from the single-level model is extended by indicator variables for the ethnic group in power and the ethnic group in opposition, which assume the value one if an individual belongs to the incumbent's ethnic group or to a group that has a history of opposition to the current president's group or party, respectively.[51] Likewise, controls are included for government and oppositional partisans. The latter captures all partisans of oppositional parties.

The second MME model adds contextual effects and cross-level interactions to investigate H4a, b, and c which assume that the level of democracy, economic development, and low growth rates are associated with stronger performance voting. Table 6-1 gives an overview of the contextual variables included. All variables vary across countries but also within countries over time. The N is 57 because I exclude the second pre-election surveys from Ghana and Uganda in the cross-level analysis, as the contextual variables have the same value for the two closely scheduled surveys.

To measure democracy, I use the Polity IV index and the margin of victory in the last executive election, i.e. the difference between the vote share of the winner and the vote share of the second-place finisher. The former is to capture the overall level of democracy; the latter tests competitiveness as a specific aspect of democracy because of its assumed relevance for electoral sanctioning. The level of economic development is measured using GDP per capita. To capture short-term economic fluctuations, I use the GDP growth rate in the year of the survey. Averages over several years were considered, but the growth rates in the data are volatile, sometimes dropping heavily between two years. Lastly, I add a control variable which is coded 1 if the

[51] See section 4.3 in chapter 4 for details on the selection of ethnic groups

Table 6-1: Contextual Variables in MME-Model

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Source
Combined Polity Score, Polity IV	57	4.86	3.78	-4	9	Polity, Centre for Systemic Peace
Victory margin last election	57	0.29	0.21	0.01	0.69	Daxecker, et al. 2019 (Updated)
GDP per capita (constant 2010 US$)	57	2212	2349	385	7864	World Bank
GDP growth	57	5.72	1.86	1.56	10.41	World Bank
Campaign Period	57	0.16	0.37	0	1	Coded by Author

survey was carried out within 100 days before an election to account for a potential impact of the campaign period on the salience of performance issues.

$$(2.2)\ \Pr(y_{ik}=1) = logit^{-1}(\beta_0 + \beta_1 perf_{ik} + \mathbf{Z_{ik}}\delta + u_{0k} + u_{1k}perf_{ik} + \beta_3 Polity_k + \beta_4(log)Margin_k + \beta_5(\log)GDPpc_k + \beta_6 GDPgrowth_k + \beta_7 Campaign_k + \beta_8 Polity_k * perf_{ik} + \beta_9(log)Margin_k * perf_{ik} + \beta_{10}(\log)GDPpc_k * perf_{ik} + \beta_{11} GDPgrowth_k * perf_{ik} + \beta_{12} Campaign_k * perf_{ik} + \epsilon_{ik})$$

Equation 2.2 shows the MME model from 2.1 with contextual effects and cross-level interactions. β_3 to β_7 represent the contextual effects which model the influence of the country variables on the likelihood to vote for the incumbent. The main research interest is in the cross-level interactions β_8 to β_{12} which interact the country-level variables with performance perceptions. The interactions allow the effect of performance perceptions on voting for the incumbent to depend on democracy, economic development, and GDP growth to reveal how the macro-variables affect the magnitude of retrospective voting across the 57 surveys.

6.4 Results

The results are presented in three steps: Sections 6.4.1 and 6.4.2 are dedicated to the in-depth study of Ghana and Uganda. Section 6.4.3 presents the comparative perspective across 16 countries.

6.4.1 Ghana: Retrospective Voting across all Groups

Ghana is one of the most competitive democracies in Africa and has experienced three presidential turnovers since the adoption of multi-party elections in 1992. Previous studies have already reported links between performance perceptions and vote choice in survey data (Youde 2005, Lindberg 2013). Moreover, road maintenance was found to raise incumbent support (Harding 2015). At the same time, Ghana is associated with ethnic voting (Nugent 2001, Fridy 2007) and clientelist distributive strategies along ethnic lines (Ichino and Nathan 2012, Nathan 2019a). In addition, chapter 5 has documented that partisan identities lead to massive biases in perceptions of government performance, which may prevent Ghanaians with partisan identities from voting retrospectively.

The results presented below, nonetheless, indicate intact accountability in Ghana. Throughout the observational period, the statistical link between performance perceptions and vote choice is robust. It gets particularly strong ahead of the 2016 election, indicating higher performance awareness in campaign time. Most importantly, the loyalty of politicised identity groups seems limited. Appreciable proportions of Ghanaians vote against ethnic and partisan preferences because of performance perceptions. The potential for retrospective voting within most groups

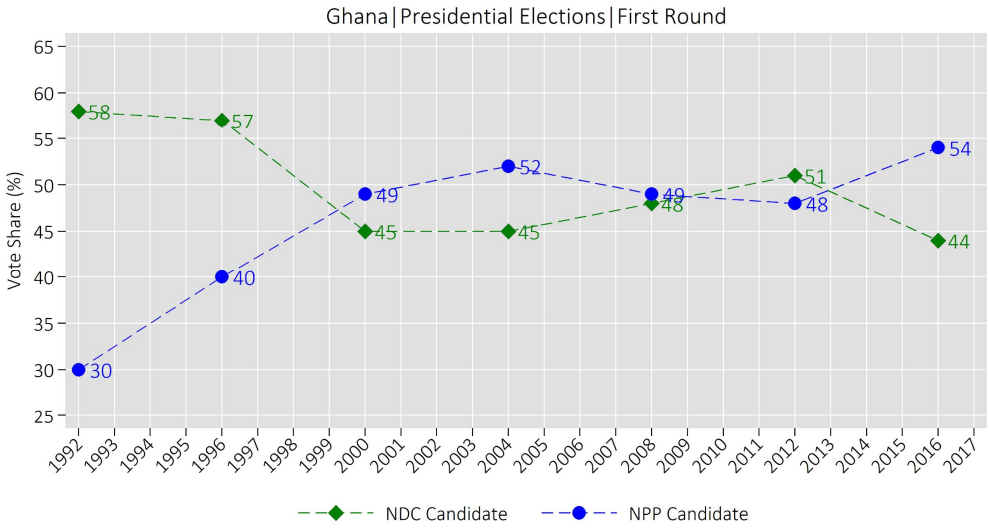

Figure 6-1: Presidential Election Results in Ghana. First Round.

seems sufficient to tip the scale in Ghana's competitive presidential elections. To survive in office, incumbents are likely to pursue - at least partly - programmatic strategies that maximise the reach and the impact of developmental policies.

Before turning to the results, it is appropriate to briefly look at political and economic developments during the observational period. Figure 6-1 shows the vote share of candidates from Ghana's two major parties in presidential elections since the reintroduction of multipartyism in 1992. The National Democratic Congress (NDC) held the presidency from 1992 to 2000 and again between 2008 and 2016 after narrowly edging out the NPP in a keenly contested run-off in 2008. The New Patriotic Party (NPP) was in power from 2000 to 2008 and secured another victory in 2016. The 2016 defeat of Incumbent John Mahama by NPP candidate Nana Akufo Addo marked the first time in Ghana's history that a sitting president got voted out. Both recent turnovers fall into the observational period. The change in 2008 happens after the second of six surveys, which allows observing the behaviour of relevant identity groups in and out of power. We also have two surveys gathered before the 2016' turnover, which predict the election result precisely at the national and the regional level.

Ghana's developmental record also features interesting temporal variation. Figure 6-2 provides an overview of trends since 1990. The top plots show World Bank statistics on economic growth and poverty.[52] The bottom plots are based on my survey data and give national mean values of performance perceptions and the Afrobarometer Lived Poverty Index (LPI). The first years of the observational period were highly successful. Between 2005 and 2013, we see record GDP growth rates, significant poverty reduction, and positive average performance perceptions. However, in 2013 Ghana slipped into the worst crisis of its democratic history. GDP growth

[52] See: GDP growth (annual %), https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=GH, Poverty headcount ratio at $1.90 a day, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.DDAY?locations=GH, rise in poverty also recorded by Afrobarometer Lived Poverty Index.

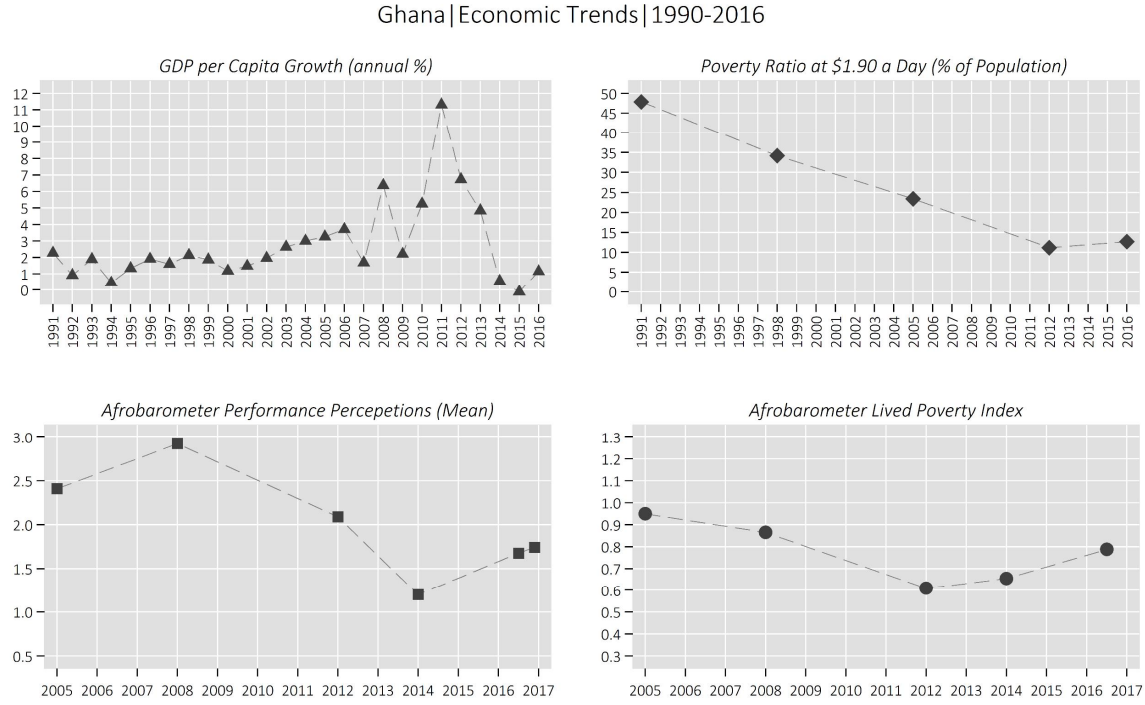

Figure 6-2: Economic Trends in Ghana. 1990-2016. Top plots show GDP Growth and Poverty Ratio as reported by the World Bank. Bottom plots are national summary statistics based on the Surveys in this Analysis. Performance Perceptions are the average number of positive ratings for the incumbent on 4 developmental issues. Lived Poverty Index is a composite measure of shortages in basic needs as reported by Afrobarometer respondents. Higher values indicate higher poverty.

dropped to the lowest value since the early 1980s, and the poverty ratio increased after a long period of constant poverty reduction. The development is also visible in popular perceptions. Performance ratings hit a record low in 2014, and the LPI - in line with the World Bank statistic - registers the first rise of poverty in Ghana in almost 20 years of Afrobarometer research.

Do negative ratings for the president translate into votes against the incumbent at the individual level? Turning to the main results, table 6-1 shows the logit models of equation 1, which predict the likelihood to vote for the incumbent vs a vote for an oppositional party. For a temporal comparison, the columns present separate models for each of the six surveys, from 2005's Afrobarometer to the pre-election polls before the December 2016 election.

The first thing to notice in Table 6-1 is that all coefficients of performance (first row of results) are significant at the 99%-level. Accordingly, there is a robust statistical relationship between performance perceptions and vote choice throughout the observational period. Note that the effect pertains to about 20% of Ghanaians who do not belong to the four partisan and ethnic groups controlled in the model.[53] The finding is not overly exciting as previous studies have found similar links. Nonetheless, the strengths and the consistency of the relationship generally confirms H1 for Ghana. Performance perceptions and vote choices are linked.

An exciting finding accrues from the temporal dimension of the analysis: Performance effects

[53] For the effects of group members, the interaction term needs to be added to the main effect. If an observation does not belong to any of the controlled groups, indicator variables and product terms are 0, so that the coefficient of performance describes the effect for the remaining observations.

increase considerably ahead of the 2016 election. Not only are the coefficients of the pre-election polls (columns 5 and 6) higher than those for the four regular Afrobarometer surveys, the effects are also considerably more robust, as indicated by the high t-values below the coefficients. It can be inferred that Ghanaian voters become more aware of performance as the election day is coming closer.

An alternative explanation could be that ahead of the election, minor ethnic groups whom the model does not control become more politicised. The statistical increase in performance voting could then be an artefact of stronger biases in both performance perceptions and vote choice. However, relatively few groups are associated with ethnic voting in Ghana beyond those included in the model. Generally, several regions are considered swing regions, where, despite relative ethnic homogeneity, voters do not have a fixed ethno-regional political preference (Fridy 2012). The more substantial effects hence likely reflect an actual peak in performance voting ahead of the election.

Turning to the coefficients for ethnicity and partisanship, feeling close to one of Ghana's major parties is, not surprisingly, a strong predictor of vote choice with highly significant effects. Interestingly, the picture is less clear for ethnicity. Although the supposed leaning of both groups finds expression in the direction[54], the coefficients only occasionally reach statistical significance. However, we need to be careful in drawing conclusions based on the regressions table. All groups are modelled via interaction terms. Therefore, the significance of the individual term is not a reliable criterion. For a sound assessment of interactions in non-linear models, it is necessary to calculate marginal effects that factor in both variables of the interaction term (Brambor, et al. 2006, Berry, et al. 2010). Indeed, both ethnic groups significantly deviate from the average voter at specific points of the performance scale (cf. Figure 6-7).

As for the demographic control variables, Table 6-1 shows few significant effects. Only education and urban dwelling are weakly associated with lower support for the incumbent. In the three recent waves, both variables are significant, and the negative direction is consistent throughout the observational period. Accordingly, better educated and urban voters are more likely to support the opposition. The result challenges the notion that the NPP is the party of well-educated urban people, whereas the NDC represents rural interests (Whitfield 2009, Kim 2018). As the direction of related estimates is consistent beyond the presidential turnover, the results do not really back the demographic interpretation of political alignments in Ghana and instead support the view that Ghana's two major camps are catch-all parties (Elischer 2013).

[54] The direction of the effects is in line with the Akan-NPP and Ewe-NDC alignments, turning around when the NDC takes over from NPP after 2008. An exception is the positive Ewe coefficient in 2008, which is likely to be an artifact of overreported incumbent support by Ewe in this particular survey, as discussed in section 5.3.1.2.

Table 6-2: Ghana, Logistic Regression of Incumbent Vote, Afrobarometer Round 3 – 6 and 2016 Pre-Election Surveys

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)		(6)	
	Round 3 2005		Round 4 2008		Round 5 2012		Round 6 2014		PES I Jul 16		PES II Oct 16	
Government Performance	0.52**	(3.30)	0.27+	(1.72)	0.45**	(3.99)	0.42**	(4.18)	0.48**	(5.25)	0.60**	(6.53)
Ethnicity												
Ewe	-1.17+	(-1.92)	0.16	(0.18)	0.45	(0.67)	0.15	(0.39)	1.28**	(2.46)	0.82	(1.62)
IA: Ewe#Performance	0.32	(1.36)	-0.24	(-0.82)	0.08	(0.35)	0.53**	(2.83)	0.07	(0.38)	0.01	(0.09)
Akan	0.74	(1.46)	1.78**	(2.46)	-1.17**	(-2.95)	-1.41**	(-4.13)	-1.42**	(-3.80)	-1.17**	(-3.04)
IA: Akan#Performance	-0.13	(-0.72)	-0.13	(-0.60)	0.18	(1.30)	0.24+	(1.65)	0.14	(0.92)	0.19	(1.40)
Eth Group treated unfair	-0.38	(-1.15)	-0.81+	(-1.89)	0.05	(0.20)	-0.40	(-1.44)	-1.18**	(-2.97)	-0.83**	(-2.11)
Partisanship												
Close to NPP	3.49**	(6.16)	1.91**	(2.45)	-3.79**	(-3.33)	-3.54**	(-5.05)	-3.03**	(-4.62)	-3.40**	(-4.87)
IA: NPP#Performance	-0.29	(-1.54)	0.37	(1.48)	0.15	(0.40)	-0.22	(-0.76)	-0.36	(-1.13)	-0.48	(-1.11)
Close to NDC	-2.15**	(-3.61)	-2.83**	(-2.22)	2.78**	(6.97)	2.69**	(8.95)	2.65**	(7.31)	2.90**	(7.92)
IA: NDC#Performance	-0.29	(-1.22)	-0.15	(-0.35)	0.08	(0.54)	-0.12	(-0.94)	0.23	(1.60)	0.06	(0.45)
Demographics												
Youth	-0.21	(-0.76)	0.25	(0.95)	-0.31+	(-1.84)	0.13	(0.60)	-0.12	(-0.60)	-0.26	(-1.36)
Female	0.15	(0.55)	0.27	(0.98)	0.16	(0.92)	-0.01	(-0.05)	0.04	(0.21)	0.13	(0.67)
Urban	-0.35	(-1.38)	-0.43	(-1.53)	-0.25	(-1.33)	-0.58**	(-2.59)	-0.68**	(-3.28)	-0.51**	(-2.57)
Education: 4 Cat	-0.14	(-0.90)	-0.30+	(-1.83)	-0.08	(-0.72)	-0.25**	(-1.98)	-0.30**	(-2.84)	-0.24**	(-2.20)
Lived Poverty Index	-0.17	(-1.12)	-0.12	(-0.72)	0.02	(0.18)	-0.21+	(-1.65)	-0.15	(-1.21)		
Muslim	-0.06	(-0.19)	-1.19**	(-3.46)	-0.20	(-0.85)	-0.18	(-0.64)	0.32	(1.30)	-0.18	(-0.78)
Constant	-0.27	(-0.46)	-0.29	(-0.50)	-0.88**	(-2.18)	-0.49	(-1.30)	-0.63+	(-1.74)	-0.86**	(-2.80)
Observations N	914		860		1722		1538		1735		1931	
Pseudo R^2	0.57		0.59		0.60		0.62		0.67		0.71	

In Parantheses: t-values, Model predicts likelihood to vote for the Incumbent: 1=Vote for the Incumbent; 0=Vote for any other Party, + $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.05$

Interestingly, the Lived Poverty Index (LPI), which was found to have a substantial impact on performance perceptions in chapter 5, remains mostly insignificant in the prediction of vote choices. That said, it is consistently negative (or 0 in 2012), which is a sign that personal exposure to poverty indeed reduces incumbent voting. The LPI may just not have an independent statistical effect on vote choices beyond its strong manifestation in performance perceptions.[55] Indeed, some statistics below indicate that personal exposure to poverty is an important factor in the strong sanctioning reactions I observe in Ghana (cf. Fig 6-7). Certainly, the negative signs of the LPI estimates do not support the argument that poor people are generally more inclined to uncritically support incumbents – at least in Ghana, there are no signs of such a tendency.

The core finding from the regression table is that performance perceptions are a powerful predictor of vote choice in Ghana. The link is robust and extremely strong ahead of the election, which is a clear sign that the developmental track record of the incumbent president is a central consideration when voters in Ghana make up their minds. However, the confirmation of H1 does not necessarily mean that the electorate is effective in creating incentives for presidents to pursue a national developmental strategy. Incumbents may still successfully secure their re-election through patronage to specific groups of supporters. Only if performance reactions cut across ethno-regional alignments, they really build up pressure for a national programmatic policy strategy. Thus, the pivotal question is to what extent ethnic and partisan groups contribute to the national performance signal.

