



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG  
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW

**WORKING PAPERS IN ECONOMICS**

**No 598**

**Clientelism and ethnic divisions**

**Ann-Sofie Isaksson and Arne Bigsten**

**June 2014**

**ISSN 1403-2473 (print)**  
**ISSN 1403-2465 (online)**

# Clientelism and ethnic divisions

Ann-Sofie Isaksson<sup>†</sup> and Arne Bigsten<sup>††</sup>

March 2014

**Abstract:** In light of the empirical evidence on clientelism and ethno-regional favouritism in African politics, the present paper examines the relationship between ethnic divisions and clientelism. Specifically, we ask whether – and what type of – ethnic divisions affect the experiences with, perceived prevalence of, and attitudes to clientelism. Empirical findings drawing on data for more than 20 000 respondents across 15 African countries challenge the dominant role of ethnic divisions for clientelist practices in Africa. Contextual measures of ethnic fragmentation and ethnic identification are found to have limited explanatory power for the concerned clientelism outcomes, and, considering possible subjects of ethno-regional favouritism, the empirical findings point more to the relevance of regional than ethnically based targeting of clientelist transfers.

**JEL classification:** D72, O12, O55

**Keywords:** Clientelism, vote buying, ethnic divisions, Africa

## 1 Introduction

African politics is often described as clientelist. Scholars stress that African rulers tend to rely on the distribution of personal favours in exchange for political support, and that voting is often based on particularized loyalties based in kinship and ethnic ties and to what extent benefits accrue to the own group rather than broad-based policy accountability (see discussion in Wantchekon, 2003; Kimenyi, 2006; Lindberg and Morrison, 2008; Vicente, 2008; and Vicente and Wantchekon, 2009).

Clientelism can be defined as transactions between politicians and citizens whereby material favours – goods or services – are offered in return for political support at the polls (Wantchekon, 2003). As such, politics relying on clientelism focuses on private transfers rather than provision of public goods or projects of national interest. Not only is this likely to

---

<sup>†</sup> University of Gothenburg, Department of Economics; The Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala.

<sup>††</sup> University of Gothenburg, Department of Economics and Gothenburg Centre of Globalization and Development

have significant distributional consequences, it could also discourage a democratic system where citizens vote for broad-based policy accountability rather than narrow personal gain, and where governments formulate development policy that places the long-term common good ahead of short-sighted narrow and local interests. Understanding clientelism is thus important from a democratic, economic and development policy perspective.

In the African context, clientelism is often suggested to have an ethnic dimension. Ethnically based parties tend to redistribute towards their ethnic group rather than provide public goods, the argument goes, and citizens tend to vote for candidates who represent their group, regardless of quality (Glaeser and Saks, 2006; Kudamatsu, 2009; Burgess et al., 2013; Alesina and Zhuravskaya, 2011; Franck and Rainer, 2012; Kramon and Posner, 2012). That some voters are less stringent in terms of holding politicians accountable is suggested to undermine the quality of political candidates and lead to undesirable governance outcomes such as corruption (Banerjee and Pande, 2007). In line with this, a large literature links ethnic diversity to low public goods provision and poor governance more generally (see e.g. Easterly and Levine, 1997; La Porta et al., 1999; Treisman, 2000; Alesina et al., 2003; Miguel and Gugerty, 2005; Kimenyi, 2006; Habyarimana et al., 2007).

Implicit in the above arguments is the idea that clientelism should be more widespread in ethnically divided societies. However, we are not aware of any studies exploring this assumption directly. Against this background, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between ethnic divisions and clientelism. Specifically, we ask whether – and what type of – ethnic divisions affect the experiences with, perceived prevalence of, and attitudes to clientelism. Our empirical findings, drawing on data for more than 20 000 respondents across 15 African countries, challenge the dominant role of ethnic divisions for clientelist practices in Africa. Contextual measures of ethnic fragmentation and ethnic identification are found to have limited explanatory power for the concerned clientelism outcomes, and, considering possible subjects of ethno-regional favouritism, the empirical findings arguably point more to the relevance of regionally than ethnically based targeting of clientelist transfers.

## **2 Clientelism and ethnic divisions**

Above, we described clientelism as the distribution of particularistic benefits in exchange for political support. While the exact definitions vary, clientelism is often described as based on

patron-client relationships involving repeated and contingent exchange (for an overview, see Hickens, 2011). The contingent nature of the exchange between patron and client sets clientelism apart from other forms of particularism that target specific groups (e.g. farmers or poor households) for programmatic reasons (e.g. increasing farm productivity or alleviating poverty). In clientelism, targeting comes with strings attached; politicians distribute benefits to individuals or groups that support or promise to support them, and citizens support politicians who deliver or promise to deliver benefits in return for their electoral support (Hickens, 2011).

With this description in mind, clientelism can take many forms, ranging from outright vote buying involving the distribution of rewards to individuals in exchange for votes before an election, to electoral promises of postelection particularistic benefits (e.g. goods, government jobs, education, health care and infrastructure). Considering that it involves rewards in exchange for political support ahead of elections, vote buying is often characterized as a particular form of clientelism (Kramon, 2011). Yet, vote buying too can come in many shapes, differing in terms of the type of rewards offered and the extent and type of monitoring and targeting of voters (Nichter, 2008).

In this paper, we consider experiences with and perceptions of vote buying, as well as attitudes to clientelism in a wider sense. Below, we discuss the role of credibility for clientelist exchanges, and why ethnic divisions may be relevant in this context.

## **2.1 The role of credibility**

A unifying theme in the literature on clientelism in general and vote buying in particular is the emphasis on the role played by political credibility. First, a political system characterised by low credibility could help explain why politicians turn to clientelism. Keefer and Vlaicu (2008) describe how in an environment where political competitors cannot make credible commitments to broad groups of voters, they resort to clientelist appeals to members of their clientelist network. Their argument can help explain why young democracies, where political reputations are typically less developed, engage in more targeted transfers. In line with this, Bratton (2008) describes how in African politics programmatic promises are often judged as lacking credibility and as being very similar across contending parties, making voters choose among candidates based less on distinctive policy positions than on the candidates' assumed reliability as prospective patrons.

Second, having resorted to clientelism, politicians need to establish credibility in the clientelist exchange. Clientelist exchange – whether it is politicians offering gifts in exchange for promised votes or citizens offering their votes in exchange for promised post-election benefits – requires one of the parties to trust that the other will deliver on their promises (Hickens, 2011). Hence, politicians need to signal that they are credible patrons, as well as define a dependable clientelist network.

With respect to the former, there is first of all most likely an incumbency advantage; with public-sector resources at their disposal ahead of the elections, incumbents are arguably more credible than their challengers in delivering on clientelist promises (see e.g. the results of Wantchekon, 2003, and Collier and Vicente, 2012). Furthermore, political candidates can actively seek to build credibility as patrons. In particular, it has been suggested that politicians use vote buying to signal that they are trustworthy providers of future patronage goods. In a Kenyan field experiment exploring citizen responses to the reported use of vote buying among politicians, Kramon (2011) finds that with voters who reasonably expect that they are on the receiving end of a politician's particularistic transfers – the poor and co-ethnics of the politician – vote buying improves the politician's ratings. With the wealthy and non-coethnics of the politician, i.e. those who might not expect to benefit from such transfers, on the other hand, it does not. Hence, Kramon argues that politicians buy votes because of the information it conveys to voters about their credibility with respect to the provision of targeted goods to poor voters. As vote buying signals credibility as a patron for the poor, it is most effective with poor voters. And, in line with what we discussed above, where the poor have low expectations about politician credibility regarding programmatic promises, do not expect to benefit from such policies, or lack the resources to monitor policy performance, signalling credibility as a patron can be an effective means of building political support. The findings of Jensen and Justesen (2014), who study poverty and vote buying in a large African sample, confirm that poor voters are more likely to be targets of vote buying than wealthier voters.

Turning to the clientelist network, a relevant question is to how broad of a segment of the population politicians can credibly commit and expect the corresponding commitment in return at the polls. A clientelist network is defined precisely by the ability of members to make mutually credible commitments (Keefer and Vlaicu, 2008). This brings us to the role of ethnic divisions.

## **2.2 The role of ethnic divisions**

Since politicians are usually unable to observe how votes are cast, they must develop reasonable predictions about voter behaviour (Hickens, 2011). Ethnic group affiliations could in this context be used as a proxy and as a way to delineate the clientelist network. This could be effective considering that members of ethnic groups share language and kinship ties and are often geographically concentrated just as the goods that the state provides, and that ethnic identities are ascriptive and therefore naturally limit the size of coalitions to compete for resources (Kasara, 2007). Clientelist promises are more credible when there is an expectation that the relationship will be ongoing (Hickens, 2011), and in this context ethnic group affiliations arguably have the advantage that they are perceived as relatively fixed.