6.4.1.1 Performance Voting within Ethnic Groups in Ghana

In Ghana, ethnic alignments are detached from the ethnicity of candidates and follow long-standing links between certain groups and the two major parties (Fridy 2007). The NPP is associated with the Akan or Ashanti[56], who make up about 30% of the total population. The NDC is assumed to maintain strong links to the Ewe, who constitute 14% of Ghanaians. Analysts view the political leaning of both groups as clear and consistent, mainly because regions with a high concentration of both groups (specifically Ashanti and Volta regions) supposedly show unshakable electoral support for NPP and NDC, respectively. However, in Ghana's competitive presidential democracy, subtle shifts may influence whether a president is retained or rejected in an election. The results in this section suggest that the developmental performance of presidents in Ghana may indeed cause decisive gains and losses among Ewe and Akan.

[55] Appendix 6.5 shows Logistic Regression Model that regress Incumbent Vote on the LPI without Performance Perceptions. Interestingly, poverty remains a relatively weak predictor of vote choice, but the negative relationship is confirmed. Only in some instances, the estimates reach significant. But especially when the LPI is interacted with Identity, we see some strong effects. For instance, in the pre-election survey of July 16, poor NDC partisans are significantly more likely to vote against the NDC incumbent than non-poor copartisans.

[56] Note that the Akans are made up of different subgroups. To exclude the Fante sub-groups which does not share the political preference for NPP (cf. Michelitch 2015, Nathan 2016), the coding excludes Akans from Central Region. Appendix 6.2 shows, moreover, results with only Akans from Ashanti region coded as Akan. The effects remain largely unaltered even with this restrictive coding. For further discussion of this issue see Chapter 2.2.

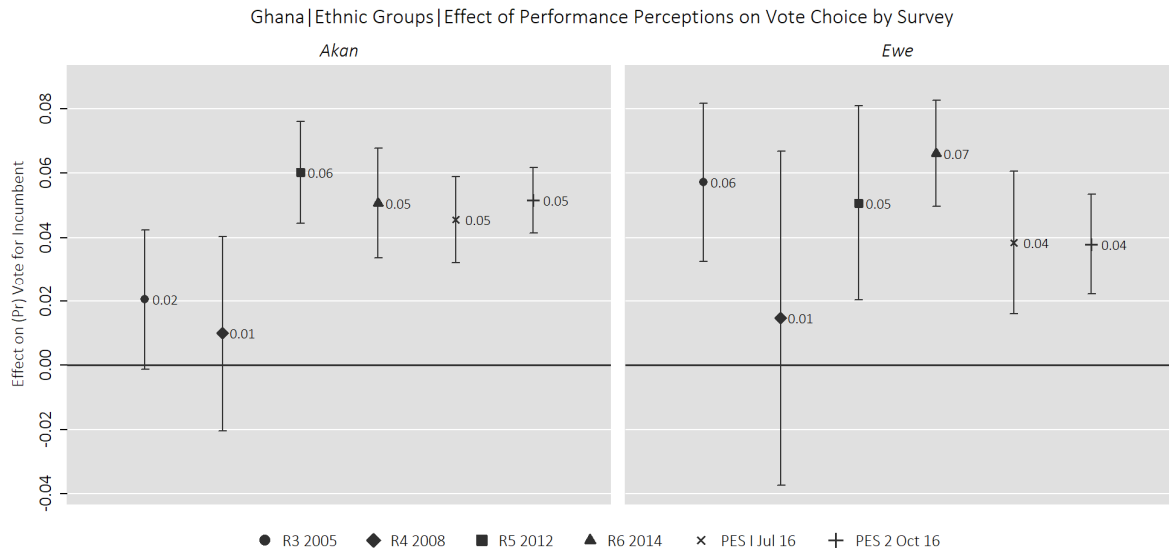

Figure 6-3: Ethnic Groups in Ghana. Effects of Performance on Vote Choice by Survey. Values are Average Marginal Effects and indicate how a one-unit change in performance perceptions affects the likelihood of voting for the incumbent vs. the likelihood to vote for an oppositional candidate. Performance Perceptions range from 0 to 4 and correspond to the number of positive assessments across four developmental key areas. Error bars show 95% confidence intervals. The effects are calculated based on the logit equations from Table 6-1 at the observed values of the remaining variables.

Figure 6-3 presents marginal effects for both groups based on the estimates from Table 6-1. The numbers can be interpreted as the average change in the probability of voting for an incumbent for a one-unit change in performance perceptions (Williams 2012, Long and Freese 2014). An additional positive (negative) rating for the handling of jobs, infrastructure, education, and health is predicted to change the likelihood by the indicated value. The y-axis corresponds to the change in the probability of casting a vote for the incumbent. The x-axis simply sorts the effects of the different surveys according to their date.

The first thing to note is that for both groups, most effects are significant. Only 3 out of 12 subsamples show no reaction to performance as confidence intervals stretch over the 0-line. The model hence confirms links between performance perceptions within both groups. In other words, some group members vote against the group's traditional party preference because of perceptions about an incumbent's developmental performance.

Concerning Akan (left sub-graph of Figure 6-3), all but the first two waves are significant. The strength of the effects is appreciable. An additional positive rating for the government in a developmental key area increases the probability of voting for the incumbent by an average of 0.05. Moreover, the confidence intervals are relatively small. It can thus be said with a high level of certainty that the likelihood of Akan to re-elect the incumbent changes appreciably over the full range of performance perceptions (cf. Figure 6-7) – at least in the four recent waves. The results are robust against restricting the Akan sub-sample to people who live in the Akan-dominated Ashanti region.[57] Accordingly, even in the prime stronghold of the NPP, some voters

[57] See Appendix 6.2 for the corresponding results for Akan from Ashanti region. The more restrictive coding

prefer strengthening a developmentally successful NDC incumbent over the prospects for ethnic favouritism by a president from the Akan-associated NPP.

The temporal distribution suggests that the Akan reward non-co-ethnic incumbents but may be reluctant to punish a coethnic incumbent. The insignificant effects in the first two survey waves fall into a time when the Akan-associated NPP held the presidency. Only after the NDC takes over by the end of 2008 the analysis records significant performance reactions among the Akan. However, the developmental track record of the NPP was arguably positive in 2005 and 2008, and the picture may change if an NPP president fails to provide development.

Regarding the Ewe ethnic group, the model also shows a consistent and robust impact of performance. Average Marginal Effects for Ewe are displayed on the right side of Figure 6-3. Five of the six results are significant. In the two pre-election surveys, for instance, an additional positive rating in one of the four developmental key areas is expected to increase the probability of voting for the incumbent by 0.04. Ewe also seem more willing than Akan to punish coethnic presidents. All effects after the NDC won the presidency in 2008 are significant. A poor developmental performance by an NDC government may hence lead to critical losses among Ewe. This is especially visible during the 2014 crisis, where we see the highest point estimate (0.07) and comparatively small confidence intervals, i.e., a particularly robust effect. In light of the problems in developmental key sectors around that time, performance became a more prominent consideration and raised the number of Ewe voters determined to punish their political allies from the NDC because of a poor developmental record.

To get a sense of the electoral consequences of performance voting among Ewe and Akan, it is informative to include descriptive statistics. Figure 6-4 plots the voting intentions of both groups against performance perceptions. The lines show the proportion of group members who report casting a ballot for the other major party against the group's traditional preference. I will refer to this statistic below as the *defection rate*. The bars represent the average number of positive ratings across the four developmental key areas.[58] Do performance perceptions and voting intentions covary, and more importantly, do we see decisive shifts in incumbent support?

Regarding Akan, the figure backs the assessment that an incumbent's developmental performance can lead to critical gains and losses. Especially visible is the impact between 2008 and 2014. The dark line reveals that as few as 9% of Akan intend to vote against the group's affiliated NPP party in 2008. Back then, the NPP was in power, and I also did not find a statistical connection between performance perceptions and vote choice (cf. Figure 6-4). However, after the NDC took over and delivered a relatively successful term between 2008 and 2012, the

produces nearly identical results.

[58] Note that incumbency changed from NPP to NDC between 2008 and 2012, which, especially in the case of the Akan (dark bars), leads to generally poorer performance ratings. See Chapter 6 for an analysis of ethnic biases in performance perceptions.

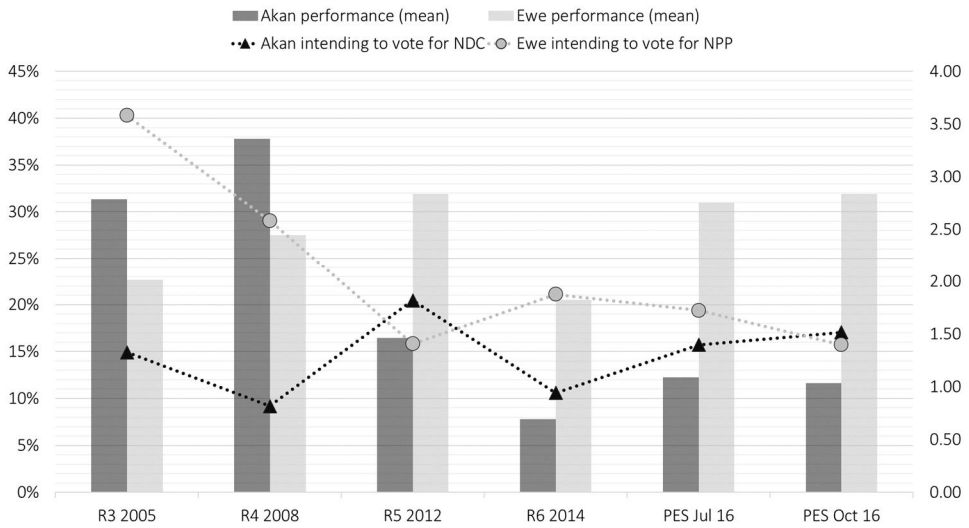

Figure 6-4: Ethnic Groups in Ghana. Performance Perceptions and Voting Intentions over Time. Lines with markers (left scale) show the percentages of group members who intent to vote against the traditional preference of their ethnic group. Bars (right scale) show the average number of positive ratings for the government in 4 developmental key areas.

number of Akan who want to support the NDC incumbent raises by 11 percentage points to 20%. Two years later, during the crisis of 2014, a sharp drop in average performance perceptions is accompanied by a loss of 9 percentage points for NDC incumbent John Mahama among Akan voters. As performance perceptions improve in 2016, Mahama regains some ground among his traditional ethnic opponents, with 17% reporting casting a ballot for the NDC. The figure indicates that the individual-level link between performance and vote choice leads to considerable shifts of about 10% in incumbent support among Akan. Given that the group accounts for 35% of Ghana's population and that presidential elections in Ghana are highly competitive, performance voting by Akan may tip the scale.

The picture is less clear for the Ewe, and some of the group's descriptive stats raise concerns about measurement error. For the first two waves, the light line in Figure 6-4 suggests defection rates of 40% (2005) and 29% (2008) among Ewe, which seems unlikely. During that time, Ewe were in opposition - for the first time after 18 years in power[59]. The historical situation potentially raised political anxiety, so that incumbent support was overreported (cf. Carlson 2018a). The high 2008 defection rate is not even attributable to performance perceptions (cf. Figure 6-3). The data for later waves are plausible and support the assessment that performance effects translate into votes among Ewe. The shifts are, however, small. In 2012, only 15% of Ewe indicated to vote against the NDC incumbent. During the 2014 crisis, the number of defectors raises by six percentage points to 21%. Simultaneously, the light bar representing average Ewe performance ratings hits a record low. However, the NDC regains these vote shares before the 2016 election. It is difficult to tell whether this is a consequence of actual improvements or stronger ethnic bias

[59] The 2000 presidential election led to Ghana's first democratic turnover and marked the end of the 18-year rule of President Jerry John Rawlings. Rawlings was an Ewe and it was him who built the persistent link between the NDC party and the Ewe is attributable to his personal influence (Whitfield 2009).

ahead of the election.

Overall, Ghana's two politicised ethnic groups seem to contribute to electoral accountability. H2 is confirmed for both by solid links between performance perceptions and vote choice. The voting patterns over time indicate that performance-induced volatility is higher among Akan than among Ewe. However, Ghanaian presidents may gain and lose decisive vote shares among both groups. In 2012, after two extraordinarily successful years, 20% of Akan said they want to support the NDC incumbent against the group's traditional leaning. During the 2014 crisis, 21% of Ewe state they want to defect and vote against their NDC ally in office. It is essential to point out that the Akan effects remain robust if the group (consisting of several sub-groups) is reduced to people from the heartland Ashanti region. Accordingly, the performance voting among Akan is not an artefact of strategic geographic considerations, as readers of Ichino and Nathan's (2012) influential paper may suspect.

6.4.1.2 Performance Voting within Partisan Groups in Ghana

Almost half of Ghana's electorate reports a partisan preference. About 30% feel close to NPP, roughly 20% feel close to NDC. The size of both camps has been stable in recent years, which suggests that partisanship is not just a reflection of short-term voting preferences or patrimonial benefits. Partisanship, moreover, cuts across ethno-regional alignments - both partisan groups are regionally diverse and multi-ethnic.[60]

Partisanship has a huge impact on public opinion in Ghana. Chapter 5 has illustrated that supporters of NDC and NPP live in different worlds when it comes to judgements on a president's handling of developmental affairs. The gap in performance perceptions indicates that party alignments have grown into a social identity, which colours perceptions through psychological processes of motivated reasoning. However, we have also seen that exposure to poverty reduces partisan bias, so that we find variation in the performance perceptions of NDC and NPP supporters. Does this variation translate into votes? Indeed, the results indicate that sometimes in Ghana, performance is put before partisan loyalty. Performance-induced defection is observed among partisans from both camps but occurs only when the respective party is in power.

Figure 6-5 presents the Average Marginal Effects of performance for both partisan camps with 95% confidence intervals. The numbers indicate how a one-unit change in performance perceptions affects the likelihood of casting a ballot for the incumbent. NPP partisans, displayed on the left side, show hardly any reactions. Just the 2008 effect is barely significant. In all other surveys, the confidence interval includes the 0-line, meaning performance perceptions have no

[60] Especially NDC partisans show a high level of ethnic diversity with as many as 74% belonging to other ethnicities than the traditionally NDC-affiliated Ewe. NPP partisans are somewhat more homogenous as ethnic Akan make up 67% of the partisan group. Still one-third of NPP partisans is recruited from diverse ethnic groups including Ewe. See Appendix 1.8 for detailed graphs on the ethnic and regional composition of partisan groups.

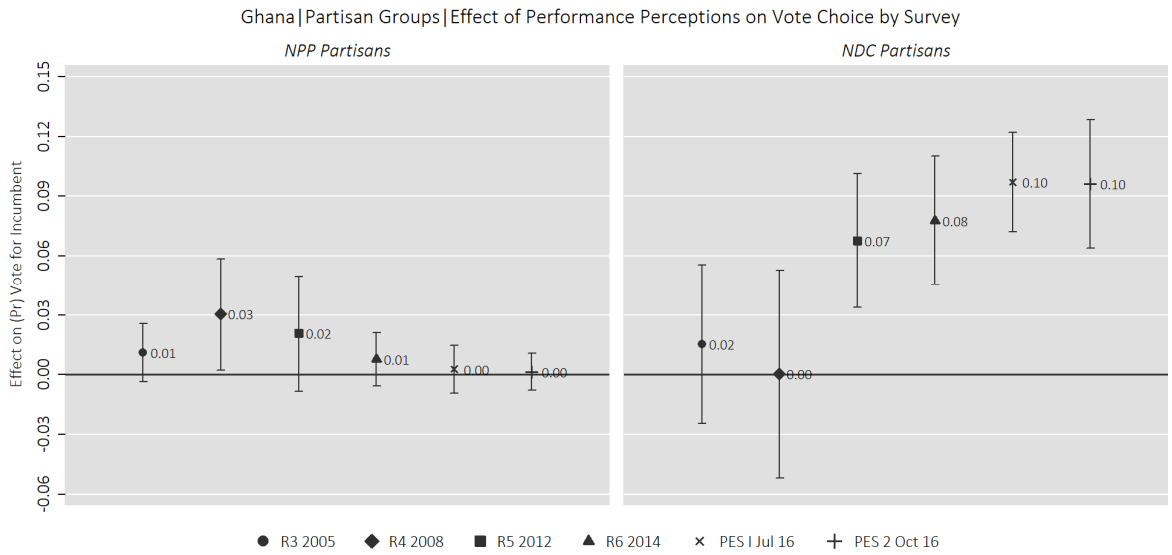

Figure 6-5: Partisan Groups in Ghana. Effects of Performance on Vote Choice by Survey. Values are Average Marginal Effects and indicate how a one-unit change in performance perceptions affects the likelihood of voting for the incumbent vs. the likelihood to vote for an oppositional candidate. Performance Perceptions range from 0 to 4 and correspond to the number of positive assessments across four developmental key areas. Error bars show 95% confidence intervals. The effects are calculated based on the logit equations from Table 6-1 at the observed values of the remaining variables.

statistically significant impact on the vote choices of NPP partisans. For NDC supporters, the model reveals robust performance effects in four of six surveys, including both pre-election polls, which are carried out at the peak of the campaign, when potential partisan patronage occurs more frequently. In the second pre-election poll of 2016, for instance, the model predicts that the probability of NDC partisans to support copartisan president Mahama depreciates by 0.1 with every additional bad grade for the handling of the four developmental key issues.

An interesting observation is that partisans only react to performance when their preferred party holds the presidency. This is especially striking in the case of NDC partisans, who show no response under the NPP presidency in the first two surveys, but robust reactions after the NDC took over in late 2008. Likewise, the single slightly significant effect for NPP partisans is recorded in 2008 under an NPP president. Ghana's partisan groups accordingly punish their own presidents for bad developmental performance but are hard to win over by an incumbent from a different party.

However, a high individual-level performance impact, as recorded for NDC partisans, may be owed to a few cases at the extremes of the performance scale with only marginal numbers of voters voting against their partisan identity. It is thus essential to factor in the underlying distribution of voting intentions. Figure 6-6 plots the descriptive statistics for partisan groups over time. The lines represent the defection rates, i.e. the proportion of partisans who say they want to cast a ballot for the other major party. The bars give the average number of favourable performance ratings by both partisan camps.

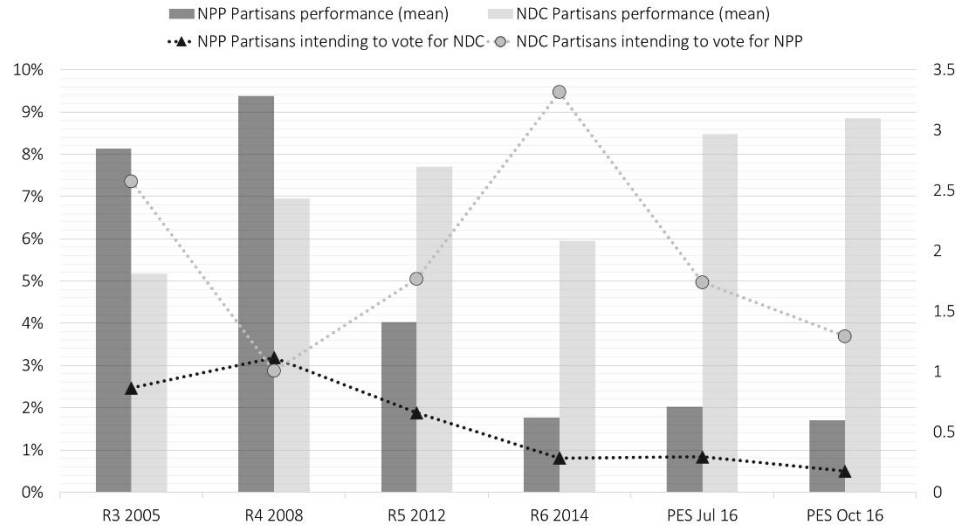

Figure 6-6: Partisan Groups in Ghana. Performance Perceptions and Defection Rates over Time. Lines with markers (left scale) show the percentages of group members who intent to vote against their partisan identity. Bars (right scale) show the average number of positive ratings for the government in 4 developmental key areas.