Van de Walle (2003) describes how African political parties tend to gain power when they can make a credible claim to represent a certain ethnic, regional or linguistic segment of the population. He argues that even if members of an ethnic community do not have distinct policy preferences, or if the clientelistic patronage networks do not spread across much of the ethnic group, citizens still vote to place ethnic representatives in positions where, they believe, the national pie is divided. Furthermore, the presence of ethnically based clientelism is likely to create a vicious cycle; if other parties adopt appeals to ethnic loyalties and clientelism, it is difficult for a programmatic party to win. Voters will support the clientelist party because they know they will benefit from the programmatic party whether or not they voted for it, while they will get no access to targeted benefits if another ethnic-clientelist party that they do not support wins (van de Walle, 2003).

Hence, targeting their clientelist appeals, politicians arguably use ethnic affiliations as a proxy for voter behaviour. Still, it is not clear what this implies for the relationship between ethnic divisions and the prevalence of and attitudes to clientelism. It is interesting to consider both the contextual (country or local) level and the individual level.

At the contextual level, the presence of politically salient ethnic divisions around which one could organise clientelist networks and ethnically based targeted benefits could reasonably imply a greater prevalence of clientelism. Clientelism being more common could in turn translate into it being perceived as normal procedure, i.e. into greater acceptance of clientelism as a natural part of the political system. On the other hand, a high prevalence of clientelism in divided societies could raise awareness of the democratic problems involved in this practice.

At the individual level, citizens' attitudes to clientelism are, according to the reasoning above, likely to depend on whether they perceive themselves as on the receiving end of clientelist appeals. This could imply that co-ethnics of the politicians in power take a more favourable position toward clientelism. Citizens may expect politicians who provide patronage to channel resources to their co-ethnics. As studies of ethnic favouritism by politicians demonstrate (see e.g. Burgess et al., 2013; Franck and Rainer, 2012; Hodler and Rachky, 2011; Kramon and Posner, 2012), such expectations are not unfounded. Thus, in signalling credibility as a distributor of patronage, vote buying could help build support amongst co-ethnics, who may believe they have a chance of benefitting from future targeted benefits, while reducing support amongst non-coethnics, who may not expect to receive future transfers (Kramon, 2011).

Then again, it is not evident that co-ethnics of politicians in power perceive themselves as benefitting from their clientelist appeals. First, while the clientelist network to which a politician can make a credible promise may be ethnically homogenous, it may still be narrower than the ethnic group – clients may be more likely to be co-ethnics, but most co-ethnics are still excluded from the clientelist network (Keefer, 2010). It might well be that the benefits politicians suggest they give to co-ethnics do not spread beyond a small group of relatives and cronies (Kasara, 2007). Moreover, we cannot be sure that politicians focus their efforts on co-ethnics. With respect to vote buying, the evidence of whether politicians target swing voters, seek to mobilise moderate supporters or reward core supporters is mixed (see e.g. Stokes, 2005; Nichter, 2008; Hicken, 2011). Politicians arguably want to transfer resources to groups with high expected 'rates of return' in terms of political support at the polls, and if voters for some non-instrumental reason prefer seeing their co-ethnics in office, politicians seeking power should have to expend less money and effort in securing their co-ethnics' support (Kasara, 2007). Correspondingly, and as noted by Kramon (2011), vote buying could potentially be a way to compensate for a lack of common ethnic identity, signalling to recipients that the candidate is a credible patron despite the fact that expectations of ethnic favouritism would suggest otherwise. This idea suggests vote buying to be particularly effective with non-coethnics. While, as noted above, Kramon's (2011) own empirical results are more consistent with the earlier argument – that vote buying strengthens support of co-ethnic politicians – the findings of Gutiérrez-Romero (2012) indicate that in the 2007 Kenyan election, reported vote buying was higher among the ethnic groups without a presidential candidate contending in the elections, presumably suggesting that candidates used ethnic affiliations to target potential swing voters.

The above discussion raises some interesting questions. In particular, at the contextual (country or local) level, is clientelism more prevalent and accepted in ethnically divided regions? And at the individual level, is ethnic group affiliation a stable predictor of support for and individual experiences with clientelism? In the next section, we discuss how to approach these questions empirically, and in particular how to measure clientelism and what forms of ethnic divisions are relevant to consider in this context.

### 3 Data and empirical strategy

To investigate the relationship between ethnic divisions and clientelism, we use detailed individual level survey data covering roughly 21 600 respondents from 15 African countries.<sup>1</sup> The data is obtained from the Afrobarometer, which is a comprehensive multi-country survey project collecting data on political and economic attitudes and behaviour of African citizens. As such, it is uniquely suited to study experiences with vote buying and clientelism in a large African multi-country sample. The survey covers a representative sample of each country's adult population<sup>2</sup> and asks a standard set of questions in all countries, thus allowing for cross-national comparisons. Using the third wave of the survey, which was conducted in 2005-2006 and contains key questions on clientelism, we estimate the following benchmark probits for the clientelism outcome  $Client_i$  of individual  $i$ :

$$prob[Client_i = 1] = \Phi(\lambda \cdot IndEthnic_i + \varphi \cdot regEthnic + \mathbf{X}_i \boldsymbol{\beta} + \mathbf{R}_i \boldsymbol{\delta} + \gamma_c).$$

That is, the probability that individual  $i$  has the concerned experience with, perception of, or attitudes to clientelism is taken to depend on individual ethnic affiliation  $IndEthnic_i$ , regional ethnic variables  $regEthnic$ , individual controls  $\mathbf{X}_i$ , and regional controls  $\mathbf{R}_i$ , allowing for country fixed effects  $\gamma_c$ .  $\Phi(\cdot)$  denotes the standard normal cumulative distribution function.

---

<sup>1</sup> Namely Benin, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Cape Verde, Lesotho and Madagascar are excluded since they display essentially no variation in terms of ethnic group affiliations (in Cape Verde, 99.7 percent of the respondents belong to the same language group, and in Lesotho and Madagascar the equivalent figures are 98.2 and 99.6 percent). Moreover, the questions on support for clientelism and ethnic identity are not asked in Zimbabwe, and the co-ethnic with the president variable is not available for Mozambique and Tanzania, meaning that the effective estimation sample varies depending on specification.

<sup>2</sup> For more information about the Afrobarometer sampling procedures and survey methods, see Bratton et al. (2005).



### 3.1 Dependent variables

We use three different dependent variables capturing 1) personal experiences with vote buying, 2) perceived prevalence of vote buying, and 3) attitudes to clientelism in a wider sense. Considering the sensitivity of the subject, approaching it from different angles is necessary.

To capture personal experiences with vote buying, we use the question, ‘During the last election, how often, if ever, did a candidate or someone from a political party offer you something, like food or a gift, in return for your vote?’, creating a dummy variable taking the value one if this happened at least once, and zero if it never happened. When asking respondents about their own experiences with vote buying, there is likely to be a certain degree of under-reporting due to social desirability bias or fear of legal action (see discussion in Kramon, 2011). Reassuringly, the question above does not ask whether respondents in fact accepted money for their vote, but merely if they were approached by someone making them an offer to this effect. Hence, an answer in the affirmative does not mean that the respondent admits to selling their vote. Nevertheless, the fact that the question concerns them personally is still likely to cause some under-reporting.

For this reason, it is useful to also consider an indicator that is more detached from direct personal experiences. To measure the perceived prevalence of vote buying, we use a dummy variable taking the value one if the respondent answers ‘often’ or ‘always’ to the question ‘In your opinion, how often do politicians do each of the following: Offer gifts to voters during election campaigns?’ (and zero if the answer is ‘never’, ‘rarely’ or ‘don’t know’).

Finally, to capture people’s attitudes to clientelism in a wider sense, we use a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent in response to the question, ‘Which of the following statements is closest to your view? A: Since leaders represent everyone, leaders should not favour their own family or group. B: Once in office, leaders are obliged to help their home community’, agrees more with the latter statement.

Looking at Figures A1-A3, we can note that there is substantial country variation in experiences with, perceptions of and attitudes to clientelism. The share reporting to have been offered something in return for their vote ranges from around 2 percent in Botswana to around 42 percent in Kenya. Similarly, while high overall, the shares reporting that it is common for politicians to offer gifts to voters during election campaigns range from 41 percent in Namibia to 94 percent in Kenya. Broadly speaking, the countries with relatively low shares reporting personal experiences with vote buying are also the countries where the perceived prevalence

of vote buying is comparatively low, and vice versa. Kenya stands out as the sample country where vote buying attempts are most prevalent. Support for clientelism, measured in terms of whether respondents consider that politicians are obliged to support their own community rather than society in general, is on the other hand comparatively low in Kenya. In fact, there is seemingly no clear-cut link between clientelism support, which ranges between 8 percent in Malawi and 41 percent in Nigeria, and the prevalence of vote buying.

### **3.2 Explanatory variables**

Our main explanatory variables focus on ethnic divisions. While measures of ethnic divisions are commonly used in the economics literature and in studies of African politics, it is important to note that ethnicity is a complex concept that is difficult to measure. In the present paper, we think of ethnic groups as socially constructed identities originating in a shared culture. While there is not necessarily one right way to specify the set of ethnic groups in a country, the very notion of an ethnic group arguably implies that members and non-members recognise the distinction between groups, meaning that a reasonable list of ethnic groups in a country should depend on what people in the country themselves identify as relevant ethnic groupings (Fearon, 2003).

To proxy for ethnic group affiliations, we use the question, ‘Which [Ghanaian/Kenyan/etc.] language is your home language?’, where respondents answer in terms of their local language. Language is commonly used to capture ethnic affiliations. Presenting the findings of the first round of the Afrobarometer, Bratton et al. (2005, p. 428) argue that it ‘remains the best single marker of cultural identity and is used by Africans themselves as a quick and reliable way to attribute ethnicity’ (see also the discussion in Posner, 2003). The data material allows us to construct roughly 250 ethnic group dummies, which in turn can be used to create ethnic division measures of interest. As outlined above, ethnic divisions both at the contextual (country or local) and individual levels are relevant for our purposes. Hence, we consider two groups of ethnic division variables: 1) contextual measures capturing ethnic fragmentation and ethnic sentiments and 2) individual level variables intended to capture variation in the likelihood of being the subject of ethno-regional favouritism.

With respect to the former, most studies of ethnic divisions focus on ethnic fractionalisation (see e.g. Easterly and Levine, 1997; La Porta et al., 1999; Treisman, 2000; Alesina et al., 2003; Miguel and Gugerty, 2005; Kimenyi, 2006), typically measured by an

index capturing the probability that two randomly selected individuals in a country belong to different ethnic groups.<sup>3</sup> Importantly, however, this measure focuses only on the number and size of ethnic groups, and does not reveal whether people in fact identify themselves in ethnic terms. Put differently, they provide no information on the salience of ethnic divisions. Ethnic dividing lines do not automatically become politicised. On the contrary, empirical findings suggest that the salience of ethnic identities largely depends on political mobilisation and institutional design (Reilly, 2001; Posner, 2003; Miguel, 2004; Eifert et al., 2009). Being interested in the relationship between clientelism – i.e. targeted benefits in exchange for political support – and ethnic divisions, the political salience of ethnic dividing lines is clearly central. Reilly (2001) describes an ethnically divided society as a society that is both ethnically diverse and where ethnicity is a politically salient cleavage. In line with this description, when measuring ethnic divisions at the contextual level we will seek to capture both fragmentation and the strength of ethnic identification.

However, we start by considering the type of ethnic division measure that is most common in the literature, namely an index of ethno-linguistic fractionalisation (ELF). Measuring it at the regional (sub-national province) level gives the probability that two randomly selected individuals in a region belong to different ethnic groups. Next, to get a picture of the salience of ethnic divisions, we consider whether people actually identify themselves in ethnic terms, creating a dummy variable indicating whether the individual reports to identify more in terms of his/her ethnic group than in terms of his/her nationality, as well as a regional variable giving the share of respondents identifying in ethnic terms. Conceivably though, the contextual ethnic division variable that is relevant for clientelist outcomes should, in line with Reilly's (2001) definition of an ethnically divided society, pick up both whether the region is ethnically diverse and whether ethnicity is a politically salient cleavage. Hence, we also consider a multiplicative term capturing both regional ethnic fractionalisation and regional ethnic identities. Looking at Figures A4-A6, we can note that there is considerable country variation in number of ethnic groups and degree of ethnic fragmentation and identification.

At the individual level, a relevant ethnic affiliation measure should, in line with the discussion in Section 2, capture whether an individual belongs to an ethnic group that is close to the ruling elite and thus might expect to be on the receiving end of clientelist transfers.

---

<sup>3</sup> In addition, there are studies focusing on ethnic polarisation in terms of group size (see e.g. Esteban and Ray, 1994; Montalvo and Reynal-Querol, 2005), and more recently on the extent of economic inequalities across ethnic groups (Baldwin and Huber, 2010; Alesina et al., 2012) and geographical segregation of groups (Alesina and Zhuravskaya, 2011).

Following some recent studies (see e.g. Franck and Rainer, 2012), we first consider a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent belongs to the same ethnic group as the country's president. Considering that African politics tends to be highly centralised around the head of government and that the ethnic group of the president is often thought to be the most favoured and politically dominant, this measure should be relevant (see the discussion in Franck and Rainer, 2012). Next, in an attempt to distinguish ethnic from regional favouritism – taking into account that scholars tend to speak of 'ethno-regional favouritism' (see discussion in Kudamatsu, 2009) – we construct a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent lives in the president's region of origin. In additional estimations we also consider the regional share of president co-ethnics, as well as an interaction term between being a co-ethnic of the president and living in the president's region of origin.

Furthermore, we seek to control for other factors – not depending on individual ethnic affiliations – possibly affecting experiences with, perceptions of, and attitudes to clientelism. Just as respondents' ethnic affiliations could affect to what extent they expect to be on the receiving end of clientelist transfers, and to what extent they are exposed to clientelist offers, so could presumably other socio-demographic characteristics. Hence, we include controls for the age, gender, urban/rural residence, level of education, religious affiliation, employment status and economic standing of respondents. Similarly, just as the extent of politically salient ethnic divisions around which one could organise clientelist networks and ethnically based targeted benefits could affect the prevalence of and attitudes towards clientelism, so could reasonably other contextual factors. Hence, we include controls for sub-national regional<sup>4</sup> averages in terms of education, employment, economic standing, rurality (the share of respondents living in rural areas) and religion. In alternative estimations, we instead use region fixed effects. Finally, country dummies are included to control for country variation in average levels of our clientelism outcomes. For variable descriptions and summary statistics, see Tables A1-A2.

### **3.3 Field interviews in Kenya**

To better understand the causal mechanisms involved, we complement the statistical analysis with observations from key informant interviews conducted in Kenya shortly after the 2013 national elections. As noted above, Kenya stands out as the sample country where vote buying

---

<sup>4</sup> The regions refer to the first-order administrative division in a country, in the data codebook denoted 'province or region'.

is most prevalent. Moreover, it has the largest number of ethnic groups and the highest ethnic fractionalisation (here measured at the country level), as well as a relatively high share of citizens identifying themselves in ethnic terms (see Figures A4-A6). As such, and considering the timing of the field visit – shortly after the 2013 national elections – as well as its known history of ethnically based clientelist politics (see e.g. Wrong, 2009), Kenya constitutes a very interesting case. Our interview subjects include senior representatives from public policy and governance research institutes, government agencies working with social cohesion and electoral arrangements, donors, the political science and economics departments at the University of Nairobi, and a former member of parliament.

## **4 Results**

In this section we present the results of empirical estimations of the relationship between clientelism and ethnic divisions. After considering the results of the benchmark estimations for the 15 African countries in our sample, we explore country heterogeneity in the results and present some illustrative field observations from Kenya.

### **4.1 Main results**

To begin with, let us consider the role of ethnic fractionalisation, i.e. the type of ethnic division measure that is most common in the literature (see discussion in Section 2.3). Looking at Columns 1-3 in Table 1, we can note that while, as expected, the marginal effects of higher fractionalisation on the concerned clientelist outcomes are all positive, only in the case of support for clientelism is it statistically significant at the ten percent level.<sup>5</sup> Hence, while there is some indication that a higher regional level of ethnic fragmentation is associated with greater

---

<sup>5</sup> For the sake of brevity, the main results tables present only our key explanatory variables, i.e. individual ethnic affiliations and regional ethnic divisions. However, for a snapshot of the estimated effects of the individual and regional control variables, see Table A3. Among the individual level control variables, we can for instance note that more educated people are less supportive of clientelist policies, perceive vote buying to be more prevalent and more often report to have direct experience with the same. While one might expect politicians offering patronage to target uninformed and less educated voters, this could reflect educated citizens being more exposed to situations where political campaigning takes place as well as more aware of what counts as illicit campaigning strategies. Moreover, and in line with previous findings suggesting that the poor may be more susceptible to vote buying and clientelist appeals (see e.g. Bratton, 2008; Nichter, 2008; Kuenzi and Lambright, 2010; Kramon, 2011, Isaksson, 2014; Lindberg and Weghorst, 2013), the estimations indicate that poorer citizens are more likely to have experienced vote buying and to support clientelist policies. The regional variables, on the other hand, seemingly do comparatively little to explain individuals' experiences with, perceptions of and attitudes to clientelism.

support for clientelism, regional ethnic fragmentation does not stand out as a statistically significant determinant of individuals' personal experience with and perceived prevalence of vote buying. Comparing within countries, and controlling for relevant individual and regional characteristics, the regional level of ethnic fragmentation thus seems to play a limited role for the concerned clientelist outcomes. As noted, however, measures of ethnic fragmentation focus only on the number and size of ethnic groups and provide no information on the political salience of ethnic divisions.

In a next step, we therefore turn to the extent to which people actually identify in ethnic terms – measured at the individual level and as a regional average (Columns 4-6, Table 1). As it turns out, though, whether the individual identifies in ethnic terms does not seem to matter much for the concerned clientelist outcomes. For personal experience and perceived prevalence of vote buying, the marginal effects of the individual ethnic identity variable are far from statistically significant. This is not necessarily surprising as it might be more reasonable to attribute the prevalence of vote buying to contextual rather than individual variation in ethnic identities. With the discussion in Section 2 in mind, one might, however, expect the individual's ethnic identity to matter for the extent to which he or she supports clientelist policies. While the estimation in Column 6 does not contradict this idea, the positive marginal effect of ethnic identification on support for clientelism is not statistically significant at conventional levels.