As can be seen from the dark line in Figure 6-6, less than 1% of NPP partisans report a voting intention for NDC in the three most recent surveys. Slightly more defectors occur in the first two waves while the NPP holds the presidency. In conjunction with the narrowly significant performance effect in 2008 (cf. Figure 6-5), this is a sign that a more dissatisfying performance of an NPP president may break up the loyalty of NPP partisans. For NDC partisans, the electoral reactions are more substantial. The crisis of 2014 induces almost one-tenths to say they want to support the NPP and vote out the party they feel close to. And even ahead of the elections two years later, about 5% of NDC partisans remain unforgiving and determined to vote for the NPP, even though things improve and performance perceptions (light bars) bounce back. As we can tell from the regression results, the renegades are attributable to performance perceptions.

To sum up, the performance reactions found among Ghana's partisans are weak but probably not irrelevant. For NDC partisans, performance is a valid predictor of vote choice. The actual variation in voting intentions is low but sufficient to influence the outcome of an election in Ghana, with at maximum 10% reporting they want to vote against an NDC president at the height of the 2014 crisis. Concerning NPP partisans, the analysis hardly finds individual-level links between performance and vote choice. However, a narrowly significant performance coefficient combined with a rise in defectors while the NPP was in power in 2008 indicate that people feeling close to NPP may also punish copartisan incumbents in the event of developmental setbacks. Based on the overall picture during the observational period, however, H2 must be rejected for NPP Partisans.

The fact that performance reactions occur primarily among supporters of the party in power underlines that it is common in Ghana to put development before patrimonial considerations. If it was about patronage, incumbent copartisans should be loyal to maintain access to patronage.

The fact that individuals vote against their own people in power indicates that even the passionate supporters of NDC and NPP expect developmental progress. Supplying patronage is not sufficient to secure electoral support. Substantial problems in public service delivery, as in 2014, induce voters to consider voting for a candidate from the opposing major party. Partisans accordingly contribute to the central disciplining factor in moral-hazard models of electoral accountability, that is, the perpetual signal towards political elites that they risk losing power if they do not pursue general development.

6.4.1.3 Overview: Retrospective Voting in Ghana

Figure 6-7 gives a final overview of retrospective voting in Ghana ahead of the 2016 election. The lines are the predicted probabilities of voting for the incumbent of each subsample as the number of positive ratings in the four developmental key areas rises from 0 to 4. The horizontal spikes are 95% confidence intervals. The displayed probabilities are calculated based on the regression results for the second pre-election survey in 2016, which predicted the election result very accurately at the national and the regional level.[61]

The overview demonstrates that the 2016 electoral turnover was a consequence of performance voting across ethnic and partisan lines. Voters from all segments of the electorate, including his core supporters, punished NDC president John Mahama for the developmental backlashes following the 2014 crisis. On the left, we see predictions for the two ethnic groups under scrutiny. The probability of Akan (red line) changes from 0.18 to 0.46 as performance ratings raise from 0 to 4. For Ewe (yellow line), the ethnic allies of the incumbent NDC, the change is also significant but somewhat lower. Likewise, copartisan support for Mahama decreases moderately but significantly with lower performance perceptions. The green line in the middle plot indicates that the probability of supporting Mahama drops to 0.66 if performance perceptions are all negative. The larger confidence intervals towards the lower end of the performance scale, however, reveal that the absolute number of NDC partisans who want to vote against the NDC because of negative performance ratings is relatively low (4%). Only for NPP partisans, the likelihood to vote for the incumbent does not change along the performance scale and is consistently next to zero.

The black line to the right pertains to those 20% Ghanaians who do not belong to any of the controlled groups. We see a sizeable rise in the probability to vote for the incumbent from 0.17 to 0.67 along the performance scale. It is possible that the slope is somewhat inflated by unobserved small-scale regional biases. However, there is good reason to view the line as evidence of relevant performance reactions. At minimum, the sharp rise indicates high awareness of developmental affairs. But it also aligns with real-world voting patterns. Beyond the Akan and Ewe territories, many areas in Ghana are characterized as swing regions and saw large shifts

[61] See Appendix 1.8 for a regional comparison of official and survey election results

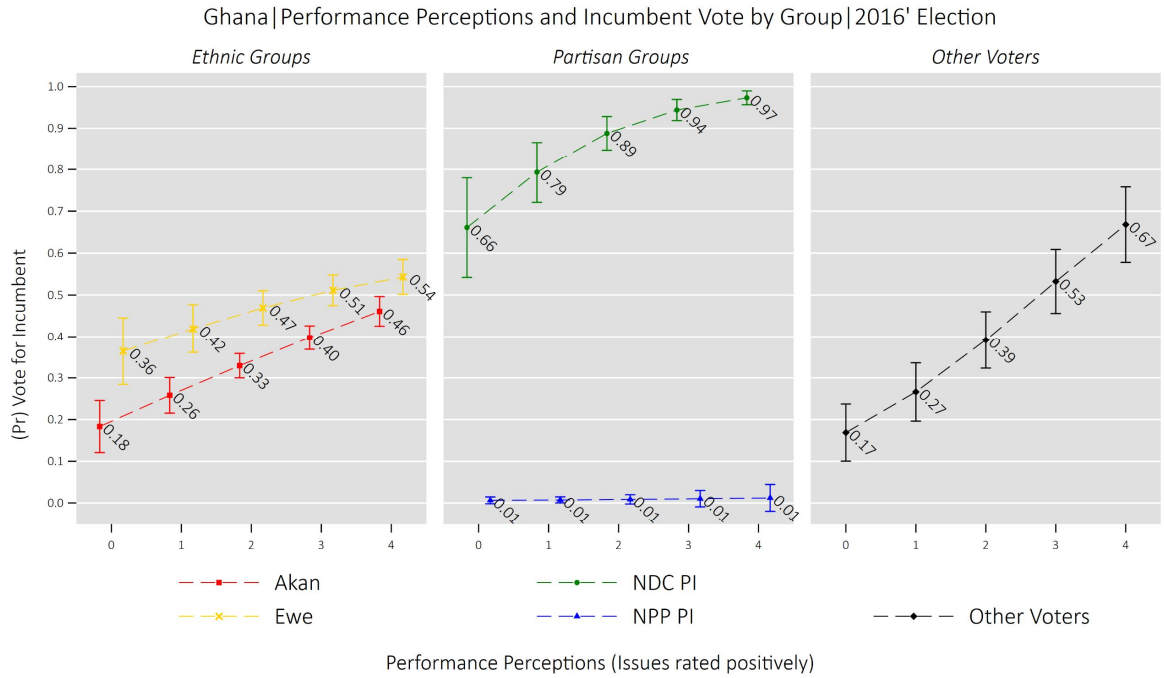

Figure 6-7: Performance Voting in Ghana ahead of the 2016 Election by Group. Lines are predicted probabilities of voting for the incumbent as the number of positive performance ratings for the government increases along the x axis. The estimates are based on the logit results in Table 5.1. Error bars show 95% confidence intervals.

between the two parties over time (Fridy 2012). It is thus undoubted that many voters in Ghana are "up for grabs" (Weghorst and Lindberg 2013). The strong probability change for 'other voters' strongly indicates that concerns of developmental progress are a central factor behind these shifts.

It is worth noting that most lines are significant at different steps of the performance scale. Accordingly, the probability of an incumbent vote changes continuously with every additional positive rating. An Akan rating 2 of 4 issue areas as handled well is, for instance, already clearly less likely to support the incumbent than an Akan who gives all positive ratings, evident in the gap between the corresponding confidence intervals of the red line. The fact that even nuanced differences in performance perceptions affect voting preferences is another piece of evidence that performance voting is a very robust phenomenon in Ghana.

Figure 6-7 also shows that Ewe deviate from the control group of other voters in terms of their likelihood to re-elect President Mahama in 2016 despite an insignificant group coefficient in the regression results of Table 6-1. Towards the lower end of the performance scale, Ewe remain significantly more likely to vote for the NDC than the reference group of other voters. The observation underlines that insignificant group indicators in non-linear models with interaction effects do not necessarily rule out a significant deviation of the respective sub-population (cf. Brambor, et al. 2006, Hainmueller, et al. 2019).

An interesting question is to what extend poverty is a driver of retrospective voting in Ghana. Chapter 5 has found firm evidence that exposure to developmental shortages leads to bad marks

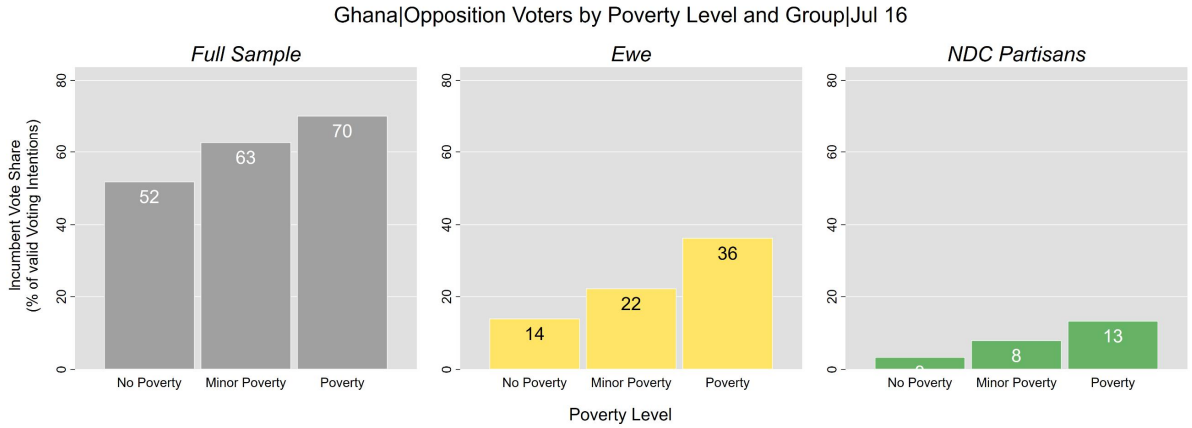

Figure 6-8: Opposition Vote Share by Group and Poverty Level in Ghana. Pre-Election-Survey I Jul 16. Numbers are percentages of valid voting intentions (excluding Don't know/Would not vote/Refused) saying they want to vote for an Oppositional candidate in the Pre-Election Survey of July 2016 (PES I). Poverty Level is based on the Lived Poverty Index (LPI). No Poverty: LPI=0, Minor Poverty: LPI<1, Poverty: LPI>1. Each category contains about 30% of respondents.

for the incumbent president – even among members of his most loyal support groups. However, the indicator variable, the Lived Poverty Index, failed to show an independent effect vote choice in this chapter (cf. Table 6-1). In an independent prediction of vote choices, which replaced performance by poverty, I also found relatively inconsistent links between poverty and voting for the incumbent.

Nonetheless, poverty seems to play a key role through its effect on performance perceptions, as documented in chapter 5. Let's conclude the analysis by looking at some descriptive statistics on poverty and vote choice. Figure 6-8 indicates poor people contributed disproportionally to the 2016 victory of NPP candidate Addo. The bars represent Addo's vote share (of valid voting intentions) across different poverty levels in the July 2016 pre-election survey.[62] The right plot shows the distribution in the full sample; the other two plots pertain to Mahama's ethnic and partisan core supporters. In all three groups, opposition support is significantly higher among poorer voters.[63] Especially regarding NDC supporters, it is apparent that defection only occurs among individuals who are personally confronted with developmental shortages. The variation in voting intentions which is well predicted by performance perceptions is hence to a large deal attributable to poor voters.

Overall, it can be concluded that the developmental record of the incumbent president is a central concern for Ghanaian voters. Throughout the observational period, we find significant links between performance perceptions and vote choice, not only for the electorate-at-large but also within all ethnic and partisan groups under scrutiny, except for partisans from the NPP. And for the latter, I find some signs that they may also punish a poor performance by an NPP incumbent. Generally, oppositional partisans appear to be more loyal than government partisans, who seem inclined to vote against a president from their preferred party if this president fails to

[62] I am using the July pre-election survey because Lived Poverty was not inquired in the October survey.
[63] The survey's margin of error is 2.5%. N=2400

deliver developmental progress.

The crisis of 2014 demonstrates that even groups with a strong leaning towards a particular party are unwilling to tolerate poor performance. At the height of the crisis, considerable percentages of both groups affiliated with the incumbent NDC say they want to punish their allies, including 10% of NDC partisans who indicate to vote against their partisan identity helping the opposition to get to power. Many Ghanaian voters accordingly do clearly not tolerate a disregard of developmental needs, even if the incumbent is a coethnic or a copartisan. It is worth pointing out that this implies that performance concerns are put before prospects for patronage. Interestingly, especially people who experience the fallout of developmental deficits in their personal lives seem inclined to defect from ethnic and partisan allegiances.

An important additional finding is that electoral campaigns in Ghana seem to raise performance awareness among Ghanaian citizens. Performance is a good predictor of vote choices throughout the study, but the link is exceptionally strong ahead of the election. The finding is of high relevance as previous works have indicated that the campaign period fuels the salience of politicised identities such as ethnicity or partisanship at the expense of performance voting (Eifert, et al. 2010, Michelitch 2015). The results here suggest that the higher salience does not interfere with performance voting – at least not in Ghana.

The overall results indicate that Ghana's electoral accountability effectively incentivises political elites to choose universalistic, development-enhancing policies. Given that small margins decide presidential elections, leaders cannot afford to focus on core supporters and disregard the developmental expectations of oppositional groups or vice versa. Clientelist strategies that serve only selected groups are too risky as the empirical potential for performance voting in most groups is sufficient to tip the scale in Ghana's competitive presidential elections. Thus, Ghanaian presidents are likely to pursue programmatic strategies that serve the entire country and maximise national developmental progress (cf. De Mesquita, et al. 2003). Recent evidence of distributional patterns in Ghana backs this assessment. Extensions of the electricity grid, the distribution of solar panels, as well as access to health and education have all been found to be essentially free of clientelist capture (Brass, et al. 2020, Harding 2020b, Briggs 2021).

6.4.2 Uganda: The Absence of Electoral Sanctioning

The second focus country, Uganda, is a semi-democratic regime with a dominant party system. The case represents another typical setup in Africa, where electoral competition is limited but not absent. President Yoweri Museveni came to power in 1986 as a rebel leader and removed constitutional term and age limits to stay in office until today. His party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), has grown from a rebel group into a powerful political organisation that operates much like a single party, sometimes indistinguishable from the state. Allegations of opposition intimidation are common (Abrahamsen and Bareebe 2016).

Still, Museveni must assert himself against electoral competitors.[64] Throughout the observational period, his prime challenger was Kizza Besigye, an NRM renegade who turned his back on the organisation in 1999, accusing the movement of authoritarian rule and kleptocracy. In 2001, he ran as an independent candidate. After the reintroduction of multi-party politics in 2005, he established the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) as a second major party in Uganda. More than 95% of the popular vote in all presidential elections between 2001 and 2016 went either to Museveni or Besigye.

However, analysts are sceptical regarding electoral accountability in Uganda. One reason is ethnic voting. Carlson (2015) reported that people are rather willing to tolerate poor performance than cast a ballot for a non-coethnic candidate. Another concern is campaign clientelism by the dominant NRM party (Vokes 2012, Whitfield, et al. 2015: 172f), possibly in tandem with systematic intimidation (Rauschenbach and Paula 2019). Ugandans may also blame bureaucrats instead of the president for dissatisfying developmental outcomes (Martin and Raffler 2020), partly because Museveni and the NRM still capitalise on a liberation movement narrative. However, two experimental studies found that people defy ethnic and partisan preferences when aware of substandard political management (Conroy-Krutz 2012, Platas and Raffler 2021). If so, we should see lower support for Museveni among survey respondents with negative views about his developmental management.

Yet, the results below support the impression that electoral accountability is dysfunctional in Uganda. The handling of developmental affairs seems to have little impact on voter preferences. Initially, I find statistical associations between performance and vote choice in the national sample. However, none of the ethnic and partisan groups under scrutiny show notable retrospective voting. Within-group variation in voting intentions is simply not attributable to performance perception. The overall picture suggests that electoral pressures for developmental improvements on Museveni are too low to incentivise a programmatic strategy for national progress. Uganda, thereby, represents a stark contrast to Ghana.

Before turning to the individual-level results, a brief look at political and economic time trends along the observation period. Figure 6-9 plots the outcomes of presidential elections between 2001 and 2016. Although Museveni has won all elections by comfortable margins, electoral support has waxed and waned. In 2006 and 2016, the president lost about 10% to his contender Besigye. Even though Museveni's power was never at stake, such losses may create accountability pressures as a warning signal for the incumbent.

[64] While the playing-field is unbalanced (Platas and Raffler 2021), systematic rigging has not been reported regarding the elections in the observational period. That said, recent years saw a constant deterioration of political freedom in Uganda. Since 2014, Freedom House has changed the status from partly free to unfree, and the 2021' election, which saw popular musician Robert Ssentamu (a.k.a. Bobi Wine) running against Museveni, was surrounded by more substantive allegations of rigging.

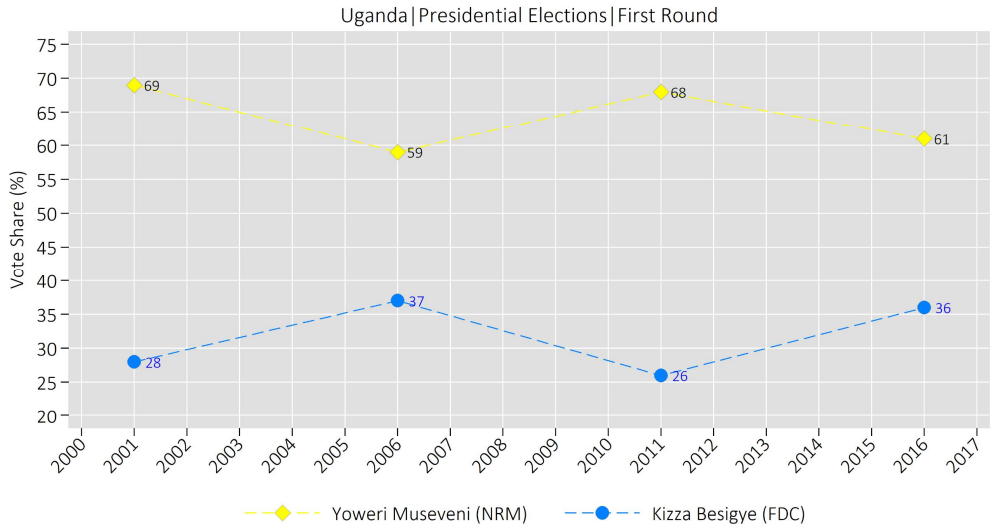

Figure 6-9: Presidential Election Results in Uganda. First Round.

Developmental progress has also varied over time. The top plots in Figure 6-10 show GDP growth and the poverty ratio. Throughout the 2000s, Uganda did well, growing at high rates of up to 8%. The share of people living on less than $1.90 a day also declined steadily from 67% in 1999 to 36% in 2000. After 2012, however, growth slowed down, and the poverty headcount went up to 42% again by 2016.[65] The downtrend is partly reflected in this study's survey data, as revealed by the two bottom plots. Average performance perceptions are lowest in the 2012 Afrobarometer. It is worth pointing out that, notwithstanding potential intimidation, many people express dissatisfaction with Museveni's handling of developmental responsibilities as only two of four issues rated positively on average. Interestingly, the Lived Poverty Index (LPI), does not fully match the rise in poverty recorded in the ratio. A slight increase in the LPI in 2012 is followed by a considerable drop, indicating fewer shortages in basic necessities.

So, do negative performance perceptions translate into votes against Museveni? Table 6-2 presents the regression results based on Equation 1. Each column pertains to one of the six surveys. As can be seen from the first row, performance perceptions are a significant predictor of vote choice throughout the observational period. In the first two waves of 2005 and 2008, the corresponding effects are only significant at the 95% confidence level; in the four most recent surveys, including both pre-election surveys, they reach the 99% level. The coefficients in the first row pertain to about 30% of Ugandans who do not belong to the identity groups, for whom the model calculates separate effects through interactions. For this constituency, variation in vote choices generally seems attributable to performance.

However, it is important to point out that the explanatory power of the performance variable is relatively low in the Ugandan case. This is partly visible from relatively low t-values on the

[65] See: GDP growth (annual %), https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=UG Poverty headcount ratio at $1.90 a day, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.DDAY?locations=UG

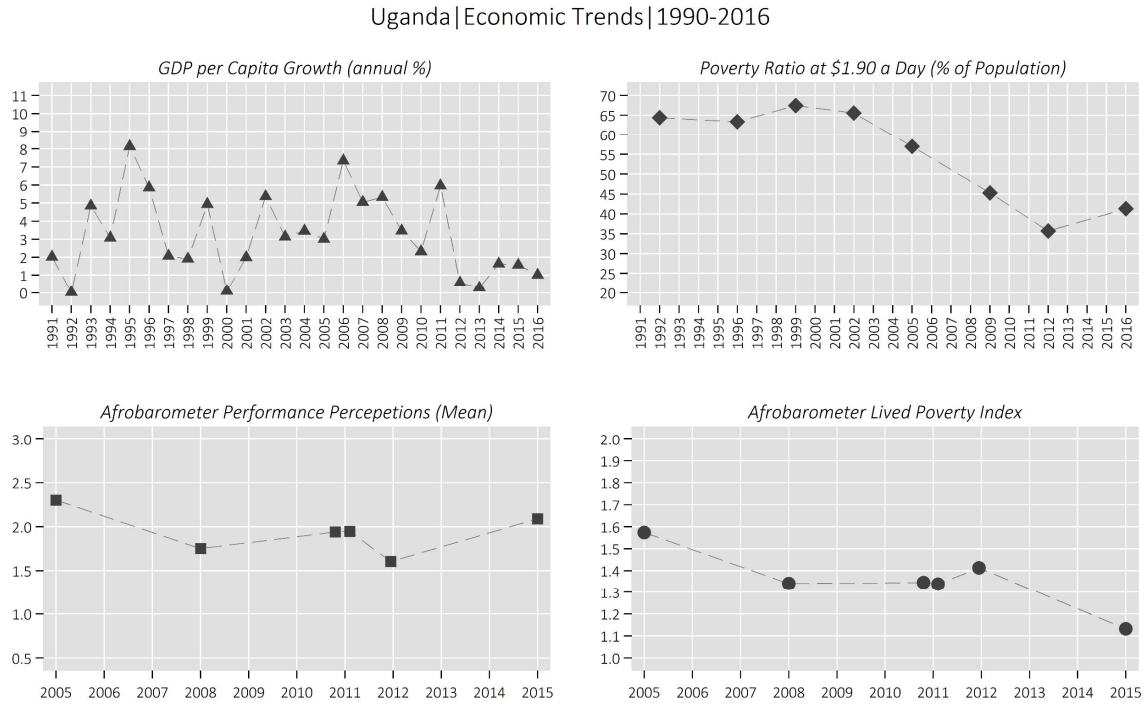

Figure 6-10: Economic Trends in Uganda. 1990-2016. Top plots show GDP Growth and Poverty Ratio as reported by the World Bank. Bottom plots are national summary statistics based on the Surveys in this Analysis. Performance Perceptions are the average number of positive ratings for Museveni on 4 developmental issues. Lived Poverty Index is a composite measure of shortages in basic needs as reported by Afrobarometer respondents. Higher values indicate higher poverty.

performance coefficients in Table 6-2, meaning the confidence intervals are comparatively large. More strikingly, if performance is used as the only predictor variable, the model fit is poor with a Pseudo R^2 between 0.02 and 0.05, indicating that the indicator explains very little of the variation in voting intentions. In Ghana, by contrast, the performance-only models yield Pseudo R^2 values of up to 0.36 (cf. Appendix 6.1).

The highest impact of performance is found in the 2012 Afrobarometer survey, which was carried out roughly one year after the 2011 election. A relatively large coefficient and a high t-value indicate a stronger and more robust relationship than in the other surveys. There is a good possibility that this is a sanctioning reaction. The year 2012 marks a turn to the worse in Uganda's developmental record (cf. Figure 6-10). The negative trend may have made performance a more central concern among Ugandans. This is a hint that developmental drawbacks may still trigger electoral sanctioning, despite an overall weak relationship between performance and vote choice in Uganda.

Turning to identity effects, partisanship, not surprisingly, is a significant and reliable predictor of vote choice. The indicator variables of feeling close to NRM and FDC in table 6-2 are strongly significant throughout the observational period. The numbers on ethnicity, however, are remarkably inconsistent. For Museveni's coethnics, the Munyankole, all coefficients on the group indicator variable are insignificant.

Table 6-3: Uganda, Logistic Regression of Incumbent Vote, Afrobarometer Round 3 – 6 and 2011 Pre-Election Surveys

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)		(6)	
	Round 3 2005		Round 2 2008		PES I Dec 11		PES II Jan 12		Round 5 2012		Round 6 2014	
Government Performance	0.25**	(2.47)	0.22**	(2.15)	0.41**	(2.83)	0.37**	(2.73)	0.53**	(4.49)	0.37**	(3.66)
Ethnicity												
Munyankole	-0.11	(-0.15)	-0.16	(-0.24)	0.16	(0.21)	-0.40	(-0.46)	0.42	(0.94)	-0.59	(-0.91)
IA: Munyankole#Performance	0.46	(1.29)	0.42	(1.44)	0.26	(0.80)	0.52	(1.41)	-0.25	(-1.15)	0.24	(0.78)
Mukiga	1.50	(1.42)	-3.07**	(-3.82)	-0.20	(-0.11)	0.10	(0.13)	-0.31	(-0.35)	-1.49**	(-2.09)
IA: Mukiga#Performance	-0.10	(-0.19)	1.33**	(3.80)	0.45	(0.58)	-0.07	(-0.20)	-0.15	(-0.31)	0.88**	(3.01)
Acholi	-2.16**	(-3.02)	-1.24+	(-1.74)	0.43	(0.38)	-1.58	(-1.18)	-0.70	(-1.05)	3.43**	(4.47)
IA: Acholi#Performance	-0.11	(-0.37)	0.18	(0.57)	-0.89**	(-2.14)	0.05	(0.11)	0.08	(0.22)	-0.86	(-1.29)
Eth Group treated unfair	-1.30**	(-5.99)	-0.48	(-1.61)	-0.56**	(-2.04)	-0.76**	(-2.41)	-0.18	(-0.80)	-0.58**	(-2.30)
Partisanship												
Close to NRM	4.24**	(5.86)	4.25**	(8.78)	4.68**	(9.51)	4.80**	(10.35)	4.05**	(10.44)	4.18**	(8.04)
IA: NRM#Performance	-0.13	(-0.48)	-0.11	(-0.51)	-0.09	(-0.35)	-0.14	(-0.69)	-0.09	(-0.41)	-0.11	(-0.46)
Close to FDC	-2.92**	(-3.96)	-3.25**	(-3.57)	-2.04**	(-3.65)	-2.22**	(-3.26)	-3.13**	(-3.28)	-5.20**	(-4.40)
IA FDC#Performance	-0.30	(-0.92)	0.23	(0.61)	-0.30	(-1.22)	-0.43	(-1.28)	-0.41	(-0.85)	0.57	(1.34)
Demographics												
Youth	0.40**	(1.97)	0.09	(0.42)	-0.29	(-1.19)	-0.07	(-0.25)	-0.30	(-1.40)	0.09	(0.38)
Female	0.40**	(2.07)	0.60**	(2.75)	0.66**	(2.62)	0.23	(0.85)	0.76**	(3.50)	0.89**	(3.84)
Urban	-0.42**	(-2.08)	-0.01	(-0.05)	-0.04	(-0.15)	-0.21	(-0.51)	0.07	(0.25)	-0.69**	(-2.29)
Education: 4 Cat	-0.65**	(-4.58)	-0.53**	(-3.89)	-0.28+	(-1.85)	-0.27+	(-1.79)	-0.28**	(-2.17)	-0.49**	(-3.21)
Lived Poverty Index (LPI)	0.02	(0.13)	-0.01	(-0.08)	0.20	(1.33)	-0.11	(-0.64)	-0.16	(-1.35)	0.46**	(3.51)
Muslim	-0.30	(-1.03)	-0.19	(-0.59)	0.41	(1.33)	-0.37	(-0.84)	0.85**	(2.40)	0.05	(0.10)
Constant	1.22**	(2.73)	-0.49	(-1.18)	-1.07+	(-1.88)	-0.32	(-0.61)	-1.17**	(-2.95)	-0.42	(-0.97)
Observations N	1838		1722		1632		1732		1770		1924	
Pseudo R^2	0.56		0.62		0.67		0.70		0.65		0.63	

In Parantheses: t-values, Model predicts likelihood to vote for the Incumbent: 1=Vote for the Incumbent; 0=Vote for any other Party, + $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.05$

The oppositional Acholi show an incoherent political leaning: Two of six effects reach significance, yet a negative relationship in 2005 is contrasted by a strong positive impact in 2014. Only the effects for Mukiga, coethnics of opposition leader Besigye, are largely in line with expectations, with two of six effects reaching significance indicating that Mukiga is less likely to vote Museveni. Indeed, the voting preferences of the three groups partly contradict assumed leanings, as the next section analyses in detail.

Regarding the demographic controls in Table 6.2, the first aspect to focus on is the behaviour of poor people. Chapter 5 has found robust evidence that poorer people across all identity groups tend to give bad marks to Museveni, but to what extent does that affect vote choice? Looking at the Lived Poverty Index (LPI), we see insignificant estimates with changing signs for the first five surveys, but then a highly significant and positive coefficient in 2014, indicating that higher poverty increases the likelihood to vote Museveni.

The 2014' positive LPI coefficient is puzzling. It seems poorer people express dissatisfaction (cf. Ch 5, Figure 5-5) but still vote for the incumbent. One explanation is that developmental performance is simply not considered in vote choices, which is plausible given the overall weak effects in Uganda. However, we might also have lost dissatisfied poor voters between the two steps of the analysis, as the prediction of vote choice only considers respondents who report a voting intention and excludes people who say they would not vote or refuse to disclose their preference. Explaining abstention is beyond the scope of this study, but a quick look at the distribution of non-responses by poverty level reveals that poor voters often refuse to answer the voting question (cf. Appendix 6.5.5). If non-response is broken down by groups, the tendency becomes even more pronounced.

Rising repression and intimidation may play a role here and explain why the LPI becomes a positive predictor of vote choice in 2014, while retaining a negative impact on performance perceptions (cf. Ch 5: Figure 5-5). Around that time, Museveni's regime generally turned more autocratic (Abrahamsen and Bareebe 2016, Vokes and Wilkins 2016). In 2014, Freedom house changed Uganda's status from partly free to unfree. The vote choice question is probably more sensitive than performance perceptions, and poor people may be more fearful of disclosing their voting intention. In this climate, individuals who refuse to answer are also unlikely to sanction, as it is doubtful that people feel more comfortable in the voting booth (cf. Ferree and Long 2016).

Regarding the remaining controls, urban settings are, not surprisingly, associated with lower support for the incumbent, reflecting more oppositional resources in major cities (Resnick 2012). Moreover, the estimates of education are significant and negative throughout. Accordingly, less educated individuals are more likely to vote for the incumbent. A slightly unusual finding is that women favour Museveni, which may be related to a commitment of the incumbent to include

women in politics dating back to the days of the 'no party' system (Boyd 1989, Goetz 2002)

6.4.2.1 Performance Voting within Ethnic Groups in Uganda

Table 6-3 has found a significant influence of performance perceptions on vote choice, but it cannot be ruled out that the effect is caused by unobserved ethnic biases. A more convincing piece of evidence would be performance voting within ethnic groups. For three Ugandan ethnicities, my models include interaction effects to establish whether performance perceptions lead group members to vote against traditional alignments. All ethnicities are expected to either favour or oppose long-term ruler Museveni and the NRM.[66] Munyankole are Museveni's coethnics and make up roughly 10% of Uganda's population. Mukiga are coethnics of the president's main challenger Besigye and account for about 7% of Ugandans. Finally, the Acholi are long-standing enemies of Museveni, as an Acholi president was ousted when the NRM took power in 1986. The group represents roughly 5% of Ugandans.

To highlight some unexpected patterns, it is appropriate to start with the ethnic group's descriptive statistics displayed in Figure 6-11. First, incumbent support is not fully in line with assumed political leaning, as can be taken from the lines showing Museveni's vote share among the three ethnicities. Against expectations, around 80% of Mukiga (dark grey triangles) say they want to vote for Museveni, although they are coethnics of opposition leader Besigye. A potential reason is that the Mukiga and the Munyankole are related groups,[67] so that some Mukiga may view both major political figures as coethnics. Following Carlson (2015), this should be conducive to performance voting. Another peculiarity is the turnaround of Acholi vote preferences (light squares) at the end of the observational period. The first waves confirm the group's aversion against Museveni but suddenly, in 2014, 73% of Acholi indicate to vote for the president. Only the voting intentions of Museveni's coethnics Munyankole (black circles) fall in line with expectations, consistently showing high support for the incumbent.

Moreover, Figure 6-11 indicates that support for the incumbent does not always follow trends in performance perceptions. The bars give a group's average number of positive performance ratings – a higher bar should accordingly coincide with a higher incumbent vote share. However, this is not always the case. In the pre-election surveys of 2010/11, performance perceptions of Munyankole (black plots) and Mukiga (dark grey plots) are clearly lower than in previous surveys, but support for Museveni among both groups remains high, suggesting that performance does not drive incumbent support around the election period. Likewise, the rising support for Museveni among Acholi (light plots) in the two most recent surveys coincides with relatively low performance ratings. The only sign of electoral sanctioning is found in 2012, where lower

[66] See Chapter 3 for more details on the identification of relevant ethnic groups in Uganda

[67] It is generally discussed whether the Mukiga and Munyankole should be treated as distinct groups. However, since the ethnic identity is inquired in an open-ended question, the distinction is certainly made by respondents. The groups are thus usually treated as two different groups by researchers (cf. Carlson 2016b).

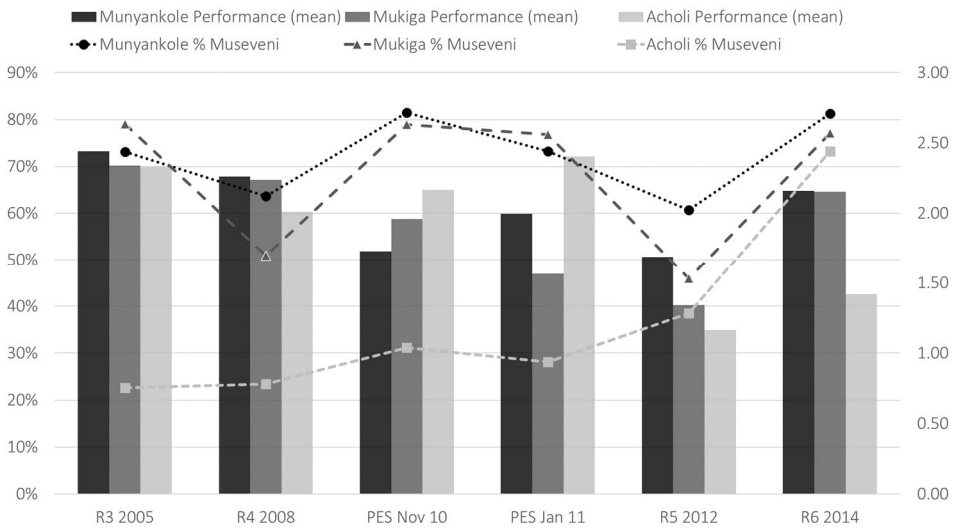

Figure 6-11: Ethnic Groups in Uganda. Performance Perceptions and Voting Intentions over Time. Lines with markers (left scale) show the percentages of group members who indicate to vote for Museveni. Bars (right scale) show the average number of positive ratings for the government in 4 developmental key areas.

incumbent support among Munyankole and Mukiga coincides with poor performance ratings. The averages over time, however, may be deceptive, as they cannot disclose individual-level motivations.

To investigate whether performance perceptions predict vote choices within Uganda's ethnic groups, Figure 6-12 presents the Average Marginal Effects (AME) for the three ethnicities. The results are calculated based on the regression results of Table 6-2. The value on the y-axis reflects how a one-unit increase in performance perceptions on average changes the likelihood to vote for incumbent Museveni. The x-axis sorts the effects from the different surveys by date. The vertical bars are 95% confidence intervals.

The results suggest that performance hardly affects the voting behaviour of Uganda's ethnic groups. 11 of the 18 effects are insignificant as the confidence intervals include the 0-line. Those effects that are significant are rather weak. Large confidence intervals indicate a high uncertainty about their true strengths. If the confidence level is raised to 99% (not displayed), only three effects stay significant.

Especially surprising is that the 2012' effects of Mukiga and Munyankole fail to reach significance. The descriptive statistics in Figure 6-12 hinted at electoral sanctioning here, as both groups give poor ratings by both groups are accompanied by a drop in incumbent support compared to previous surveys. However, the insignificant AMEs strongly indicate that the on average lower ratings on Museveni's handling of developmental key areas do not account for the higher share of opposition voters among group members in 2012.

Similarly, the sudden rise in support for Museveni among members of the Acholi ethnic group (cf. Figure 6-11) at the end of the observational period is not attributable to performance perceptions. Insignificant AME's for Acholi in 2012 and 2014 demonstrate that performance

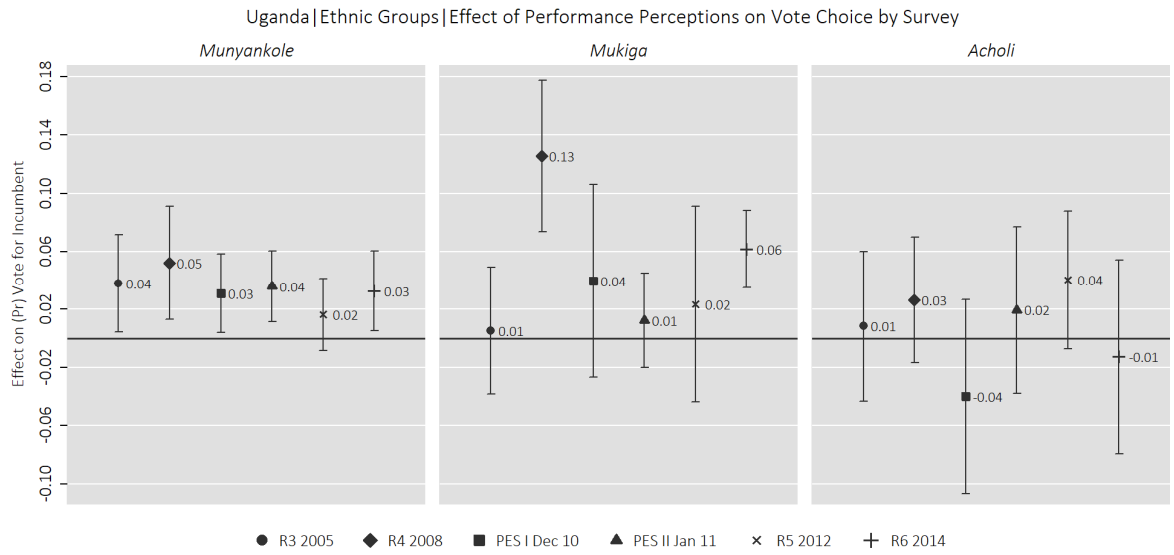

Figure 6-12: Ethnic Groups in Uganda. Effects of Performance on Vote Choice by Survey. Values are Average Marginal Effects and indicate how a one-unit change in performance perceptions affects the likelihood of voting for the incumbent vs. the likelihood to vote for an oppositional candidate. Performance Perceptions range from 0 to 4 and correspond to the number of positive assessments across four developmental key areas. Error bars show 95% confidence intervals. The effects are calculated based on the logit equations from Table 6-2 at the observed values of the remaining variables.

perceptions do not account for Museveni's unexpected popularity among Acholi at the end of the observational period. It remains unclear why the group's voting preferences change so fundamentally. The most likely explanation is that Museveni has won the group's support through targeted patronage to Acholi leaders, as some documented by some media reports.[68]

The oppositional Acholi generally do not show any reaction to performance. All AME's are clearly insignificant, which is remarkable, given that each wave finds considerable percentages of the subsample defecting from the group's dominant preference. One reason for the null effect may be the low number of observations as Acholi make up only 5% of the Ugandan population. However, I also tested expanding the Group by the Langi people to create a broader category of northern groups, but the results did not change. Developmental performance simply does not predict electoral support by Acholi.