With respect to contextual variation in ethnic identities, a greater regional share identifying themselves in ethnic rather than national terms is associated with a higher perceived prevalence of vote buying. Compared with someone living in a region where all people identify in national terms, an individual living in a region where everyone identifies in ethnic terms is about 15 percentage points more likely to report that vote buying is prevalent (statistically significant at the ten percent level). Moreover, the regional share identifying in ethnic terms is positively related to personal experiences with vote buying, although the marginal effect is not statistically significant at the ten percent level ( $p=0.13$ ). Overall, however, the individual and regional ethnic identity variables arguably have surprisingly weak explanatory power.

Using a multiplicative term capturing both regional fractionalisation and regional ethnic identities (Columns 7-9, Table 1), in line with Reilly's (2001) definition of an ethnically divided society, the positive marginal effect on the perceived prevalence of vote buying comes out more precisely estimated than when considering regional ethnic identity in isolation. Still, though, it is not significantly related to support for clientelist policies and personal experiences with vote buying.

Finding that regional ethnic fragmentation and individual and regional ethnic identification do comparatively little to explain the concerned clientelist outcomes, let us instead turn to specific ethnic affiliations. In particular, we are interested in the possible effects of ethno-regional favouritism, and thus whether the respondent can expect to be at the receiving end of clientelist transfers. For this purpose, we consider whether respondents' are co-ethnics with their country's president and whether they live in their president's region of origin (Table 2).

First, we can note that compared with people from other ethnic groups, there is some indication that respondents belonging to the same ethnic group as the president (Columns 1-3) are less likely to have been offered something in return for their vote and to perceive vote buying as prevalent (statistically significant at the ten percent level). To some extent, one might worry that this result is driven by president co-ethnics being more loyal to the regime and thus less likely to reveal information that could reflect badly on the government. However, including a variable to control for attitudes to the government (measured as the share of ten questions on government performance to which the respondent answers that the government handles the concerned issue 'very badly') does not change the result. An alternative, and more substantive, interpretation would instead be that the sitting government counts on the support of co-ethnics and instead targets vote buying efforts to potential swing voters from other groups. This idea, which suggests that ethnic affiliations are used when targeting clientelist offers, but that candidates target members of other groups rather than their own, is in line with the findings of Gutiérrez-Romero (2012) for Kenya and with Kramon's (2011) proposition that vote buying could be a way to compensate for a lack of common ethnic identity.

If co-ethnics of the president are more likely than people from other ethnic groups to be on the receiving end of targeted benefits – as the literature on ethnic favouritism would suggest – one would expect president co-ethnics to be more supportive of clientelist policies. However, if targeting swing voters from other groups is considered to give greater payoffs in terms of securing political support (see the reasoning in Kasara, 2007), and targeted benefits thus do not disproportionately accrue to the own group, the opposite might be true. The estimation in Column 3 suggests no difference between co-ethnics and non-co-ethnics in terms of support for clientelism, either indeed suggesting no systematic relationship between the two variables or possibly masking a heterogeneous effect. Hence, the empirical estimations raise questions on the targeting of clientelist offers – in particular whether candidates focus targeted benefits on core or swing supporters, and whether ethnic group affiliations are used as a proxy to make this distinction.

Indeed, maybe what matters in the distribution of patronage is not primarily people's ethnic affiliation, but rather their region of residence. As noted, scholars tend not to separate ethnic from regional favouritism but rather speak of it jointly, as 'ethno-regional favouritism'. Hence, in Columns 4-6 we instead consider a dummy variable indicating whether the respondents live in the president's region of origin. Again, the results suggest that those belonging to the potentially advantaged group – here those living in the president's home region – are less likely to have been offered something in return for their vote (statistically significant at the ten percent level). And once more, adding the control for government discontent does not change this picture. Moreover, respondents living in the president's home region do not stand out in an equivalent manner in terms of the extent to which they judge vote buying as prevalent. If people base this judgment on, say, media reports on countrywide conditions, this could be seen as further support for the possibility that the difference in reported personal vote buying experience is not driven by government loyalty. However, to the extent that their judgment is based on observations of people in their immediate surroundings, i.e. people who also live in the president's home region, we should not put too much weight on the observed difference in vote buying experiences.

Perhaps most interestingly, though, unlike co-ethnics of the president, who did not stand out from people from other ethnic groups in terms of support for clientelism, the results in Column 6 suggest that people living in the president's region of origin are nine percentage points more likely than people in other regions to support clientelist policies. This finding could be taken to indicate that compared with co-ethnics of the president, people living in the president's region of origin to a greater extent view themselves as likely to be on the receiving end of clientelist transfers, i.e. that regional targeting of clientelist transfers is more prevalent than ethnically based targeting.

Importantly, however, geographical segregation of ethnic groups of course means that there will tend to be an overlap between being a co-ethnic with the president and living in the president's region of origin. Indeed, whereas in the president's region of origin, the average share of president co-ethnics is 46 percent; in other regions the equivalent share is only 21 percent. In an attempt to disentangle these influences, in Columns 7-9 we consider both whether respondents are co-ethnics with the president and whether they live in the president's region of origin. When included in the same estimation, neither of the ethno-regional variables come out significantly related to personal experiences with vote buying or the perceived prevalence of vote buying (both marginal effects are still negative though). Considering support for clientelism, however, it is interesting to note that whereas living in the president's region of



origin is still positively related to clientelism support, co-ethnics of the president are, compared with non-coethnics, actually five percentage points less supportive of the same. A possible interpretation of this finding is that it reflects discontent with clientelist transfers targeted e.g. regionally rather than to members of the ethnic group.<sup>6</sup>

## 4.2 Country heterogeneity in results

As noted, African politics is often described as heavily influenced by ethnically based clientelism, and our sample countries have in common that they are relatively young democracies located in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, it is important to note that they are by no means homogenous, neither with respect to the dependent variables, i.e. the extent to which their citizens experience, perceive and support clientelism (see Figures A1-A3), nor as regards the existence, nature and salience of ethnic divisions (see Figures A4-A6). Hence, it is interesting to consider to what extent the patterns observed in the pooled sample estimations can be observed in the individual countries. Unfortunately, the fact that many of our key explanatory variables are measured at the regional level means that in estimations focusing on the individual country sub-samples, we are restricted by limited degrees of freedom.<sup>7</sup> Running separate regressions for each sample country, we are therefore unable to include the regional controls included in the pooled sample estimations and must interpret the key explanatory variables measured at the regional level with care, taking into account that they will most likely pick up substantial unobserved regional variation.

With this caveat in mind, we run individual country estimations focusing on the composite measure taking account of ethnic fragmentation and ethnic identification, as well as individual level controls (the results are available upon request). In the pooled sample, while the individual ethnic fragmentation and ethnic identification variables did little to explain the concerned clientelist outcomes, this measure was found to be positively related to the

---

<sup>6</sup> In a separate set of estimations (available upon request) we also include a variable giving the share of president co-ethnics in the region. Just as the dummy for being a co-ethnic of the president, this variable comes out negatively related to support for clientelism (and not significantly related to the other two outcome variables). Hence, conditional on whether or not the respondent is a co-ethnic of the president and lives in the president's region of origin, living in a region with a larger share of co-ethnics is associated with less support for clientelism. This could possibly reflect particularly strong discontent with clientelist transfers targeted to the president's home region in other regions with strong representation of the president's ethnic group. Furthermore, running estimations adding an interaction term between being a co-ethnic of the president and living in the president's region of origin (again, the results are available upon request) reveals no significant interaction effect between the two variables and does not change the main results of Table 2, Columns 7-9.

<sup>7</sup> Most of our sample countries are divided into at least ten sub-national regions (in Nigeria and Tanzania the figure is as high as 31 and 26, respectively). However, Uganda and Malawi are divided into only four and three regions, respectively.

perceived prevalence of vote buying. Running separate regressions for each country subsample, it has a positive marginal effect on the perceived prevalence of vote buying in 7 out of 14 countries, and a negative marginal effect in three countries. In line with the pooled sample results, the measure is not to the same extent significantly related with direct experiences with, or support for, clientelism in the individual countries. Equivalent individual country estimations including the dummy for being a co-ethnic with the president and the dummy for living in the president's region of origin, seemingly suggest that the pooled sample result indicating that people living in the president's region of origin are more supportive of clientelism and that co-ethnics of the president are less supportive of the same is driven by relatively few countries. While, as noted, these results need to be interpreted with care, this should serve as a reminder that the pooled sample results do not reflect a homogenous pattern across our sample countries.

### **4.3 Field observations from Kenya**

In Kenya, ethnically based clientelism has received a lot of attention (see e.g. Wrong, 2009). And indeed, all of our Kenyan interview respondents (see Section 3.3) agree that ethnicity plays a major role for voting in the country. Furthermore, the motivation for voting in ethnic terms is reportedly to a large extent instrumental, resting on the assumption that a co-ethnic will be the most reliable patron, i.e. the most likely to deliver on promises of private (and public) goods to the benefit of the ethnic group. As one interview respondent put it: 'Ethnicity is a vehicle, it helps you get what you want'.

At the same time, however, several interview respondents emphasise that the role of ethnic voting needs to be qualified. It is not as simple as everyone votes for a candidate from their own ethnic group. The ethnic landscape is more complex than that, with a multitude of small ethnic groups with no realistic chance of winning an election based on their numbers. Hence, one has to consider group size, and in particular whether groups are large enough to constitute viable ethnic coalition partners. Rather than voting for a member of their own group, voters from small groups will vote for the candidate perceived as most likely to incorporate the smaller group's interests. Furthermore, respondents point out that many people consider proximity rather than ethnicity, believing the candidate will deliver to the home region.

With respect to outright vote buying, most interview respondents claim that it is common for party representatives to hand out cash or goods such as sugar or flour with the instruction

to vote for a certain candidate. While vote buying is illegal, considering the extent of poverty, it is difficult to ask people not to accept gifts. As one respondent noted, what one can do is encourage voters not to let the bribes influence how they vote. After all, the fact that the ballot is secret means that it should be difficult to enforce the agreement on election day. In line with this, interview respondents note that it is common for voters to accept bribes from different candidates. In our empirical estimations on experiences with vote buying, we have no information on the party affiliation/s of the representative/s offering respondents bribes in return for their votes. While it has been suggested that vote buying is more feasible for an incumbent with real resources to spend and that political challengers lacking economic resources are more likely to resort to voter intimidation (Collier and Vicente, 2012), having this information would have allowed for more precise interpretations of the relationship between being a co-ethnic of the president (/living in the president's region of origin) and own experiences with vote buying.

Furthermore, politicians offering gifts is not described as something that is frowned upon among voters, rather the opposite. Among poor people, it could be seen as a sign of generosity, and of politicians being aware of and caring about the needs of its poor voters. It could also be seen as an important signal of the candidate's willingness and ability to provide a continued flow of transfers once elected. There is no mention of ethnically targeted vote buying. However, vote buying is reportedly particularly prevalent in poor areas and informal settlements.

The field interviews also highlight the relevance of considering voter incentives in a wider sense. Our interview respondents stress that bribes are not only used to buy votes in a strict sense, but also to mobilise people, e.g. to take part in campaign activities and to register to vote.<sup>8</sup> This could involve handing out cash or goods like the ones described above to people taking part in large rallies. However, it could also involve items that in the West would be described as campaign merchandise rather than bribes, but which in Kenya are more important due to the level of poverty. As described by one respondent, a campaign t-shirt does not only carry the party logo, it is also a garment for the person to wear. Similarly, respondents suggest that parties use bribes to ensure that voters from their strongholds actually register to vote, and correspondingly, that illegitimate practices (e.g. buying voter

---

<sup>8</sup> In the empirical analysis above, one dependent variable (*Experience*) captures experiences with vote buying in the strict sense of having been offered something 'in return for your vote'. Our second dependent variable (*Prevalence*) is broader, however, capturing the perception of how common it is for politicians to 'offer gifts to voters during election campaigns', i.e. not necessarily explicitly in return for their vote.

registration cards) are sometimes used to discourage voter registration and voting in the opposing candidate's strongholds.

Kenya is clearly a country where ethnic divisions play an important role in politics. In other African countries, such as neighbouring Tanzania, ethnic groups are not necessarily equally politically salient (see e.g. Miguel, 2004). Yet, the field interviews in Kenya demonstrate that the links between ethnic divisions and clientelist transfers are by no means clear-cut. Regarding ethnic voting to ensure future clientelist transfers, respondents emphasise that the ethnic landscape is complex with many small groups that have no realistic chance of winning an election based on their numbers, and that people may consider coalition partners from different ethnic groups or a candidate's regional proximity rather than their ethnicity. With respect to vote buying, the role of poverty rather than ethnicity is highlighted, and regarding voter incentives in a wider sense, respondents point to targeting of party strongholds rather than of members of specific groups. Considering that these complexities are highlighted in a country known for its politically salient ethnic dividing lines, it is understandable that the links between ethnic divisions and clientelism are far from clear-cut in a large sample including 15 different African countries.

## **5 Conclusions**

The present paper started from two observations: 1) African politics is often described as clientelist in the sense that rulers rely on particularised loyalties and the distribution of personal favours in exchange for political support, and 2) African clientelist networks are commonly suggested to have an ethnic dimension. Ethnically based parties tend to redistribute toward their ethnic group rather than provide public goods, the argument goes, and citizens tend to vote for candidates who represent their group. While these arguments seem to suggest that clientelism should be more prevalent and accepted in ethnically divided societies, we are not aware of any studies exploring these linkages more closely. Against this background, we investigated the relationship between ethnic divisions and clientelism, asking whether – and what type of – ethnic divisions affect the prevalence of and attitudes to clientelism.

The discussion of the need for politicians to establish a dependable clientelist network, and the suggested use of ethnic affiliations as a proxy for voter behaviour to delineate the clientelist network and target clientelist transfers, raised some interesting empirical questions. At the contextual level, does the presence of politically salient ethnic divisions around which

one could organise clientelist networks and ethnically based targeted benefits imply a greater prevalence and acceptance of clientelism? And at the individual level, does the commonly suggested existence of ethnic favouritism in African politics imply that ethnic group affiliation is a stable predictor of support for and individual experiences with clientelism?

With respect to the former, empirical findings drawing on data for more than 20 000 respondents across 15 African countries provide some indication that a higher regional level of ethnic fragmentation is associated with greater support for clientelism, and that a greater regional share identifying in ethnic terms is associated with a higher perceived prevalence of vote buying. A variable capturing both regional fragmentation and regional ethnic identities also comes out positively related to the latter. Overall, however, the regional ethnic fragmentation and ethnic identification variables have weak explanatory power for the concerned clientelist outcomes, as does our measure of individual ethnic identification.

Turning to the possible individual level effects of being the subject of ethno-regional favouritism, somewhat surprisingly, the results indicate that compared with people from other ethnic groups, co-ethnics of the president are, if anything, less likely to have been offered something in return for their vote, and – conditional on whether or not they live in the president’s region of origin – less supportive of clientelism. In an attempt to distinguish ethnic from regional favouritism, in a next step we considered respondents’ regional residence. The results indicate that while people living in the president’s region of origin are also, if anything, less likely than people from other regions to have experiences with vote buying, they are on the other hand more supportive of clientelism in a wider sense. With respect to vote buying, one interpretation of these findings could be that the incumbents in our sample countries in fact did not primarily target vote buying efforts to people from their ethnic group or home region – who might be judged to support them irrespectively – but instead focused on potential swing voters from other groups/regions. The literature on whether politicians attempting to buy votes predominantly target core supporters or swing voters is indeed far from settled. As regards support for clientelism, these findings could be taken to indicate that compared with co-ethnics of the president, people living in the president’s region of origin to a greater extent view themselves as likely to be on the receiving end of clientelist transfers, i.e. that regional targeting of clientelist transfers is more prevalent than ethnically based targeting. Indeed, unlike, say, employment opportunities in the civil service, many potential voter benefits, e.g. public goods and services such as roads, schools and hospitals, should for administrative reasons be more feasible to target regionally.

Overall, the empirical results cast doubt on the idea that there is a close and straightforward relationship between ethnic divisions and the experiences with, perceptions of, and attitudes to clientelism. First, contextual measures of ethnic fragmentation and contextual and individual measures of ethnic identification have little explanatory power. Furthermore, considering ethno-regional favouritism, the empirical findings seemingly point more to the relevance of regionally rather than ethnically based targeting of clientelist transfers. Importantly, however, the results display substantial country heterogeneity, and field interviews from Kenya illustrate a number of complexities that need to be taken into consideration when studying the relationship between ethnic divisions and clientelism.

In general terms, though, the high prevalence of vote buying and the widespread support for clientelist policies reported in this paper call attention to the need to keep the monitoring of electoral practices and the promotion of impartiality in the state apparatus high on the agendas of donors and African governments. While the empirical results challenge the dominant role of ethnic divisions for clientelist politics in Africa, further research is needed on the targeting of clientelist benefits.