The only robust performance effects for ethnic groups in Uganda are recorded for Mukiga in 2008 and 2014. In the 2008 survey, Museveni's vote share among group members is also one of the highest (cf. Figure 6-11). As it 2008 falls into a time of high growth and poverty reduction, the significant performance effect may indicate a rewarding reaction by Mukiga. The 2014 effect also coincides with a relatively high vote share for Museveni among group members. However, the macro-trends around that time were not especially positive, so that a sanctioning reaction would be more plausible. Although it cannot be ruled out that the trend in Mukiga areas deviated, the positive effect remains suspicious, especially since the 2014 survey seems to

[68] See for instance: "Government builds 54 houses for chiefs in Acholi", in Daily Monitor. 2011. Available at: https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/688334-1160868-amp1v9z/index.html

generally suffer from rising political fear. Given that the other four effects for Mukiga are insignificant, it is reasonable to treat the positive findings as outliers and, in sum, assess accountability pressures from the Mukiga people as low.

Overall, performance effects within Uganda's ethnic groups are weak and unreliable. H2 cannot really be upheld for any of the groups. Although President Museveni's vote share changes considerably over time (especially among Mukiga and Acholi), performance perceptions mostly fail to predict vote choices within the groups. Consequently, the handling of developmental key areas is a negligible factor in the voting behaviour of Munyankole, Mukiga, and Acholi.

6.4.2.2 Performance Voting within Partisan Groups in Uganda

In Uganda, the proportion of people who say they feel close to a party is relatively high. On average, 52% report they identify with Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM), while 12% say they feel close to Besigye's Forum for Democratic Change (FDC). The size of the partisan groups is more volatile than in Ghana. Nonetheless, some recent studies have suggested that partisanship constitutes an independent identity in Uganda (Carlson 2016a, Conroy-Krutz, et al. 2016, Platas and Raffler 2021). As in Ghana, both partisan groups are multi-ethnic and regionally fairly diverse[69].

The regression analysis has identified partisanship as a strong predictor of vote choice, and one would expect to find little performance reactions among people who have a fixed party preference. In Ghana, however, I found that up to 10% of government partisans may vote for the opposition in case of a dissatisfying performance. In the Ugandan datasets, there are also some partisans who report they want to vote against their partisan identities, yet performance perceptions fail to predict who defects.

Figure 6-13 visualises the impact of performance on vote choice for both partisan groups in Uganda. The numbers are the AMEs of performance calculated based on the regression results (Table 6-2), i.e. the estimated average change in the likelihood to vote for the incumbent for a one-unit change in performance perceptions. An effect is significant if the confidence interval visualised by the vertical lines does not include the 0-line.

11 of 12 effects in Figure 6-13 are insignificant. Performance accordingly does not explain the vote choice of those partisans who indicate to vote against their partisan identity. Only in the 2012 Afrobarometer, a narrowly significant effect is found for NRM partisans. As 2012 represents the year with the lowest sample performance perceptions, this may be interpreted as a sign that Museveni could lose some support from NRM partisans in the event of more severe developmental drawbacks. However, the effect is barely significant and tiny. On average, a one-

[69] Regionally, both partisan groups resemble the regional distribution of Uganda's population. Regarding ethnicity the ethnic groups of the Museveni and Besigye are only slightly overrepresented withing NRM and FDC partisans, respectively. See Appendix 1.7 for the ethnic and regional composition of partisan groups.

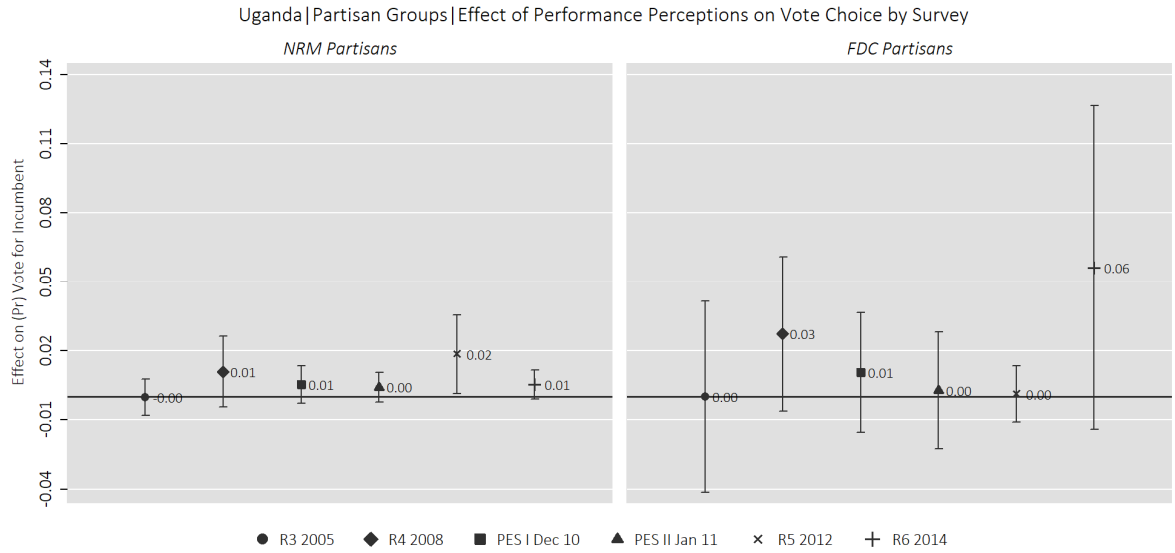

Figure 6-13: Partisan Groups in Uganda. Effects of Performance on Vote Choice by Survey. Values are Average Marginal Effects and indicate how a one-unit change in performance perceptions affects the likelihood of voting for the incumbent vs. the likelihood to vote for an oppositional candidate. Performance Perceptions range from 0 to 4 and correspond to the number of positive assessments across four developmental key areas. Error bars show 95% confidence intervals. The effects are calculated based on the logit equations from Table 6-1 at the observed values of the remaining variables.

unit change is predicted to change the likelihood of voting for the incumbent by 0.02. The predicted probability for NRM partisans with a performance score of 0 is still as high as 0.92 (cf. Appendix 6.4).

For the second partisan group, i.e. respondents who feel close to the oppositional FDC, we find no performance reactions at all. This is consistent with findings from Ghana, which also suggested that oppositional partisans are generally loyal. Performance perceptions and vote choices are not linked. The few FDC and NRM partisans who say they want to vote against their partisan preferences are not attributable to performance perceptions. Overall, H2 is rejected for both partisan groups.

6.4.2.3 Overview: Retrospective Voting in Uganda

To wrap up, Figure 6-14 presents the predicted probability for each group in the January pre-elections survey right before the 2011 election (cf Table 6-2). The lines visualise how the likelihood of voting for Museveni changes along the 5-point performance scale.

The predicted probabilities in Figure 6-14 underscore that the vote choices of most Ugandans are not affected by performance. The purple, yellow, and red lines in the left plot represent the three ethnic groups under scrutiny. For Acholi (purple) and Mukiga (yellow), the lines proceed almost horizontally with overlapping confidence intervals, even at the extremes of the performance scale. Accordingly, group members with all positive ratings are no more likely than those with all negative scores to support the incumbent. The same is true for both partisan groups represented by the blue and yellow lines in the middle plot. Again, we hardly see a change in the probability of voting Museveni along the performance scale.

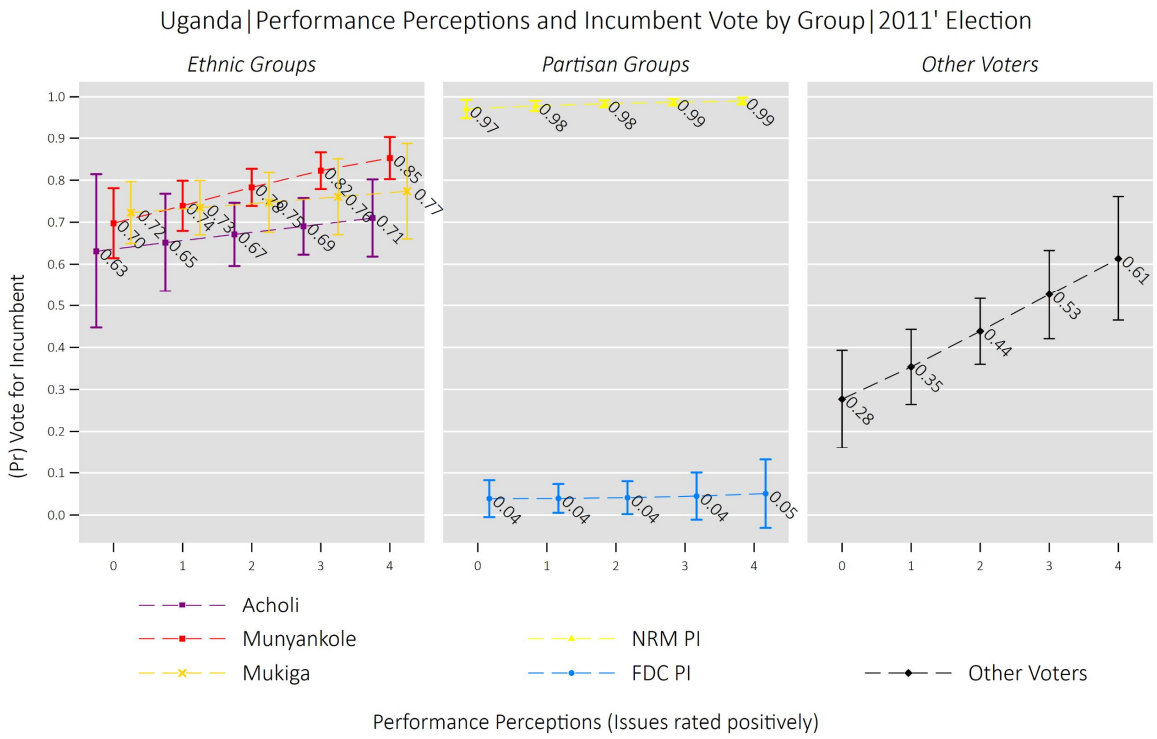

Figure 6-14: Performance Voting in Uganda ahead of the 2011 Election. Lines are predicted probabilities of voting for the incumbent as the number of positive performance ratings for the government increases along the x axis. Other variables are held constant at observed values. The estimates are based on the logit results in Table 5.2. Error bars show 95% confidence intervals.

The only group that shows some responsiveness to performance are the Munyankole, Museveni's coethnics, as the red line indicates a decrease in the probability of reelecting the president with more negative views on Museveni's handling of developmental matters. However, the prediction line also illustrates that statistically significant estimates may have little impact on voting probabilities. The effect in the January 2011 survey was one of the most robust of several narrowly significant performance AME's for Munyankole (cf. Figure 6-12), but the probability change is low. A gap between confidence intervals is only visible at the poles of the performance scale. Appendix 6.4 shows predicted probabilities for all six surveys and confirms the image of largely negligible effects. Significant probability changes for Uganda's ethnic and partisan groups are rare and, if at all, confined to the extremes of the performance scale.

Only for 'other voters', i.e. respondents who do not belong to one of the identity groups, the performance shows a noteworthy effect on voting preferences. In the January 2011 survey, 20% of Ugandans fall into this category. The predicted probabilities show a robust effect, and significant differences are not limited to all positive and all negative ratings. However, a caveat is that unobserved ethnic bias may inflate the effect if minor groups, which are not controlled, over- or underreport government approval (Carlson 2015, 2020). Moreover, compared with Ghana (cf. Figure 6-6), the slope is weaker, and the confidence intervals are visibly larger, which illustrates the generally poorer predictive record of the performance variable in Uganda.

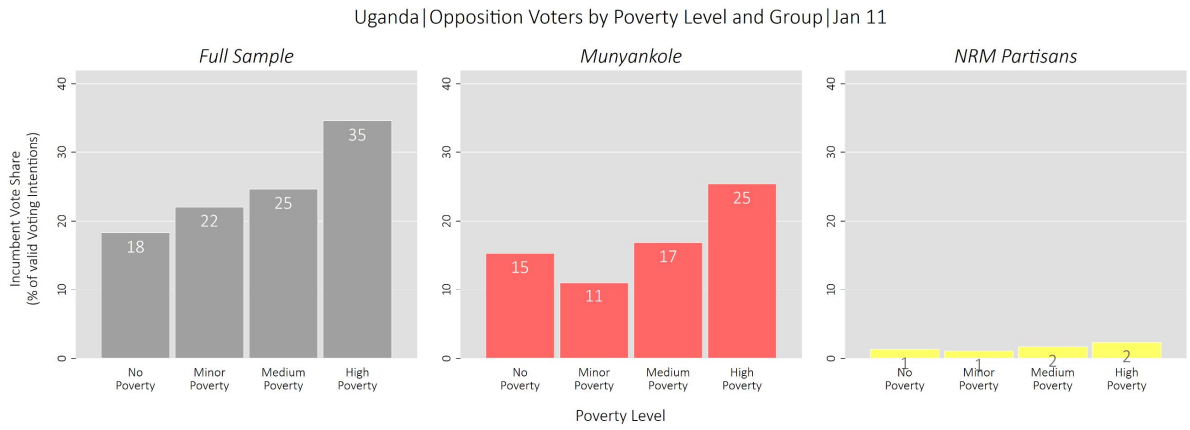

Figure 6-15: Opposition Vote Share by Group and Poverty Level in Uganda. Numbers are percentages of valid voting intentions (excluding Don't know/Would not vote/Refused) saying they want to vote for an oppositional candidate in the Pre-Election Survey of Jun 2011 (PES I). Poverty Level is based on the Lived Poverty Index (LPI). No Poverty: LPI=0, Minor Poverty: LPI<1, Medium Poverty: LPI>1, High Poverty: LPI>2. Only 7% of the sample face no poverty, 31% minor, 38% medium, and 24% high.

Lastly, a look at the voting behaviour of poor people in the 2011 pre-election survey. Chapter 5 has clearly shown that Ugandans affected by poverty tend to express dissatisfaction with Museveni's developmental performance, irrespective of partisan and ethnic allegiances. However, in the prediction of vote choices (Table 6-2), the estimates of the Lived Poverty Index showed weak and ambiguous effects. Figure 6-15, nonetheless, indicates that the few significant effects that we see in Figure 6-14 are partly driven by people confronted with poverty saying they want to vote for the opposition. The bars give the percentages of opposition voters for the full sample and Museveni's ethnic and partisan core supporters. For the first two, the share of opposition voters is clearly higher among poorer people. For NDC partisans, in accordance with the null results regarding performance voting, we see no change.

However, it is important to point out that in Uganda, this pattern is not consistent across surveys. In the 2014 survey, the picture turns around with higher support for Museveni among poor people, as the significant positive coefficient of Lived Poverty in Table 6-2 already indicated. In some Ugandan surveys, we also see a rise of non-responses (mostly "refused to answer") in the voting intentions of poor people, which is a hint that dissatisfied poor people may also defect in Uganda's uncompetitive system.

The overall impression is thus that the government's handling of developmental key issues has little impact on the electoral outcomes in Uganda. It is quite remarkable that the same performance indicator that fared so well in Ghana does so poorly in predicting vote choices in Uganda. What might explain that Ugandans do not hold their president accountable for his handling of key developmental areas?

The notion that ethnic voting is the reason why people fail to hold Museveni to account is not supported by the data. The ethnic groups under scrutiny show a relatively high level of volatility over time. Although performance perceptions do not explain the variation, the results also do

not back the image that ethnic groups have fixed preferences or vote as a bloc.

A likely explanation is clientelism. Voter expectations may be more about patronage than about performance. Concrete hints at clientelism are provided by the results for the Acholi group. The group strongly opposes Museveni at the beginning of the period but suddenly, the president's vote share among Acholi surges to 70% in 2014. Performance completely fails to explain the turnaround, yet there are reports about direct patronage to Acholi chiefs by Museveni. Considering such anecdotes, it is very possible that patronage is a central currency of political competition in Uganda. The fact that rural, poor people with lower education are generally more likely to vote for Museveni may also be interpreted as a sign of clientelism since the Ugandan ruling party seems to primarily target poor voters (Vokes 2012, Vokes and Wilkins 2016).

A second possible explanation for the weak links between performance and vote choice in Uganda is that voters may simply not blame President Museveni for poor developmental outcomes. Museveni is one of the few remaining African presidents who can be viewed as an independence leader, and his NRM party still describes itself as a movement. The "movement legacy" was a common challenge after decolonisation, which involved a personalised idealisation of leaders as icons of the liberation struggle, who are not personally responsible for governmental mismanagement and developmental deficits (Hyden 2010a: 25 ff.). A recent experimental study adds support to this notion by demonstrating that Ugandan voters sometimes rather attribute the responsibility for issues such as the quality of roads to bureaucrats instead of holding politicians to account (Martin and Raffler 2020). Similarly, Carlson (2016a) reports that NRM supporters do not blame the government, even if they express awareness about negative outcomes.

A final point to bear in mind is potential measurement error due to political fear (Carlson 2016b, 2018a). There are some inexplicable inconsistencies in the data, such as the surprisingly high vote share of Museveni among coethnics of opposition leader Besigye. Generally, support for Museveni is exceptionally high in some of the polls, and it seems likely that political fear leads some respondents to overreport incumbent support. The issue, however, does not change the conclusions regarding electoral accountability. First, there are still considerable percentages who dare to say they want to vote for the opposition in the data, so that performance effects should be detectable if they exist. Secondly, one would usually expect wary voters to misreport both performance perceptions and voting intentions, which should produce some performance effects. Measurement error due to political fear is hence unlikely to cover up any performance effects. Finally, the issue of misreporting is by itself a piece of evidence that electoral accountability is not working in Uganda. It is highly likely that political fear also extends to the voting booth, as the NRM may intentionally sow doubts about ballot secrecy, for instance, by deploying partisan 'crime preventers' during the election (cf. Ferree and Long 2016, Gibb 2016).

6.4.3 Comparative Perspective: Performance Voting across Africa

The in-depth study of Ghana and Uganda has highlighted two fundamentally distinct situations. In Ghana, the link between performance perceptions and vote choice is reliable, robust, and traceable within all subgroups of the electorate leading to the overall impression that Ghanaians effectively hold their presidents to account for developmental progress. In Uganda, performance effects are weak and hardly found within ethnic and partisan groups, implying that Uganda's presidents face little if any electoral consequences for their developmental record.

A central contribution of this study is to put the case study results into a comparative perspective. Knowledge in the field of African studies is often derived from single-country case studies. While most publications draw inferences to the whole universe of Africa's new democracies, few verify the validity of their findings across countries. Similar historical trajectories across sub-Saharan states justify generalisations, yet misjudgements may occur if conclusions are drawn from an outlier case.

To compare the impact of performance on vote choices across countries, I first present results from a multi-level mixed-effects (MME) model with random intercepts and random slopes. Such a model allows both the intercept and the coefficient of an independent variable to vary across groups, thereby showing whether cases systematically deviate. Equation 2.1 in section 6.2 gives the formula of the MME model. The group variable is the survey. Altogether, 59 polls from 16 countries are included. For each survey, the model calculates a random intercept (i.e. the deviation in the baseline probability of voting for the incumbent) and a random coefficient for performance (i.e. deviation in the impact of performance).

Table 6-3 shows the results of the multi-level estimation. The left column presents the null model without control variables; the right column gives the results for the full model. Not surprisingly, the effect of the performance is highly significant, meaning the MME-Model generally confirms a link between performance and vote choice for Africa's new democracies. The coefficient is somewhat smaller in the full model but still substantial. The odds of voting for the incumbent are estimated to increase by a factor of $\exp(0.28) = 1.31$ for each 1-unit increase on the 5-point scale of performance perceptions, i.e. a 31% increase. The control variables for ethnicity and partisanship are also significant and in line with expectations.