## References

- Alesina, A., Devleeschauwer, A., Easterly, W., Kurlat, S., & Wacziarg, R. (2003). "Fractionalization", *Journal of Economic Growth*, 8(2), 155-194.
- Alesina, A., Michalopoulos, I. S. and E. Papaioannou (2012) "Ethnic inequality", mimeo, march 2012.
- Alesina, A. and Zhuravskaya, E. (2011) "Segregation and the quality of government in a cross section of countries", *American Economic Review*, 101(5), pp. 1872-1911.
- Baldwin, K. and J. D. Huber (2010) "Economic versus Cultural Differences: Forms of Ethnic Diversity and Public Goods Provision", *American Political Science Review*, 104(4), pp. 644-662.
- Banerjee A. and R. Pande (2007) "Parochial politics: Ethnic preferences and political corruption", CEPR discussion paper no. 6381.
- Bratton, M. (2008) "Vote buying and violence in Nigerian election campaigns", *Electoral Studies*, vol. 27, pp. 621-632.
- Bratton, M., Mattes. R. and E. Gyimah-Boadi (2005) *Public opinion, democracy, and market reform in Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Burgess, R., Jedwab, R., Miguel, E., A. Morjaria and G. Padró i Miquel (2013) “The Value of Democracy: Evidence from Road Building in Kenya”, mimeo August 2013.
- Coller, P. and P.C. Vicente (2012) “Violence, bribery, and fraud: the political economy of elections in Sub-Saharan Africa”, *Public choice*, vol. 153, pp. 117-147.
- Easterly, W. and R. Levine (1997) “Africa’s growth tragedy: policies and ethnic divisions”, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 112(4), pp. 1203-1250.
- Eifert, B., Miguel, E. and D. N. Posner (2009) “Political competition and ethnic identification in Africa”, *American Journal of Political Science*, 54(2), pp. 494-510.
- Esteban, J-M., & Ray, D. (1994). On the measurement of polarization. *Econometrica*, 62(4), 819-851.
- Fearon, J. D. (2003) “Ethnic and cultural diversity by country”, *Journal of Economic Growth*, vol. 8, pp. 195-222.
- Franck, R. and I. Rainer (2012) “Does the Leader's Ethnicity Matter? Ethnic Favoritism, Education, and Health in Sub-Saharan Africa”, *American Political Science Review*, 106(2), pp 294-325.
- Glaeser, E. L. and R. E. Saks (2006) “Corruption in America”, *Journal of Public Economics*, vol. 90, pp. 1053-1072.
- Gutiérrez-Romero, R. (2012) ”An Inquiry into the Use of Illegal Electoral Practices and Effects of Political Violence”, CSAE Working paper WPS/2012-16.
- Habyarimana, J., Humphreys, M., Posner, D. N. and J. M. Weinstein (2007) “Why Does Ethnic Diversity Undermine Public Goods Provision?”, *American Political Science Review*, 101(4), pp. 709-725.
- Hicken, A. (2011) ”Clientelism”, *Annual review of political science*, vol. 14, pp. 289-310.
- Hodler, R. and P. A. Raschky (2011) “Foreign Aid and Enlightened Leaders”, mimeo January 2011.
- Isaksson, A-S (2014) “Political participation in Africa: The role of individual resources”, *Electoral Studies*, vol. 34, pp. 244-260.
- Jensen, P. and M. K. Justesen (2014) “Poverty and vote buying: Survey-based evidence from Africa”, *Electoral Studies*, vol. 33, pp. 220-232.
- Kasara, K. (2007) “Tax me if you can: Ethnic geography, democracy and the taxation of agriculture in Africa”, *American political science review*, 101(1), pp. 159-172.
- Keefer, P. (2010) “The ethnicity distraction? Political credibility and partisan preferences in Africa”, Policy research working paper no 5236, the World Bank development research group.

- Keefer, P. and R. Vlaicu (2008) “Democracy, Credibility, and Clientelism”, *The Journal of Law, Economics & Organization*, 24(2), pp. 371-405.
- Kimenyi, M. S. (2006) “Ethnicity, Governance and the Provision of Public Goods”, *Journal of African Economies*, vol. 15, AERC supplement 1, pp. 62-99.
- Kramon, E. (2011) “Why Do Politicians Buy Votes When The Ballot Is Secret? Theory And Experimental Evidence From Kenya”, mimeo November 28 UCLA and Stanford University.
- Kramon, E. and D. Posner (2012) “Ethnic favoritism in primary education in Kenya”, mimeo August 2012.
- Kudamatsu, M. (2009) “Ethnic favoritism: Micro evidence from Guinea”, mimeo, IIES Stockholm University.
- Kuenzi, M. And G. Lambright (2010) “Who votes in Africa? An examination of electoral participation in 10 African countries”, *Party Politics*, 17(6), pp. 767–799.
- La Porta, R., Lopez-de-Silanes, F., Shleifer, A. and R. Vishny (1999) “The quality of government”, *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization*, vol. 15, pp. 222– 279.
- Lindberg, S. I. and M. K. C. Morrison (2008) “Are African voters really ethnic or clientelistic? Survey evidence from Ghana”, *Political Science Quarterly*, 123(1), pp. 95-122.
- Lindberg S. I. and K. R. Weghorst (2013) “What drives the swing voter in Africa?” *American Journal of Political Science*, 57(3), pp. 717-734.
- Miguel, E. (2004) “Tribe or Nation?: Nation Building and Public Goods in Kenya versus Tanzania”, *World Politics*, 56(3), pp. 327-362.
- Miguel, E. and M. K. Gugerty (2005) “Ethnic diversity, social sanctions, and public goods in Kenya”, *Journal of Public Economics*, vol. 89, pp. 2325-2368.
- Montalvo, J. G., & Reynal-Querol, M. (2005). Ethnic polarization, potential conflict and civil wars. *The American Economic Review*, 95(3), 796-816.
- Nichter, S. (2008) ”Vote Buying or Turnout Buying? Machine Politics and the Secret Ballot”, *American Political Science Review*, 102(1), pp. 19-31.
- Posner, D. (2003) “The Colonial Origins of Ethnic Cleavages: The Case of Linguistic Divisions in Zambia”, *Comparative Politics*, 35(2) pp. 127-146.
- Reilly, B. (2001) *Democracy in divided societies: Electoral engineering for conflict management*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stokes, S. (2005) “Perverse accountability: A formal model of machine politics with evidence from Argentina”, *American political science review*, 99(3), pp. 315-325.



- Treisman, D. (2000) “The causes of corruption: a cross-national study”, *Journal of Public Economics*, 76(3), pp. 399– 457.
- van de Walle, N. (2003) “Presidentialism and clientelism in Africa’s emerging party systems”, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41(2), pp. 297-321.
- Vicente, P. (2008) “Is vote buying effective? Evidence from a field experiment in West Africa”, mimeo.
- Vicente, P. C. and L. Wantchekon (2009) “Clientelism and vote buying: lessons from field experiments in African elections”, *Oxford review of economic policy*, 25(2), pp. 292-305.
- Wantchekon, L. (2003) “Clientelism and voting behaviour: Evidence from a field experiment in Benin”, *World Politics*, 55(3), pp. 399-422.
- Wrong, M. (2009) *It’s our turn to eat: The story of a Kenyan whistle-blower*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

## Figures and tables

Table 1: The role of ethnic fractionalisation and ethnic identities (probit marginal effects)

Dependent variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
is clientelist:	experience	prevalence	support	experience	prevalence	support	experience	prevalence	support
Regional ELF	0.037 (0.045)	0.038 (0.041)	0.090* (0.048)						
Ethnic identity				0.009 (0.013)	-0.004 (0.013)	0.018 (0.014)			
Reg. eth. Ident.				0.170 (0.113)	0.154* (0.087)	0.040 (0.088)			
RegELF x AvgEthid							0.129 (0.154)	0.311** (0.133)	0.144 (0.165)
Individual controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Regional controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Country dummies	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Observations	17538	20878	19843	16561	19833	19834	16569	19842	19843

Notes: Standard errors (clustered by region) in parentheses; \* significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%; The individual and regional controls refer to the explanatory variables included in Table A3.

Table 2: The role of belonging to the president's ethnic group and living in the president's region of origin (probit marginal effects)

Dependent variable is clientelist:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
	experience	prevalence	support	experience	prevalence	support	experience	prevalence	support
Co-ethnic with president	-0.041* (0.023)	-0.030* (0.018)	-0.024 (0.016)				-0.032 (0.020)	-0.024 (0.017)	-0.050*** (0.013)
President's region of origin				-0.050* (0.028)	-0.023 (0.031)	0.092** (0.039)	-0.035 (0.030)	-0.026 (0.032)	0.111*** (0.043)
Individual controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Regional controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Country dummies	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Observations	15714	18575	17540	17538	20878	19843	15714	18575	17540

Notes: Standard errors (clustered by region) in parentheses; \* significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%; The individual and regional controls refer to the explanatory variables included in Table A3.

## Appendix

Table A1: Variable descriptions

### Dependent variables, clientelism

Experience: Personal experiences with vote buying. Dummy variable equal to one if to the question, 'During the last election, how often, if ever, did a candidate or someone from a political party offer you something, like food or a gift, in return for your vote?', the respondent answered that it happened at least once, and zero if it never happened (those with no experience of an election are excluded).

Prevalence: Perceived prevalence of vote buying activity. Dummy variable equal to one if to the question 'In your opinion, how often do politicians do each of the following: Offer gifts to voters during election campaigns?' the respondent answers 'often' or 'always', and zero if the answer is 'never', 'rarely' or 'don't know'.