Moreover, urban-dwelling and education are associated with a lower likelihood of supporting the incumbent, which underlines that Africa's incumbents are generally doing better in rural settings with lower levels of education. Interestingly, people under 35 are estimated to be less likely to support the incumbent. We did not see such an effect of youth in Ghana and Uganda, but across all surveys, the effect is highly significant, which signifies that Africa's younger generations are getting more critical of ruling elites.

The lived poverty variable, which has been under focus because of its robust negative effect on

Table 6-4: Multi-Level Mixed-Effects Logistic Regression of Incumbent Vote

	(1) Null Model	SE	(2) Full Model	SE
Performance Perceptions	0.35**	(0.03)	0.28**	(0.02)
Ethnic Group in Power			0.78**	(0.04)
Oppositional Ethnicity			-0.71**	(0.04)
Ethnic Group treated unfairly			-0.41**	(0.04)
Oppositional Partisanship			-3.04**	(0.04)
Government Partisanship			2.82**	(0.03)
Youth (Age>35)			-0.13**	(0.03)
Female			0.10**	(0.03)
Urban			-0.32**	(0.03)
Level of Education			-0.16**	(0.02)
Muslim			-0.25**	(0.04)
_cons	-0.26**	(0.13)	0.18	(0.12)
Random-effects parameters: Survey				
Std dev (performance _slope)	0.20**	(0.02)	0.13**	(0.02)
Std dev (survey _cons)	0.96	(0.09)	0.83+	(0.08)
Corr (slope, cons)	-0.67**	(0.08)	-0.63**	(0.10)
No. of Lev 2 Groups (Survey)	59		59	
N	70661		70531	

Two-Level Mixed Effects Model with Random Intercepts and Random Slopes; Group Variable: Survey (N=59); Dependent Variable: Incumbent Vote vs. Vote for any Opposition Party; Standard errors in parentheses, + $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.05$

performance perceptions, is not included because it was not asked in the second pre-election survey in Ghana. Since the primary purpose here is to compare performance-vote links from the case studies across all surveys, I decided to keep the survey and drop the variable. Appendix 6.5.3 reports a model for 58 surveys, where the poverty indicator is included. Although lived poverty fails to reach significance, the direction of the average effect is negative. This is another sign that exposure to shortages in basic necessities drives voters towards opposition parties; the common image of uncritical support for incumbents from poorer segments of the society is certainly not backed by the data. Uganda's 2014 survey, where poverty is associated with higher incumbent support, seems to be an exception within my sample of politically stable states.

Looking at the random-effects parameters at the bottom of table 6-3, the standard deviations of both slope and intercept are significant. The latter only reaches the 90% significance level in the second model, but the standard deviation of the performance slopes is highly significant in both models. Accordingly, the effect of performance does indeed vary across surveys. A standard deviation of 0.13 moreover indicates that some surveys deviate sizably from the main effect of 0.28. Finally, the negative slope-constant correlation of -0.63 implies that surveys with a higher baseline probability of voting for the incumbent tend to have below-average effects of performance. This correlation is intuitive as high incumbent support hints at a lack of electoral control. It is, however, essential to point out that the differences in the strengths of performance effects are not merely a consequence of a higher or lower vote share for the incumbent in the data. There are considerable differences in performance effects even among countries with similar

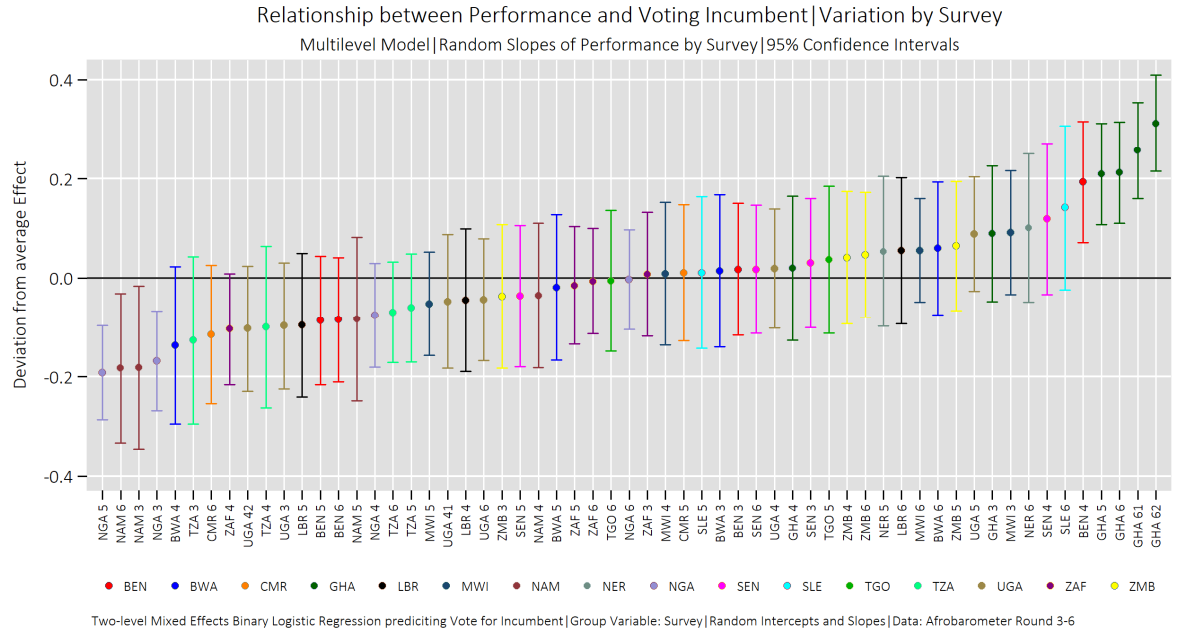

Figure 6-16: MME-Model. Random Slopes of Performance by Survey. The point estimates represent each survey's deviation from the average effect of performance across all 59 surveys. Error bars are 95% confidence intervals.

intercept residuals.[70]

The critical statistic to assess H3 (i.e. the proposition that performance effects are the same across Africa) are the random slopes, which can be thought of as each survey's deviation from the main effect. Put more mathematically, the effect of performance on the log-odds of voting for the incumbent in survey j is $0.28 + u_{1j}$. u_{1j} are the random slopes. The opposing results in Ghana and Uganda have already hinted at considerable differences in the strengths of performance voting across countries, but which of the two cases is more representative of Africa's new democracies?

Figure 6-16 plots the random slopes of performance perceptions across the 59 surveys from 16 countries sorted from lowest to highest. A point above the 0-line signifies a stronger-than-average effect of performance, whereas a point below the 0-lines indicates that the effect is weaker than the average across all surveys. The bars are 95% confidence intervals. The labels on the x-axis give the iso country code and the Afrobarometer survey round.

The random slopes reveal that Ghana's electorate is exceptional in terms of links between performance perceptions and vote choice. In total, five of the 59 surveys show a significant upward deviation from the average effect of performance (evident in the fact that the confidence intervals do not stretch over the 0-line). Four of those are recent surveys from Ghana. The only other significant upward deviation is found for Afrobarometer round 4 from Benin, yet other surveys from Benin do not show a similar deviation. For Ghana, the effect is consistently above average in all polls since 2012. The random slopes for the two earlier rounds (GHA 3 and GHA

[70] See Appendix 6.6.1 for a scatter plot of the random intercepts and the random coefficients of all surveys.

Table 6-5: Significant Average Marginal Effects of Performance, Separate Models for 59 Surveys

	Total	Sig 95	% Sig 95	Sig 99	% Sig 99
Survey	59	42	71%	29	49%
Ethnic Groups	153	55	36%	33	22%
Partisan Groups	118	19	16%	12	10%

4) are also positive, albeit the deviation is not significant. It can be concluded that the relationship between performance perceptions and vote choice is markedly stronger in Ghana than anywhere else in Africa.

The exceptionally strong link between performance and vote choice within Ghana's electorate is also evident in the behaviour of ethnic and partisan groups. To compare partisan and ethnic groups across the continent, I also calculated three-level MME models with random slopes and intercepts for relevant ethnic and partisan groups so that the deviation from the main effect of performance is calculated on the level of partisan and ethnic groups.[71] In both cases, groups from Ghana cluster at the top of the rank order, showing a significant upward deviation from the main effect. Accordingly, the voting intentions of few other ethnic and partisan groups on the continent are as strongly influenced by performance perceptions as those of Ghana's ethnic and partisan constituencies, which underlines the exceptional importance of developmental progress for Ghanaian voters.

The six surveys from Uganda, the second focus case of this study, do not significantly deviate from the main effect. The point estimates are, however, mostly below average, suggesting that the overall weak impact of performance on vote choice that was found in the in-depth study of Uganda is not necessarily the standard in Africa's new democracies.

While MME models do well in highlighting systematic variation, they cannot discern groups with significant effects from groups where performance has no influence.[72] To get a sense of the absolute number of significant performance effects across the 59 surveys, I also estimated a standard logistic regression model for all surveys. Each model was specified based on Equation 1, including interaction effects for politically relevant ethnicities and partisan groups. Analogous to the case studies, I then calculated Average Marginal Effects (AMEs) to investigate whether performance is a significant predictor of vote choice in the sample and the subgroups.

Table 6-5 provides an overview of significant performance effects from the separate models.[73] The rows show the number of significant AMEs for the entire survey sample, as well as ethnic and partisan subsamples. Performance predicts vote choice in the majority of Afrobarometer surveys, reaching the 95% significance level in 42 of 59 surveys. However, in some surveys, it is

[71] Specifically, I have calculated a model with random intercepts at the survey-level (Level 2) and both random intercepts and random slopes of performance at the third level (ethnicity and partisanship). See Appendix 6.6.2 and 6.6.3 for regression tables and random slope plots for ethnic and partisan groups.

[72] Since the main effect and the random slope of performance have independent standard errors, there is no straightforward way to obtain reliable confidence intervals for the full effect (main+random slope).

[73] Appendix 6.7 plots all Average Marginal Effects by surveys, ethnicity and partisan group.

Table 6-6: Performance Voting: Average Marginal Effects by Country

Country	No of Surveys	AME Full Sample			% AMEs reaching 95% significance		
		Average	Min	Max	Full Sample	Ethnic Groups	Partisan Groups
Ghana	6	.036	.021	.047	100%	75%	42%
Senegal	4	.034	.026	.051	100%	33%	13%
Niger	2	.029	.021	.037	100%	33%	50%
Zambia	4	.028	.020	.036	100%	17%	13%
Togo	2	.026	.024	.028	100%	50%	25%
Benin	4	.026	.001	.055	75%	67%	13%
Malawi	4	.025	.014	.041	100%	33%	13%
Botswana	4	.020	.005	.032	75%	8%	0%
Cameroon	2	.019	.006	.033	50%	33%	50%
Sierra Leone	2	.018	.006	.031	50%	33%	25%
Liberia	3	.015	.009	.022	33%	44%	0%
Nigeria	4	.014	.007	.021	50%	33%	13%
Uganda	6	.014	.008	.024	67%	50%	0%
South Africa	4	.012	.008	.015	75%	25%	13%
Tanzania	4	.008	.002	.014	50%	-	25%
Namibia	4	.004	.002	.015	0%	0%	0%

Note: Average Marginal Effects (AMEs) indicate how the probability to cast a vote for the incumbent changes for a one-unit change in performance perceptions. The AME averages the effect across all individuals and considers all variables and interactions of the underlying logistic regression model of vote choice.

not particularly robust as the number drops to 29 at the 99% significance level. At least for the 29 polls with highly significant performance effects - roughly half of the sample - it is reasonable to expect that developmental progress or backlashes have a noticeable influence on election outcomes.

Forty-two relevant ethnic groups are considered across the 16 countries, which leads to 153 group-specific effects across surveys. As can be seen from the second row of Table 6-4, 36% of ethnic group AMEs reach the 95% significance level. Accordingly, a link between performance and vote choice is only confirmed for roughly one-third of observations. Interestingly, certain ethnicities stand out with consistent performance reactions. Beyond the Ghanaian Ewe and Akan, this includes the Hausa in Nigeria, the Lomwe in Malawi, the Adja and Yorouba in Benin, and the Wolof in Senegal. The clustering of significant effects suggests that some groups are systematically more conscious of developmental performance than others. In the case of the Nigerian Hausa, this is even observed in a country with overall weak performance effects.

Fairly low is the value for partisan groups, with performance reaching the 95% significance level in only 19 of 118 subsamples. It is accordingly rare that performance induces Africans who feel close to a party to vote against their party preference. Significant partisan effects occur slightly more frequently among government than oppositional supporters, with government partisans accounting for 11 of the 19 significant results. Generally, the results for partisanship in the cross-country comparison need to be treated as preliminary. The institutionalisation of party systems varies across the continent (cf. Weghorst and Bernhard 2014) and with-it what people mean when they indicate to feel close to a party. Where parties are weak, partisan feelings may reflect short-term orientations indistinguishable from vote preferences.

Table 6-6 shows results for each country. The columns give the number of surveys, the average,

minimum, and maximum sample AME and the share of significant effects. In the upper rows, the table highlights some countries beyond the outlier Ghana where developmental progress is likely to have a relevant impact on electoral outcomes. Especially in Senegal, Zambia, and Malawi, prospects for electoral accountability seem positive. Performance has a significant effect on vote choices across four surveys, and the point estimates of the AMEs reach sizeable values. In Senegal, for instance, the minimum value of 0.026 still suggests that the likelihood of an incumbent vote changes by, on average, 0.13 (0.026*5=0.13) along the 5-point scale of performance perceptions. The value, averaged across all individuals, remains an artificial statistic. Nonetheless, it suggests that performance perceptions may tip the scale in the vote choices of a considerable number of individuals. The consistency of robust effects across four surveys indicates a constantly high level of performance awareness in the mentioned societies.

In Niger and Togo, performance effects are also thoroughly significant and substantial, yet the results are based on only two survey waves, meaning there is less certainty about the consistency of the retrospective voting over time. Nonetheless, especially Niger's electorate seems conscious of performance as the two surveys show high sample AMEs, also ranking relatively high in the multi-level analysis (cf. Figure 6-16). With 50% significant effects for partisan groups, Niger is, moreover, one of the few countries where partisans seem responsive to performance. Finally, Benin ought to be mentioned among those countries with performance voting, although a significant effect is found only for 3 of 4 surveys (75%). However, round 4 from Benin represents the only non-Ghanaian survey with a significant upward deviation in the multi-level analysis and also accounts for the highest AME on record with 0.55. Furthermore, effects for ethnic groups are mostly significant in Benin, indicating high performance awareness among Beninese.

At the bottom of Table 6-6 are some countries with conspicuously weak performance effects. Most notably, Namibia, which is the only case where the separate models find no significance at all, and also one of the few countries for which the MME model has found a significant downward deviation for two of 4 surveys (cf. Figure 6-16). Similarly, two Nigerian surveys stand out with performance effects below average according to the MME model, and the AMEs from the separate models confirm weak effects. That said, the Nigerian Hausa are among those ethnic groups where performance consistently predicts within-group variation in vote choices (cf. Appendix 6.7.2), showing that the emphasis may vary between a nation's sub-groups. In addition, Tanzania, South Africa, Uganda, and Liberia must be added to the list of countries with weak and inconsistent effects.

However, in some countries with the weakest performance effects, certain observations still hint at reactions to poor performance. Particularly interesting are some isolated significant effects among incumbent core support groups, which seem to precede electoral losses. In South Africa, a strongly significant effect for ANC partisans in 2014 (Round 6) may explain losses for the

ruling party in the 2014 and 2019 elections. Similarly, in Nigeria, a significant effect for Igbo in 2014 may be a harbinger of the country's first democratic turnover in 2015, which saw the candidate from the PDP – a party usually drawing strong support from the Igbo - losing office; potentially because of rising performance awareness among Igbo voters.

6.4.3.1 Explaining different Levels of Performance Voting

Do country-level factors explain different levels of performance voting across surveys? The hypotheses H4a, b, and c assume that electoral sanctioning may depend on the level of democracy, economic development and recent growth rates. I add contextual variables and cross-level interactions to the multi-level model presented above to investigate the hypotheses. Before turning to the results, a caveat is in order. With only 57 surveys[74] gathered over just 12 years and an unbalanced sample with different numbers of surveys per country, the results below should be generalized with care. However, they hold important and partly surprising lessons regarding the sample under scrutiny.

Table 6-7 shows three hierarchical MME models. Model 1 includes only the contextual indicators of democracy, Model 2 only the economic variables, and Model 3 all independent variables. A first thing to note is that the random-effects parameters for the slope and the constant in the bottom block of the table remain significant, but the standard deviation of both is lower compared to the models without contextual variables (cf. Table 6-4). Accordingly, the macro-level variables cannot account for the total variation across the surveys but take away some of it.

The results to look at for an assessment of the hypotheses are the cross-level interactions, which indicate whether the country-level variables affect the strength of the performance-vote link across the 57 surveys. A risk of the small sample are influential cases. Therefore, I interpret the effects under consideration of scatterplots that plot a survey's deviation from the main performance effect (as displayed in Figure 6-7) against the predictor variables. The slope residuals from the MME model without contextual effects are the reference because they represent the variation that the cross-level interactions explain. The graphs are displayed in Appendix 6.6.5 and constitute the basis for the references to specific countries below.

For the democracy variables, I find that competitiveness matters most, whereas the overall level of democracy fails to predict the magnitude of performance voting across surveys. The significant cross-level interaction of the victory margin indicates that sanctioning is stronger where elections are tightly contested. By contrast, the polity score does not explain the level of retrospective sanctioning because some south African states with high polity values (Namibia, South Africa, Botswana) exhibit below-average performance effects. Competitiveness can account for the low values in the southern cluster. Moreover, the margin of victory does well in predicting above-

[74] Note that the number has been dropped 59 to 57 because one of two pre-election surveys from each Ghana and Uganda were excluded because the contextual variables do not vary across the pre-election surveys.

Table 6-7: MME Logistic Regression: Cross-Level Interactions

	(1) Democracy		(2) Economy		(3) Full	
Performance Perceptions	0.14**	(0.03)	0.59**	(0.16)	0.24	(0.15)
Ethnic Group in Power	0.78**	(0.04)	0.78**	(0.04)	0.78**	(0.04)
Oppositional Ethnicity	-0.67**	(0.05)	-0.67**	(0.05)	-0.67**	(0.05)
Ethnic Group treated unfairly	-0.41**	(0.04)	-0.41**	(0.04)	-0.41**	(0.04)
Oppositional Partisanship	-3.02**	(0.04)	-3.02**	(0.04)	-3.02**	(0.04)
Government Partisanship	2.81**	(0.04)	2.81**	(0.04)	2.81**	(0.04)
Youth (Age>35)	-0.13**	(0.03)	-0.13**	(0.03)	-0.13**	(0.03)
Female	0.10**	(0.03)	0.10**	(0.03)	0.10**	(0.03)
Urban	-0.31**	(0.03)	-0.31**	(0.03)	-0.31**	(0.03)
Level of Education	-0.16**	(0.02)	-0.15**	(0.02)	-0.16**	(0.02)
Muslim	-0.28**	(0.04)	-0.28**	(0.04)	-0.28**	(0.04)
Contextual Effects						
Combined Polity Score, Pol IV	-0.08**	(0.02)			-0.08**	(0.03)
(Log)Electoral margin of Victory	0.32**	(0.09)			0.29**	(0.10)
(Log) GDP per capita			0.11	(0.12)	0.15	(0.12)
GDP growth			0.06**	(0.03)	0.05**	(0.02)
Campaign Survey					-0.03	(0.23)
Cross-Level Interactions						
Polity Score # Perf Perc	0.00	(0.00)			-0.00	(0.01)
(Log)Margin of Victory # Perf Perc	-0.08**	(0.02)			-0.08**	(0.02)
GDP growth # Perf Perc			-0.01	(0.00)	-0.01**	(0.00)
(Log) GDP per capita # Perf Perc			-0.04+	(0.02)	-0.01	(0.02)
Campaign # Perf Perc					0.05	(0.04)
Constant	1.10**	(0.17)	-0.91	(0.87)	-0.25	(0.86)
Random-effects parameters: Survey						
Std dev (performance _slope)	0.08**	(0.01)	0.11**	(0.02)	0.07**	(0.01)
Std dev (survey _cons)	0.61**	(0.06)	0.77**	(0.08)	0.57**	(0.06)
Corr (slope, cons)	-0.34+	(0.18)	-0.57**	(0.12)	-0.27	(0.20)
No. of Lev 2 Groups (Survey)	57		57		57	
N	67086		67086		67086	

Standard errors in parentheses, Two-Level Mixed Effects Model with Random Intercepts and Random Slopes. Dependent Variable: Incumbent Vote vs. Vote for any Opposition Party, Group Variable: Survey, + $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.05$

average effects in some countries with a relatively weak polity record, including Zambia, Malawi, and Benin. Regular turnovers in the named countries (cf. Table 4-1) signify that minor democratic deficits do not prevent voters from sanctioning their governments.