Support: Respondent's support for clientelist policies. Dummy variable equal to one if the respondent, in response to the question, 'Which of the following statements is closest to your view? A: Since leaders represent everyone, leaders should not favour their own family or group. B: Once in office, leaders are obliged to help their home community', agrees more with statement B. Question not asked in Zimbabwe.

### Ethnic division variables

Ethnic group dummies: Based on the question 'Which [Ghanaian/Kenyan/etc.] language is your home language?'.

Regional ELF: Gives the probability that two randomly selected individuals in a region (see below) belong to different ethnic

$$\text{Ethnic}_j = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^N s_{ij}^2$$

groups. Measured as: , where  $s_{ij}$  is the share of group  $i$  ( $i = 1 \dots N$ ) in region  $j$ .

Ethnic identity: Dummy variable equal to one if the respondent reports to identify more in terms of his/her ethnic group than in terms of his/her nationality; zero otherwise. Question not asked in Zimbabwe.

Regional ethnic identity: Regional share of respondents with an ethnic identity, according to the definition above (not available in Zimbabwe).

ELF x AvgEthid: A multiplicative term capturing both regional ethnic fractionalisation and regional ethnic identity, i.e. ELF x regional ethnic identity (not available in Zimbabwe).

Co-ethnic with president: Dummy variable equal to one if the respondent belongs to the same ethnic group as the country's president; zero otherwise. Based on externally compiled data on the ethnic group affiliations of the sample country's president at the time of the survey. Consult at least two sources for each country, usually Encyclopedia Britannica complemented by other sources. Measure not available for Mozambique and Tanzania.

President's region of origin: Dummy variable equal to one if the respondent lives in the country's president's region of origin; zero otherwise. Based on externally compiled data on the home region of the sample country presidents at the time of the survey. Consult at least two sources for each country, usually Encyclopedia Britannica complemented by other sources.

Regional share of president co-ethnics: The share of respondents in the region who are co-ethnics of the country president.

### Individual control variables

Female: Dummy variable equal to one if the respondent is female; zero otherwise.

Rural: Dummy variable equal to one if the respondent lives in a rural area; zero otherwise.

Age variables: Age in years and age squared.

Education (based on question about what the respondent's highest level of education is):

Primary: Dummy variable equal to one if the respondent's highest level of education is at primary school level (including those with incomplete primary); zero otherwise. Secondary: Dummy variable equal to one if the respondent's highest level of education is at secondary school level (including those with incomplete secondary); zero otherwise. Post-secondary: Dummy variable equal to one if the respondent's highest level of education is at post-secondary school level (including those with incomplete post-secondary); zero otherwise. Dummy variable equal to one if the respondent has no formal schooling used as reference category in estimations.

Employment: Full-time: dummy variable equal to one if the respondent has full-time paid employment; zero otherwise.

Part-time: dummy variable equal to one if the respondent has part-time paid employment; zero otherwise. Dummy for having no employment used as reference category in estimations.

Poverty index: A poverty index with mean zero and standard deviation one within each country. Higher values imply that the respondent is poorer. Constructed as the first principal component of the answers to, 'Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: (a) enough food to eat, (b) enough clean water for home use, (c) medicines or medical treatment, (d) enough fuel to cook your food?', with response categories ranging from 0 for 'never' to 4 for 'always' for each item.

Religion (based on the question 'What is your religion, if any?'). Christian: Dummy variable equal to one if the respondent reports to be Christian; zero otherwise. Muslim: Dummy variable equal to one if the respondent reports to be Muslim; zero otherwise. Having another religious affiliation or not being religious is used as reference category in estimations.

**Regional control variables:** Sub-national regional (first-order administrative division in each country) averages.

Share educated: Share in region who have some secondary school or more education.

Av. poverty index: Average poverty index score in region.

Share employed: Share in region who have paid employment (full-time or part-time).

Share rural: Share in region who live in rural areas.

Share Christian: Share in region who are Christian.

Share Muslim: Share in region who are Muslim.

**Country dummies:** Dummies for the 15 countries in the sample.

Table A2: Summary statistics of key variables

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
<i><u>Dependent variables, clientelism</u></i>					
Experience	17538	0.222	0.416	0	1
Prevalence	20878	0.716	0.451	0	1
Support	19843	0.270	0.444	0	1
<i><u>Ethnic division variables</u></i>					
Regional ELF	20883	0.475	0.251	0	0.883
Regional ethnic identity	19847	0.169	0.133	0	0.899
ELF x AvgEthid	19847	0.081	0.077	0	0.556
Ethnic identity	19838	0.170	0.376	0	1
Co-ethnic with president	17430	0.252	0.434	0	1
President's region of origin	20883	0.159	0.366	0	1
Regional share of president co-ethnics	17430	0.252	0.335	0	1
<i><u>Individual controls</u></i>					
Rural	20883	0.611	0.488	0	1
Female	20883	0.496	0.500	0	1
Age	20883	36.045	14.377	18	99
Age squared	20883	1505.952	1266.864	324	9801
Primary school	20883	0.377	0.485	0	1
Secondary school	20883	0.359	0.480	0	1
Post-secondary school	20883	0.111	0.314	0	1
Part-time	20883	0.137	0.344	0	1
Full-time	20883	0.240	0.427	0	1
Poverty index	20883	-0.004	0.998	-1.879	3.999
Christian	20883	0.672	0.470	0	1
Muslim	20883	0.230	0.421	0	1
<i><u>Regional controls</u></i>					
Share educated	20883	0.468	0.246	0.028	0.969
Avg. poverty index	20883	-0.002	0.343	-1.167	1.241
Share employed	20883	0.374	0.200	0	0.932
Share rural	20883	0.612	0.275	0	1
Share Christian	20883	0.670	0.309	0	1
Share Muslim	20883	0.230	0.340	0	1

Table A3: Effects of individual and regional control variables

Dependent variable is:	(1) Clientelism experience	(2) Clientelism prevalence	(3) Clientelism support
<i>Individual controls</i>			
Rural	-0.004 (0.009)	-0.040*** (0.011)	0.002 (0.009)
Female	-0.029*** (0.007)	-0.016** (0.007)	-0.002 (0.006)
Age	0.003 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.001)
Age squared	-0.000** (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Primary school	0.029** (0.012)	0.037*** (0.012)	-0.030** (0.013)
Secondary school	0.047*** (0.014)	0.081*** (0.013)	-0.029** (0.015)
Post-secondary school	0.054*** (0.020)	0.098*** (0.015)	-0.034* (0.018)
Part-time	0.019 (0.014)	-0.004 (0.015)	0.010 (0.018)
Full-time	0.001 (0.011)	0.007 (0.012)	-0.034*** (0.011)
Poverty index	0.027*** (0.005)	0.009 (0.006)	0.016** (0.006)
Christian	0.001 (0.012)	0.006 (0.013)	0.002 (0.015)
Muslim	0.015 (0.015)	0.007 (0.017)	-0.005 (0.019)
<i>Regional controls</i>			
Share educated	0.036 (0.106)	0.121 (0.104)	-0.121 (0.083)
Avg. poverty index	0.041 (0.034)	0.027 (0.033)	0.036 (0.030)
Share employed	0.084 (0.082)	0.097 (0.064)	0.106 (0.075)
Share rural	0.014 (0.048)	-0.036 (0.053)	-0.043 (0.045)
Share Christian	-0.020 (0.160)	0.184 (0.151)	-0.082 (0.146)
Share Muslim	-0.004 (0.150)	0.338** (0.142)	-0.061 (0.139)
Country dummies	yes	yes	yes
Observations	17538	20878	19843

Notes: Standard errors (clustered by region) in parentheses; \* significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%

Figure A1: Share reporting to have been offered something in return for their vote during last election

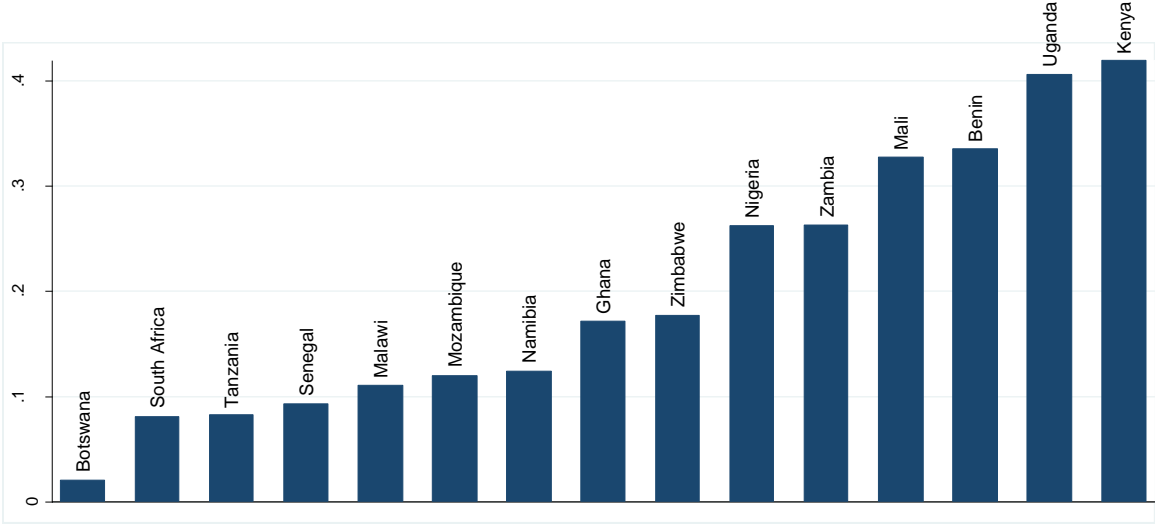


Figure A2: Share reporting that it is common for politicians to offer gifts to voters during election campaigns

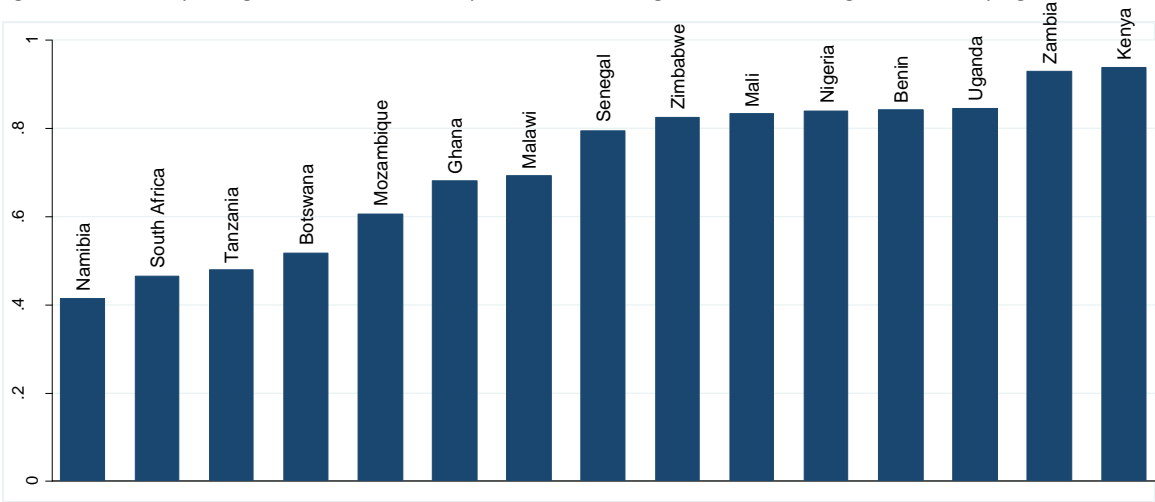


Figure A3: Share who support clientelism (consider that politicians are obliged to support own community)

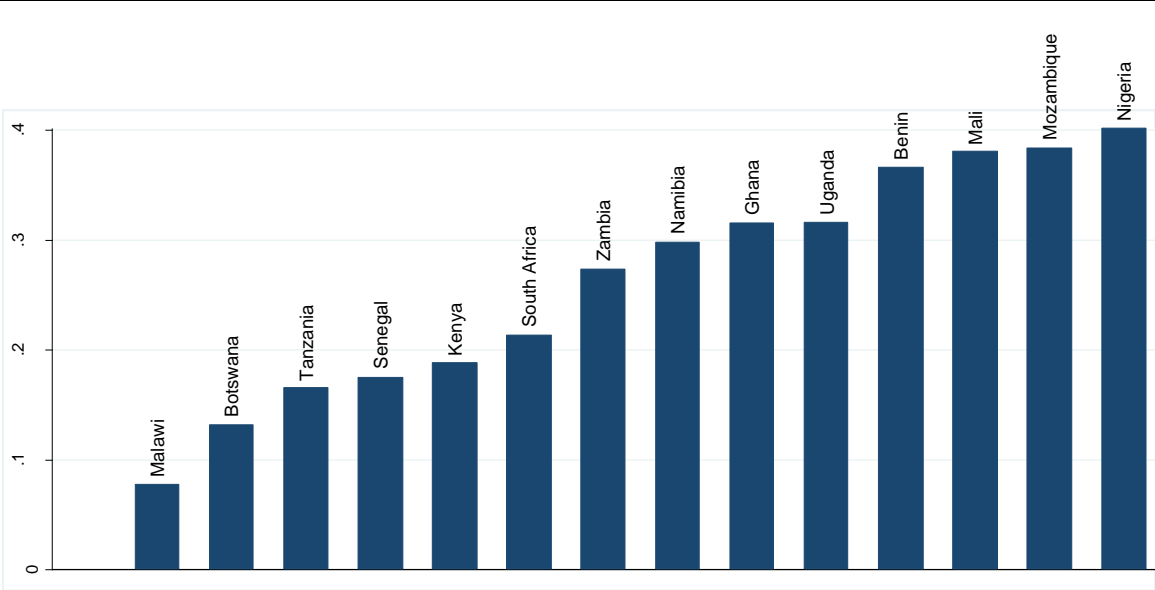


Figure A4: Number of ethnic (language) groups, by country

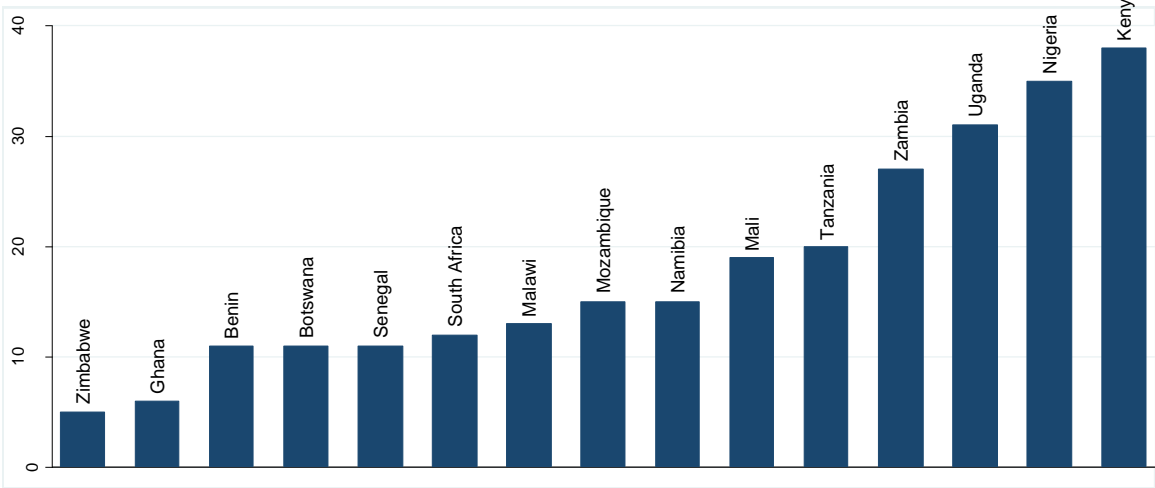


Figure A5: Estimated Ethno-linguistic fractionalisation, by country

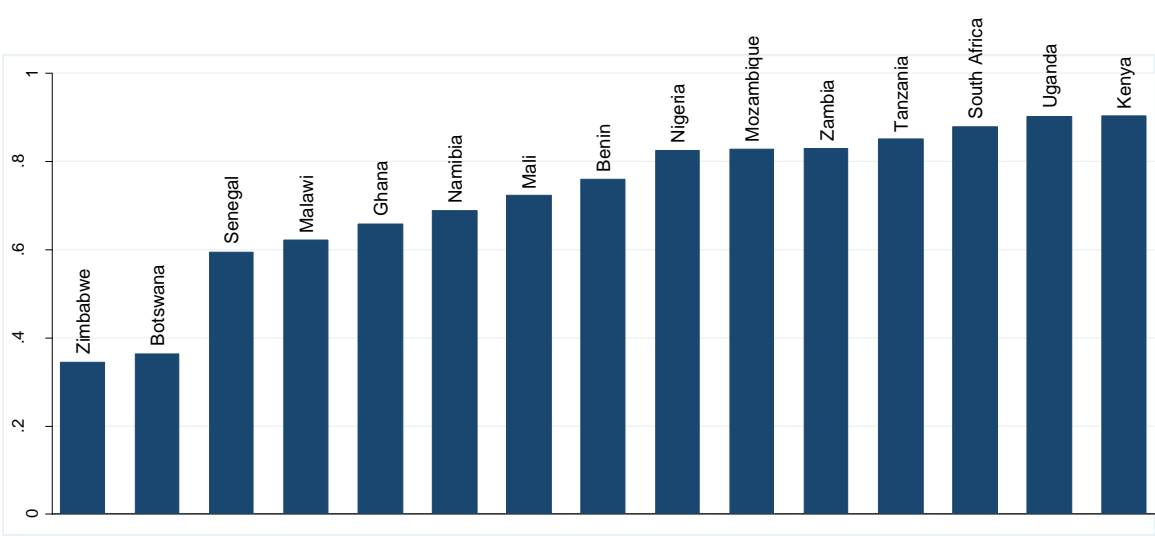


Figure A6: Share identifying more strongly with their ethnic group than with their country