However, the causal direction of the competitiveness-sanctioning link is difficult to determine. States may be competitive because of performance voting, or performance voting may be more robust because a real chance to vote out an incumbent in tight elections motivates electoral sanctioning. Given that the degree of competitiveness in Africa's democracies is rooted in different transitional trajectories and the historical development of party systems[75], it seems more plausible to assume that competitiveness stimulates retrospective sanctioning and not the other way round. That said, competitiveness and retrospective voting are naturally in constant mutual interaction. Increased performance voting should invariably raise competitiveness and, in turn, motivate further performance voting.

[75] Cheeseman (2015: 93 - 110) draws a direct link between modes of transition and competitiveness. Whitfield (2009) traces Ghana's competitiveness back to the historical genesis of two political traditions. Bleck and van de Walle (2018: 225), in an analysis of turnout, also assume that competitiveness precedes voting behaviour.

Turning to the economy, we find no support for the expectation that retrospective voting is stronger in richer societies (H4B). Instead, negative (but mostly insignificant) estimates for per capita GDP indicate that economic development instead reduces electoral sanctioning. The relationship is mainly driven by the weak performance effects in the relatively wealthy southern African states of Botswana, South Africa, and Namibia, (cf. Appendix 6.6.5). But we can also note that some states with very robust performance effects belong to the least developed countries, including Senegal, Benin, and Niger. Likewise, for the two countries with the lowest sample income, Malawi and Sierra Leone, some surveys indicate strong retrospective voting.

Although unexpected, the absence of a positive impact of GDP per Capita aligns well with the finding from this book that people affected by poverty assess incumbents more critically (Chapter 5) and, as a consequence, are more likely to vote against coethnics and copartisan. Given the immediate impact of public management on vulnerable livelihoods, it is plausible that low development does not prevent people from holding a government to account for its developmental output.

Accordingly, we would also expect a grievance asymmetry (Nannestad and Paldam 1997, Park 2019b), i.e. a negative economic trend should lead to stronger retrospective reactions as it confronts people with rising developmental shortages. A significant negative estimate of the performance-growth interaction in Model 3 of Table 6-7 lends support to this expectation. Indeed, there are several cases where a survey gathered in a year with particularly low growth exhibit the strongest link between evaluations of an incumbent's developmental record and vote choice. The most striking example is Sierra Leone. The West African country was a rising star with a growth rate of more than 15% when the first survey was gathered in 2012. Three years later, at the time of the second survey, the Ebola epidemic caused a GDP drop of 20%. In the boom survey, the point estimate of the random slope is almost 0, and the sample AME does not even reach significance. Contrastingly, the crisis survey has a positive slope residual and a highly significant sample AME (cf. Figure 6-16, Appendix 6.7.1).

Other countries where the most powerful performance effects occur in crisis surveys are Liberia and Ghana. In the latter case, the in-depth perspective in this chapter has documented in detail how an economic crisis in 2014 stimulated sanctioning among ethnic and partisan core supporters of the incumbent. Generally, the significance of the growth interaction in model 3 is also robust against excluding Sierra Leone with its relatively extreme change in growth rates.

Further investigation is certainly needed, but the data presented here provide some evidence that economic downturns may trigger retrospective electoral punishment in Africa's democracies. This is good news for African electoral accountability because it indicates that even leaders who routinely rely on mobilization strategies other than programmatic performance need to ensure they prevent developmental backlashes or risk being sanctioned at the ballot box.

Finally, let us have a quick look at the contextual effects in the middle block. They reveal the impact of the country-level variables on the likelihood of voting for the incumbent. Not surprisingly, both democracy indicators, the polity score and the margin of victory reach significance. A higher level of democracy reduces the chance to opt for the incumbent, and in countries where parties win large, people are more likely to cast a ballot for the sitting president. Although tautological, the last link is worth highlighting as it verifies that the voting intentions reported in the Afrobarometer are in line with real-world election outcomes. An interesting finding is the high significance of the GDP growth coefficients. Accordingly, current growth rates independently affect an incumbent's vote share beyond the individual-level predictors and the random country intercepts. Further research with larger samples would be required. Still, the relationship indicates that a "VP-function" (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2013), which predicts incumbent vote share and popularity by macroeconomic indicators, including growth rates, may also work in Africa.

The essential take-aways from this section are three lessons regarding contextual influences on the magnitude of performance voting within our sample. First, competitiveness seems to be a crucial aspect of democracy, whereas other minor democratic deficits show no adverse effect on performance voting. H4A thus needs to be specified: Not democracy in general, but competitiveness leads to stronger performance voting. Secondly, we find no positive impact of economic development on a society's propensity to hold the governing accountable. H4B has to be rejected for the sample. Against expectations of modernization theory, we see pretty robust performance effects in some of the least developed countries. Thirdly, there are signs of a grievance asymmetry. H4C, which predicts that lower growth raises performance voting, can be maintained against the results. In several countries, crisis surveys exhibit the most substantial performance effects.

6.5 Conclusion and Discussion

This chapter has analysed micro-level links between performance perceptions and vote choice based on two country studies of Ghana and Uganda and a multi-level comparison across 16 countries. Guided by a sanctioning model of electoral accountability, the aim was to evaluate whether it is reasonable to assume that micro-level evidence of retrospective voting translates into relevant gains and losses in presidential elections. To address concerns about the validity of existing survey-based evidence, a special focus has been on performance reactions within relevant ethnic and partisan groups.

Two main contributions arise from the analysis. The first is the nuanced evidence of retrospective voting in Ghana. For the West African nation, the results leave little doubt that presidential elections are a referendum on an incumbent's developmental performance. Particularly impressive is the responsiveness of ethnic and partisan groups in Ghana. Contrary to Carlson (2015) and Adida et al. (2017), the findings show that many members of polarized ethnic groups

opt for non-coethnics in response to government performance. The crossing of partisan and ethnic lines seems not to strategically follow ethnic geography (cf. Ichino and Nathan 2012). In the case of the Akan group, performance effects are robust against limiting the sample to respondents from the group's Ashanti heartland. This indicates that a positive developmental record is put before prospects for regional targeting. It is also worth highlighting that poorer people are overrepresented among those who defect from ethnic and partisan allegiances. The negative performance ratings among people confronted with poverty documented in chapter 5, accordingly, translate into votes for the opposition in Ghana.

The research design can address central objections against previous survey-based studies of retrospective voting (cf. Carlson 2015, 2016b, 2018a). The group-specific results rule out that the association is an artefact of unobserved biases, while the time-series perspective shows that performance effects translate into relevant gains and losses among politicised ethnic and partisan groups. Concerns that surveys fail to capture the behaviour in the ballot booth are also dispelled in the case of Ghana, as the pre-election poll of 2016 predicts the election result almost perfectly at the regional level.

The second critical contribution is a comparative image of retrospective voting pressures across the region. The in-depth study of Uganda deviates sharply from the Ghanaian case. In the datasets from the east African country, performance perceptions are a weak predictor of vote choices. Moreover, none of the ethnic and partisan groups seems to be responsive. Uganda's major ethnic groups exhibit a certain degree of volatility, but variation in vote choices is not linked to performance perceptions. Overall, the results indicate that developmental outcomes have little relevance for the electoral fortunes of long-term ruler Yoweri Museveni.

The stark contrast between Ghana and Uganda exhibits the range of variation across Africa. The comparative analysis considered 59 surveys from 16 countries and revealed that Uganda belongs to a cluster of countries with weak and inconsistent performance effects, which also includes Namibia, South Africa, and Tanzania. Ghana is distinctively the other pole of the spectrum and an outlier. Nowhere else is the link between individual evaluations of an incumbent's developmental record and vote choice equally strong and the responsiveness of ethnic and partisan groups equally consistent. That said, for several other countries, the results indicate that the handling of developmental issues matters on election day. In Benin, Malawi, Niger, Senegal, and Zambia, the association between performance evaluations and vote choice is sufficiently solid and widespread to expect a considerable influence on the electoral success of presidents.

Drawing on cross-level interactions in a multi-level model, the chapter also investigated potential explanations for the differences across surveys. Competitiveness was found to be the most robust predictor of retrospective voting. Where elections are closely contested, links between performance perceptions and vote choice tend to be stronger. Given that the competitiveness of

Africa's systems is primarily rooted in the historic transitional trajectory, I argued that close elections are likely the cause and not the consequence of performance voting. If the system is competitive, minor democratic deficits seemingly do not prevent electoral sanctioning. The Polity Score, a broader democracy indicator, performed poorly in predicting the magnitude of retrospective voting in the sample.

Fears that low economic development makes it unlikely that citizens hold the powerful to account (Lipset 1959, Inglehart and Welzel 2005) are not supported by the distribution of performance effects in the sample. The pre-signs for GDP per capita in the MME model point in the reverse direction due to robust performance effects in some of the least developed societies, including Malawi, Niger, and Sierra Leone. Finally, there are traces of a grievance asymmetry in the data (Nannestad and Paldam 1997, Park 2019b). A weak negative relationship between GDP growth and the magnitude of performance voting indicates that economic downturns raise performance awareness among voters. In several countries, the strongest performance effects stem from surveys collected in years with low GDP growth. The case study of Ghana documented in detail how an economic crisis triggered strong retrospective reactions among core supporters of the incumbent.

The robustness of retrospective voting in some of the least developed countries and the stronger effects in response to economic downturns nurtures the argument that the immediate impact of governmental mismanagement on the livelihoods of vulnerable citizens in low-income countries draws citizen attention to performance. Lower development means that more people are vulnerable to the immediate consequences of governmental (mis)management in everyday lives. In this light, it is unsurprising that we see more substantial performance effects in less developed countries and in times of economic crisis.

Taken together, the findings draw a two-edged picture regarding electoral accountability in Africa. On the positive side, the results from Ghana show that democratic elections have the potential to incentivize development-enhancing policies (Lake and Baum 2001, Harding and Stasavage 2014, Harding 2020b) and relativize concerns that democratic competition rather fuels clientelist targeting (Kramon and Posner 2016, Ejdemyr, et al. 2018, Nathan 2019a, Rauschenbach and Paula 2019). In the Ghanaian case, leaders cannot afford to confine their attention to core supporters, nor is the targeting of swing voters particularly promising. The potential for retrospective voting within each group is sufficient to tip the scale in the country's competitive presidential elections. Recent evidence supports the conclusion that accountability pressures draw governments towards more programmatic strategies in the distribution of developmental public goods (Brass, et al. 2020, Harding 2020b, Briggs 2021).

Although Ghana is an outlier, the consistency and strength of performance effects in several other countries such as Senegal, Malawi, and Zambia indicate considerable electoral feedback on an

incumbent's developmental record. Here, governments are also likely to increasingly seek general development through programmatic policies to deliver developmental progress to as many voters as possible.

On the other side, the analysis highlights countries where performance has remarkably little relevance for voters. Many Ugandans, particularly poorer people, express dissatisfaction with long-term president Museveni's handling of developmental affairs. But performance perceptions are not linked to voting choices, making it unlikely that Museveni's record in the areas of jobs, health, education, and infrastructure has consequences on election day. Similarly, in Namibia, South Africa, and Tanzania most voters seem to tolerate poor governance, given the low predictive power of performance perceptions.

The cross-country differences put into perspective conflicting findings on the state of electoral accountability in Africa. Studies on competitive countries such as Ghana and Zambia lead to optimistic conclusions (Posner and Simon 2002, Weghorst and Lindberg 2013, Harding 2015). In contrast, publications on non-competitive countries such as Uganda reject that Africa's voters exert effective accountability (Carlson 2015, Martin and Raffler 2020). The documented differences echo calls to reduce the scope of generalizations in single-country studies in the African Politics literature (Briggs 2017, Basedau 2020).

An exciting observation to further investigate is that in some cases, performance reactions within incumbent core support groups forego a weak electoral performance. Ghana's 2016 turnover was preceded by particularly high performance effects among coethnic and copartisans of the incumbent. In South Africa, the coefficient for partisans of the governing ANC turned significant for the first time in 2014, providing a potential explanation for substantial losses for the dominant party in recent elections. Similarly, Nigeria's first democratic turnover in 2015 was preceded by a significant performance effect within the Igbo-ethnic group, who traditionally voted as a bloc for the incumbent's political camp. The suspicion arising is that performance reactions within incumbent core constituencies may be an early indicator of electoral punishment in upcoming elections. Afrobarometer researchers should pay special attention to the political mood among coethnics and copartisans of the incumbent.

7 Conclusion

This book was dedicated to the question if African voters hold governments responsible for developmental performance. Based on a sanctioning model of electoral accountability (Barro 1973, Ferejohn 1986), which proposes that voters can ensure that politicians act in their best interest by punishing bad leaders and rewarding good ones, this study has investigated two key conditions. Voters should (1) form unbiased performance perceptions and (2) act upon their judgements by re-electing successful leaders and voting out bad performers.

The analysis has combined two intensive country studies of Ghana and Uganda with a comparative perspective across 16 African transitional democracies. Drawing on altogether 59 surveys, I have investigated how identity and information interact in the formation of performance perceptions and whether performance perceptions influence vote choices in national executive elections. Performance was understood in terms of the management of the most salient developmental issues: Jobs, health, education, and infrastructure. A special focus has been on group-level effects to yield new insights into the political behaviour of specific partisan and ethnic constituencies and understand the sanctioning signal's national makeup. Below, I first provide an overview of the findings and then discuss the implications for academic debates and the state of electoral accountability in Africa.

7.1 Overview of Results

Table 8-1 summarises the findings of the in-depth case studies of Ghana and Uganda. In both countries, the study followed relevant identity groups over a period of more than ten years, drawing on six nationally representative surveys, including two pre-election polls in either case.

The left section of Table 8-1 gives an overview of identity biases and illustrates the higher impact of partisanship compared with ethnicity in both case studies. An influence of identity on performance ratings was found in both countries, but interestingly, partisanship is the dominant driver. In Ghana, ethnicity biases are visible but low compared to the polarisation among partisans. In Uganda, none of the three ethnic groups under scrutiny exhibits a consistent leaning in evaluations of incumbent Museveni. Partisan biases, by contrast, are constantly visible in both countries. Especially supporters of Ghana's two major parties exhibit a deep divide in their ratings of the government's developmental performance, which culminates ahead of the 2016 election. Uganda's partisan camps are less polarised but also constantly over or underrate performance compared to non-partisan voters.

As the third column highlights, leanings in both countries follow the partisan preferences in cases where individuals hold competing party and ethnic identities. The partisan groups under scrutiny are multi-ethnic and include relevant numbers of individuals belonging to ethnic groups associated with opposing political camps. The fact that partisanship consistently overrides ethnicity biases is a clear sign of an independent role of partisan sentiments. In the case of Ghana,

Table 7-1: Overview of Results in Ghana and Uganda

Country	Identity Bias in Performance Perceptions			Does Information reduce Biases?			Voting against Coethnics/Copartisans because of Performance	
	Ethnicity	Partisan	Leaning if IDs compete	News	Interest	Poverty	Ethnic Groups	Partisan Groups
Ghana	+	++	Partisan	-	-	+	+	+
Uganda	inconsistent	+	Partisan	-	-	+	-	-

the high stability of partisan groups in conjunction with the remarkable intensity of biases strongly indicate social-psychological attachments that colour performance perceptions through cognitive processes of motivated reasoning (cf. Campbell, et al. 1960, Greene 1999, Huddy, et al. 2015). Uganda's partisan groups are more volatile and may partly consist of people for whom favouring a particular party is instead a short-term orientation (cf. Fiorina 1981, Garzia 2013).

The middle section summarises findings on whether informed voters exhibit lower identity biases. In both countries, news consumption and political interest show no moderating effect. Newspaper readers who care about public affairs are just as biased as voters who have little interest in politics and do not consume news. However, daily experiences of poverty make a difference. People affected by developmental shortages express dissatisfaction with the incumbent's developmental performance, irrespective of identity. The finding is robust for incumbent copartisans and coethnics in both countries. Even within the most biased sub-samples, people tend to rate the government poorly if they have a higher score in the lived poverty index.

The right section of Table 8-1 gives the results on performance voting. Here, we see the most crucial difference between Ghana and Uganda. Whereas in Ghana, members of all relevant groups vote across ethnic and partisan lines to punish and reward performance, the study found no relevant group-level effects in Uganda. Uganda's ethnic and partisan groups also show a certain level of volatility in voting intentions, but the variation is not attributable to performance perceptions.

The overall impression is quite different for the two cases. In Ghana, the retrospective accountability mechanism seems intact. Performance voting across all relevant identity groups creates a solid national sanctioning signal. Poor voters seem to play a critical role in making sure that leaders are held responsible. They form more critical performance perceptions and also act upon their judgements in the ballot booth, including voting against ethnic and partisan preferences. In contrast, Uganda exemplifies a case of weak accountability. Biases are moderate and hence no major concern, but performance perceptions have astonishingly little influence on vote choices. In this light, it seems unlikely that the handling of developmental key issues has relevant consequences for the electoral prospects of long-term ruler Museveni. Indeed, we also find poor Ugandans expressing dissatisfaction with the government's handling of developmental

matters, but negative perceptions do not translate into relevant vote shares for the opposition.

How do Ghana and Uganda compare against other African countries? To offer a comparative perspective, the study calculated results for 14 additional states. Concerning identity bias, the most remarkable finding of the comparative perspective is a remarkably low prevalence of ethnicity biases. In only three of 16 societies, popular evaluations of the incumbent government reflect clear-cut ethnic divisions. Most of the 42 politically relevant ethnicities do not show temporally consistent prejudices in their performance ratings. Stable biases in favour of coethnic incumbents are rare. Partisan biases are generally more reliably found across countries, but only in one other case, Malawi, they reach a similar level as in Ghana.

When it comes to the impact of performance perceptions on vote choices, the country comparison revealed that both focus cases are not exactly representative in terms of accountability pressures. The strength of performance voting in Ghana is unparalleled in the sample. However, in several other countries, including Senegal, Malawi, and Zambia, performance effects seem sufficiently strong and widespread to expect a consistent influence on election outcomes. Uganda, by contrast, is among the countries with the weakest performance effects, especially regarding the responsiveness of ethnic and partisan groups. Other examples of countries with weak linkages between performance and vote choice are Namibia, South Africa, and Tanzania.

Competitiveness seems to be a crucial factor facilitating performance voting. Close margins of victory in executive elections are a good predictor of the variation in performance reactions across the 16 study countries. As the competitiveness of Africa's political systems is primarily rooted in different transitional trajectories (Cheeseman 2015: 93-110), it seems likely that the prospect of actually throwing out an incumbent raises the salience of developmental management, i.e. competitiveness boosts performance voting. The analysis also found suggestive evidence that voters put more emphasis on a government's handling of its developmental responsibilities in times of economic downturn. In several countries, the most substantial performance effects stem from surveys gathered in years of low growth. Interestingly, GDP per capita and the Polity composite democracy index failed to predict levels of retrospective voting in the sample, which indicates that a weak economy and minor democratic deficits do not prevent electoral sanctioning as long as a basic level of competitiveness is retained. Indeed, some strong performance effects stem from some of the least developed countries, including Malawi, Sierra Leone, and Niger.

7.2 Implications for Current Academic Debates

The results of this study have important implications for scholarly debates on electoral accountability in Africa. Four key contributions ought to be highlighted. First, the study removes doubts about previous survey-based evidence of performance voting (Carlson 2015, 2018a) and strongly indicates that retrospective sanctioning can be effective in Africa, notwithstanding ethnic politics (Posner 2005, Ichino and Nathan 2012) and vote-buying practices (Kramon 2018). By

holding identity constant in group-level results, I was able to show that covariation between performance perceptions and vote choice is not merely a product of unobserved biases. At least in Ghana, considerable numbers of voters defect from ethnic and partisan preferences to sanction or reward presidents for their handling of developmental matters. The finding's external validity is confirmed by the fact that the pre-election poll of 2016 precisely predicts the regional distribution of votes in Ghana's 2016 presidential election.

Given the sanctioning signal's diverse makeup, Ghanaian governments are likely to resort to programmatic distributive strategies that maximise the impact and reach of its developmental investments (De Mesquita, et al. 2003, Stokes, et al. 2013). Electoral accountability is effective in incentivising the pursuit of national development. Although the strength of performance voting in Ghana is exceptional, the comparative perspective highlights some other countries, where linkages between government ratings and vote choices are strong, consistent, and visible at the level of ethnic and partisan groups. In these cases, it is also likely that recurring retrospective signals in elections incentivise political elites to pursue general development.

Secondly, the analysis provides new compelling evidence of independent partisan identities. Some recent publications have already documented partisan patterns in political behaviour in small-scale experiments (Michelitch 2015, Carlson 2016a). This book has revealed a tremendous influence on public opinion. In most of the 16 countries, partisanship has a significant impact on performance perceptions. In Ghana, I document in detail how stable and multi-ethnic partisan groups are extremely polarised in terms of political evaluations. Malawi represents a second case with particularly strong partisan biases. In both countries, the highest polarisation level is observed in surveys gathered close before a presidential election. The findings underpin the notion of a growing relevance of partisanship in African politics (Harding and Michelitch 2019, Mattes and Krönke 2020). As Africa's party systems are getting more institutionalisation, similar polarisation may occur in other contexts.

Based on the in-depth observations in Ghana, it is reasonable to suggest that partisan identities represent stable emotional attachments, as described by social-psychological theories of partisanship (cf. Campbell, et al. 1960, Greene 1999, Huddy, et al. 2015). In fact, the number of people identifying with one of Ghana's two parties is relatively constant over time, but biases skyrocket ahead of elections. The sharp rise on both sides of the partisan divide is explicable only by cognitive processes of motivated reasoning. If it were a matter of patronage, we would not expect such an increase among opposition supporters as parties out of government usually do not have the necessary resources to buy support at a large scale. Moreover, the number of partisans should rise ahead of elections amid campaign clientelism. Likewise, the stability and intensity of partisan biases underline that party attachments are not merely a running tally of past performance experiences (cf. Fiorina 1981, Garzia 2013).

At the same time, the study finds surprisingly few manifestations of ethnic politics in the survey

data. The low incidence of ethnic biases challenges the notion that political competition in Africa is primarily structured along ethnic lines (Posner 2005, Ichino and Nathan 2012). It thereby contributes to a growing body of literature relativising the impact of ethnicity and suggesting it may further diminish due to demographic change. (Dunning and Harrison 2010, Basedau and Stroh 2012, Elischer 2013, Koter 2016, Aryeetey and Aikins 2019). Experimental designs (e.g. Adida 2015, Carlson 2015) may sometimes overestimate the ethnic factor. Participants may be more inclined to express ethnic allegiances under laboratory conditions that use hypothetical settings than in real-world scenarios (cf. Davis 2020).

A third important theoretical contribution is the relevance of poverty in the formation of performance perceptions. The analysis showed that poorer voters tend to give bad marks to incumbents, irrespective of ethnic and partisan allegiances. Accordingly, shortages in the supply of basic needs represent highly relevant information when voters evaluate government performance. The finding highlights an often-overlooked mechanism of information acquisition in Africa and developing settings generally. Poor people obtain no-cost information because they are inevitably confronted with the consequences of governmental management in their everyday lives. In low-income settings, bad and good governance often has immediate and profound effects on the livelihoods of vulnerable citizens and the supply of public service. With rising income, the informational content of daily experiences may decrease. Africans who enjoy relative social security are less vulnerable and resort to private solutions to evade unreliable public services. As a consequence, we find stronger identity biases among citizens who live in relative socio-economic security.

The manifestation of poverty experiences in popular ratings of the government adds a new aspect to a growing literature on information and voting in Africa (Carlson 2015, Casey 2015, Gottlieb 2016, Adida, et al. 2020, Bidwell, et al. 2020, Borzyskowski and Kuhn 2020, Brierley, et al. 2020, Platas and Raffler 2021). So far, scholarly attention was confined mainly to news media and public debates, often accompanied by an implicit assumption that poor voters with low political sophistication and little media access are uninformed. However, the robust moderating impact of poverty experiences on biases suggests that due to direct exposure to shortages and dependence on public service, poor people may have a fairly good idea of how governments are handling developmental responsibilities and are less prone to be misguided by ethnic and partisan appeals. The findings also challenge modernisation views which expect accountability pressures primarily from middle-class voters (Lipset 1959, Moore 1966, Inglehart and Welzel 2005). At least regarding voter behaviour, poor people should not be underestimated as a critical force on election day.

A fourth contribution are the unique insights into cross-country variation. The comparison across 16 countries sheds light on the distribution of performance voting and the magnitude of identity biases across the continent. Most studies in the field of African politics are single-country

studies and small-scale experiments, which are prone to false overgeneralisations (Briggs 2017, Pepinsky 2019, Basedau 2020, Davis 2020). The study highlights that two of the most researched countries, Ghana and Uganda, represent deviant cases, thereby putting into perspective contrary results from both contexts (e.g. Weghorst and Lindberg 2013, Carlson 2015).

Beyond the core contributions, the results in this book may benefit all projects drawing on the Afrobarometer and other public opinion data from the region. On the one hand, the documented prevalence of identity biases is a crucial factor to be considered. While I find a low incidence of ethnicity biases, partisanship substantially skews responses in some contexts. In Ghana, the partisan divide is visible in most evaluative items, including questions on the quality of democracy, political freedom, and vote-buying. Thus, seemingly strong covariation between variables may often be endogenous to partisan-motivated reasoning. Since biases vary across countries, they may also distort country-level summary statistics and rankings. It is recommendable to investigate and control the incidence of biases in datasets carefully. Group-level effects, as used throughout this study, are one way to avoid overstating relationships.

Likewise, the study highlights new promising ways to leverage the power of the Afrobarometer. Some results in Chapter 5 suggest that significant performance effects among incumbent core supporters may be a sign of looming electoral defeat. In Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa, strong performance effects among coethnics/copartisans precede turnovers or substantive electoral losses of the ruling party. Moreover, bias statistics may offer new ways to measure ethnic (and partisan) polarisation. The fine-grained group-level results in chapter 6 indicate that biases sometimes capture ethnic polarisation when all other indicators of ethnic inequality and political fear fail to detect anomalies (cf. Carlson 2016b). It may thus be an interesting additional indicator to inform the complex and contentious task of measuring ethnic politicization (cf. Fearon 2003, Posner 2004a, Vogt, et al. 2015, Houle, et al. 2019).

7.3 Implications for Electoral Accountability in Africa

What conclusions can be drawn regarding the state of electoral accountability in Africa? Do voters punish and reward leaders in a fashion that credibly signals that stealing, poor policy choices, and bad leadership are not tolerated? And is the sanctioning signal strong enough to discourage clientelist targeting and incentivise development-enhancing policies to the benefit of the nation-at-large?

The picture varies across countries, but, at least regarding the Ghanaian case, we can answer both questions in the affirmative. Ghana's presidents cannot afford to confine their attention to core supporters, nor is the targeting of swing voters particularly promising. The potential for retrospective voting within each relevant group is sufficient to tip the scale in Ghana's competitive presidential elections. Presidents are likely to resort to technocratic criteria and allocate resources based on necessity and impact to maximise national developmental progress. Clientelism and favouritism may coexist, but the share of resources distributed programmatically

can be expected to increase sizeably due to democratic competition.

While the strength of performance voting in Ghana remains unmatched, there are other countries, most notably Malawi, Senegal, and Zambia, where performance effects are sufficiently strong, consistent, and widespread to expect a relevant and credible sanctioning signal. But the picture is diverse. At the lower end of the scale is a group of countries where I found few traces of retrospective voting. In Namibia, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda, links between performance and vote choice are presumably too weak to translate into relevant retrospective feedback.

Another positive result is that ethnicity seems not as much of an impediment to electoral accountability as accounts of ethnic politics in Africa suggest. In most societies under scrutiny, popular performance perceptions seem not to be driven by ethnic divisions. On the other hand, the intensity of partisan biases in countries such as Ghana and Malawi raises some concerns. While the transcendence of particularistic ethnic divisions by national party identification is generally a positive development, it also carries risks. The study documents strong partisan-motivated reasoning, preventing considerable shares of voters from forming objective performance perceptions. Moreover, growing polarisation may breed distrust and increase the risk of electoral violence. Party elites may also try to spread misinformation to their supporters, as polarisation generally creates incentives to mobilize by fuelling partisan sentiments and engage in confrontation rather than cooperation (Iyengar and Westwood 2015, Iyengar, et al. 2019).

It is also encouraging that poorer people tend to attribute the developmental shortages they experience to incumbents and clearly express their dissatisfaction irrespective of identity-related political preferences. This is true for coethnics and copartisans of the incumbent in both Ghana and Uganda. In Ghana, people exposed to poverty also account for a disproportional share of defectors, i.e. voters casting ballots against partisan and ethnic allegiances because of performance. The makeup of the breakup is clearly skewed towards poorer segments of the society. This suggests that poor people are a key factor in making accountability work in Ghana. Confronted with existential challenges of underdevelopment in their everyday lives, they vote for development.

The finding challenges the standard image that Africa's lower classes are easy to deceive by vote-buying offers, poorly informed, and tend to support incumbents uncritically. Still, it is not fully surprising as far as presidential polls are concerned. Africa's 'ordinary' citizens are very aware of the responsibilities of governments to create a positive economic environment and supply health and education (Bratton and Mattes 2001, Bentley, et al. 2015). The vast majority of the region's states are highly centralized with a dominant executive branch (Bleck and van de Walle 2018:9). When presidents and their administration fail, the vulnerable poor are the first to experience the fallout. Soaring prices for everyday needs or strikes at schools and clinics are some examples of many immediate effects of bad public management. Likewise, successful management can bring quick relief and tangible improvements.

Several observations across the study suggest that the performance awareness of poverty-affected people is not confined to Ghana. The negative impact of exposure to poverty on evaluations about how an incumbent president is handling developmental matters is consistent across countries. In the second focus country, Uganda, bad marks do not reliably translate into votes against the incumbent. However, in the multi-level analysis, I find some additional support for the notion that poorer people are more likely to cast a ballot for oppositional candidates. More in-depth research is needed to confirm the accountability pressures from lower classes beyond Ghana, but it seems likely. Some of the most substantial performance voting effects were found in countries with very low income levels, including Malawi, Niger, and Sierra Leone.

Finally, a ray of hope even for countries with weak performance voting is a potential grievance asymmetry. Some results of the study indicate that economic downturns and developmental backlashes raise performance awareness. Even leaders of countries with low accountability pressures may accordingly face electoral sanctioning in the event of severe crises. In turn, this means that even in Africa's less competitive states, leaders need to ensure a basic level of developmental stability and progress to avoid electoral consequences.

A general caveat regarding the potential of elections to change the incentive structure of leaders is the quality of electoral institutions. As much as this study has documented the will of citizens to hold leaders to account, flawed elections may oppress the electoral feedback. Systematic large-scale election rigging would inevitably prevent the delivery of any sanctioning signal. Likewise, political intimidation may keep voters from punishing governments. Certain peculiarities in the datasets from the more authoritarian states, Uganda and Cameroon, indicate that the responses of certain groups are driven by fear, which also creates some performance voting effects that are not plausible upon closer scrutiny.

Two contrary trends currently characterise Africa's institutional development. On the one hand, voters are getting more assertive, and transfers of power through the ballot have sharply risen in recent years (Cheeseman, et al. 2017, Carbone and Pellegata 2020: 103). On the other hand, political elites in many places try to revert democratic reform. Several democratically elected governments, including those of Zambia, Uganda, and Tanzania, have in recent years severely curtailed civil liberties and political freedom (Gyimah-Boadi 2019). Zambia is even one of the main autocratizing countries globally (Maerz, et al. 2020), although it looks back on a positive record of electoral transfers of power and shows strong performance effects. Democratic setbacks and rigged elections are thus a major threat to accountability.

Nonetheless, many of the 48 sub-Saharan countries continue to conduct fairly credible elections. Successful and ordered turnovers in Nigeria (2015), Ghana (2016), Liberia (2017), Sierra Leone (2018), and Malawi (2020) illustrate that leaders have difficulties evading electoral control and suggest that the power of incumbency is declining (Cheeseman, et al. 2017). Even in highly authoritarian Gambia, President Yahya Jammeh was removed from office after unexpectedly

losing an election in 2016. Gambia's public sphere was tightly restricted under Jammeh, and seemingly the dictator who had been in power for 23 years thought this was sufficient to secure his power, but amid rising poverty and economic collapse, the opposition received a majority (cf. Hultin, et al. 2017).

And there are reasons for optimism that electoral institutions remain responsive, at least in those countries where previous experiences have established multi-party elections as the norm. The costs for leaders to compromise the electoral process should not be underestimated. Vast majorities of citizens firmly reject authoritarian rule and express a strong commitment to elections (Bratton, et al. 2005, Mattes and Bratton 2016). Too obvious oppression may trigger resistance in the streets. Dependence on Western donors also requires at least a careful balancing between political freedom and autocratic behaviour. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that sanctioning signals from voters continue to find expression in African election results - not in all but in many settings.

On a final note, it is essential to point out that the confirmatory findings on retrospective performance voting in this study do not refute that considerations of ethnic favouritism and patronage maintain an influence on voting in Africa. A fantastic reference to understand the coexistence of performance voting alongside other motives is the recent book by Nic Cheeseman, Gabrielle Lynch, and Justin Willis (Cheeseman, et al. 2021), which illuminates that the political economy of African elections is generally marked by two different registers of political virtue. Civic virtues urge leaders to provide public goods and development to the national community. In contrast, patrimonial virtues prompt politicians to show solidarity with communal identity groups in the form of favouritism and patronage.

The evidence of retrospective accountability presented in this study indicates that, in many presidential elections, a critical share of voters from all segments of society put civic before patrimonial virtue. In parliamentary elections, we may see a stronger emphasis on patrimonial virtues due to direct exchange between voters and candidates. Therefore, the evidence of retrospective sanctioning here does not debunk, for instance, Noah L Nathan's (2019b) insightful account of patronage and ethnic voting in urban slums of Ghana's capital Accra or Eric Kramon's (2018) documentation of vote-buying reactions in Kenya. Given the presence of multiple moralities in African politics, as described by Cheeseman, et al. (2021), such influences may well coexist with effective accountability.

However, this book has shown that the proportion of citizens voting based on performance in countries such as Ghana, Malawi, and Zambia is high enough to change the overall incentive structure. Especially where electoral races are competitive, national leaders are well-advised to pursue a national developmental strategy to send positive signals to as many voters as possible. And the pressure from the ballot box has an impact, becoming increasingly visible in higher growth rates and better service delivery in Africa's competitive democracies (Carbone and

Pellegata 2020, Harding 2020b).

7.4 Topics for Future Research

The study also highlights several interesting topics for future research. Partisanship certainly needs more attention. Affective partisan identification seems to be on the rise and may supersede ethnic political alignments. However, while the study adds strong evidence of independent partisan identities, the observational period is too short to fully confirm a process of transition from ethnic to partisan identification. Future studies should further investigate the trend to establish whether psychological attachments to parties emerge beyond Ghana and Malawi and, most interestingly, whether partisanship systematically dissolves ethnic identification.

A related open question is what causes partisan identification. Given that Africa's parties are relatively young and characterised by rather diffuse ideological profiles, it is hard to tell what generates the strong emotional ties between voters and parties. One promising explanation is a process of 'value infusion', by which party elites build a brand around party history, legendary leadership figures, symbols, and other images that may invoke a long-term emotional connection to supporters (Bolleyer and Ruth 2018). Partisanship may follow similar psychological dynamics like football fandom (cf. Bartle and Bellucci 2009: 9). It has also been suggested that, notwithstanding the lack of ideological division, African parties build their base by representing different occupational sectors (Kim 2018). But so far, we know very little about what drives social-psychological identification with parties in Africa.

A topical question is, moreover, how parties react to the rise of partisan identities. Do they engage in populism (Resnick 2014), or try to manifest and expand their support base through clientelism (Croke 2016)? Moreover, analysts should keep an eye on the risks of growing polarisation. Partisan motivated-reasoning may breed distrust and electoral violence, and party elites may fuel such tendencies by spreading misinformation, as polarisation creates incentives to engage in confrontation rather than cooperation (Iyengar and Westwood 2015).

Another exciting issue to further investigate is a potential grievance asymmetry (cf. Nannestad and Paldam 1997, Park 2019b) in the voting behaviour of African citizens. If it is true that developmental backlashes and economic crises boost performance voting, there would be hope that at least outrightly bad management translates into electoral losses even in countries with weak performance voting. However, this study's database is too small to confirm a general mechanism, and it could be insightful to specifically study how economic downturns affect voting preferences in otherwise non-competitive states.

Generally, it would be interesting to further track potential changes in the performance awareness of voters over time. Most country-specific results of this study indicate that the extent of performance voting is relatively stable over time, but a longer observational period may reveal more progression. Indeed, there are cases where the analysis hints at rising performance

awareness. Nigeria is a good example in this regard. At the beginning of the observational period, performance voting effects in the surveys from Africa's most populous nation are extremely weak. However, in the last poll, the link between ratings for the government's handling of developmental issues and vote choices becomes stronger. A few months after the survey, Nigeria experienced its first democratic turnover.

Given the reliable performance effects in some countries, we also need more knowledge on how governments react to accountability pressures. Consistent sanctioning should raise efforts to provide public goods and expand their reach. Some studies already hint at increasingly programmatic distribution in Ghana (Brass, et al. 2020, Harding 2020b, Briggs 2021). But there may be undesirable consequences as well, for instance, a democracy debt trap. Governments may be tempted to overspend in election years. Some recent research hints at the existence of such political business cycles in Africa (Rogoff 1990, Iddrisu and Mohammed 2019). While most advanced democracies are able to handle rising debts, developing settings bear a high risk of sovereign default. Ghana's debt, for instance, is growing at an alarming rate and depends on high growth rates to be kept under control (Ghana 2018). Likewise, politicians may favour policies that have an immediate effect while disregarding long-term consequences. For instance, a common programmatic appeal is the abolition of school fees, which may cause deficits in education systems (Travaglianti 2016).

A final promising avenue for future research is the study of behavioural differences of people in different socio-economic conditions. The finding that poor voters are more likely to hold politicians to account falls in line with other research, suggesting that middle-class citizens are not especially keen on exerting accountability (Mattes 2015, Nathan 2019a). Interest in the middle-class in Africa has grown recently, but definitions remain contested (Resnick 2015b, Wietzke and Sumner 2018, Mercer and Lemanski 2020, Schotte 2020). One sure thing is that the number of voters living in relative security is growing in most countries, which almost seems like bad news for electoral accountability if exposure to poverty is a key driver of retrospective voting. However, more research is needed to learn how upward mobility shapes political behaviour across the various lived experiences of increasingly diverse social strata in African societies.

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