

**The Perverse Effects of Political Competition: Building Capacity for
Patronage in Ghana**

by

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Abstract

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Waves of decentralization that have swept the developing world have come with waves of scholarship documenting disappointing outcomes in local service provision. Some have identified robust electoral competition as a means by which clientelistic local government can be improved. Using original data from a survey of local government officials in Ghana, I show that where elections are most competitive, local governments over-provide patronage and under-provide public services. My identification strategy exploits plausibly exogenous variation in political competition arising from historical migration of ethnic blocs with distinct political allegiances. I argue that this behavior is driven by the patronage-seeking behavior of volunteers on whom the political parties rely to mobilize voters. The leverage of these volunteers is elevated because voters are highly immobile between the major parties, and especially so in areas where elections are closely fought.

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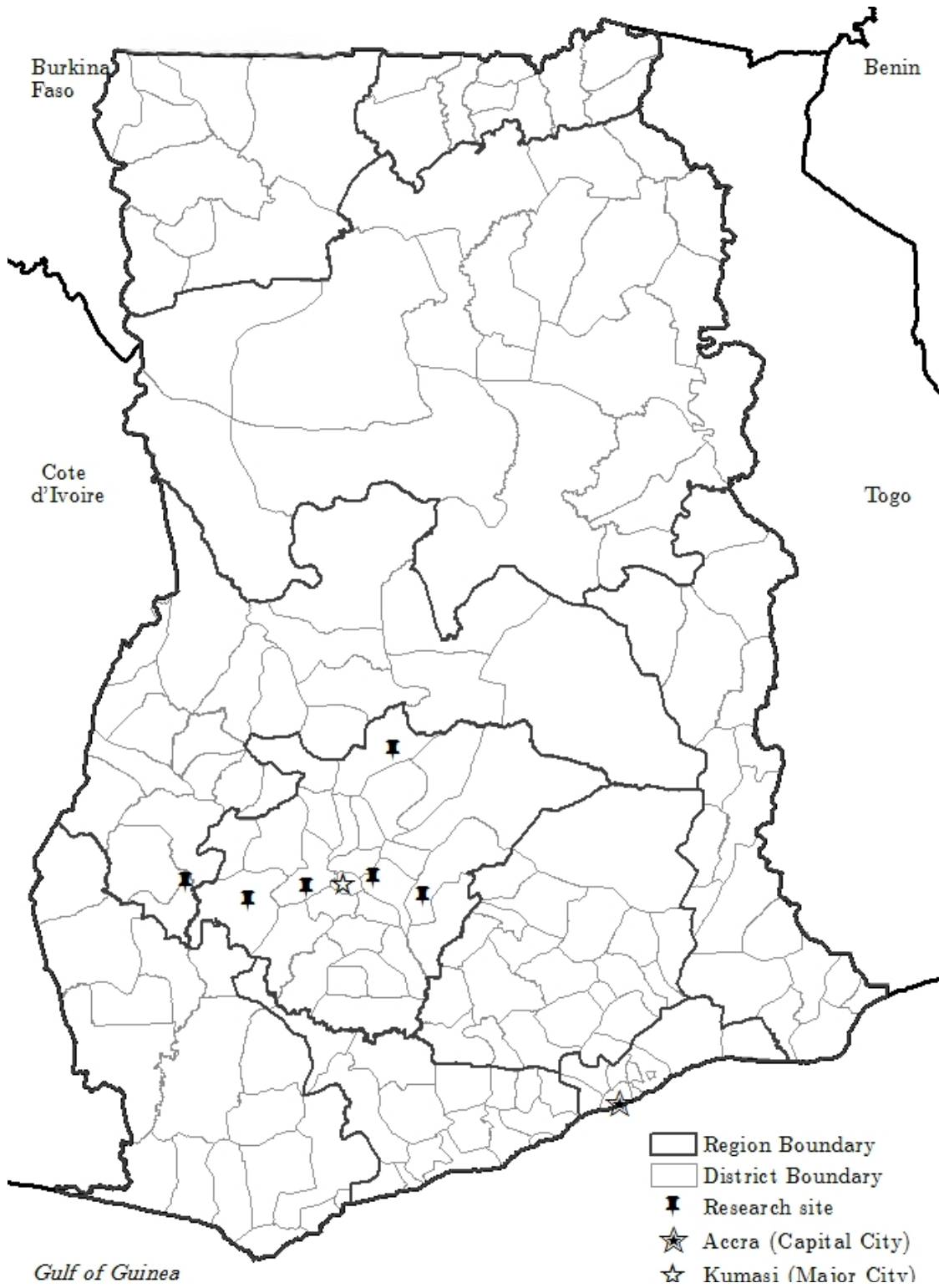
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Go n-éirí an bóthar libh.

Abbreviations

CPP	Convention People's Party
DACF	District Assembly Common Fund
DPCU	District Planning Coordination Unit
FOAT	Functional and Organisational Assessment Tool
GPRTU	Ghana Private Road Transport Union
GYEEDA	Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency
LGS	Local Government Service
MLGRD	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
NAL	National Alliance of Liberals
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NLM	National Liberation Movement
NPP	New Patriotic Party
NYEP	National Youth Employment Program
OHCS	Office of the Head of the Civil Service
OSL	Office of Stool Lands
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
PSI	Party System Institutionalization
PSC	Public Services Commission
RCC	Regional Coordinating Council
UGCC	United Gold Coast Convention

FIGURE 1: Location of research sites



Part I

Problem, theory, and research

Chapter 1

The problem of states in contemporary developing countries

Introduction

The contemporary state in developing countries is a loose organization of highly variable capacity, where the face of the state for most people is local government, and where electoral competition shapes political behavior. Scholars of the political economy of development have paid insufficient attention to how states are affected by these phenomena: decentralization, which changes the *administrative shape* of states, and democratization, which changes the *political rules* of states. Despite rich stand-alone literatures on decentralization and democratization, remarkably little attention has been paid to their point of intersection: how electoral competition affects the behavior of local governments.¹ This dissertation is about how these two phenomena shape the everyday behavior of a state in one developing country.

Data come from 14 months of fieldwork in Ghana, including nine months in six local government districts, as well as a survey of local government politicians and officials. I show that intense

¹Scholars often speak of the ‘modern state’ to refer to states in the post-Westphalian or post-Fordist worlds. I use ‘contemporary state’ to refer to the period covering the past quarter century, since the early 1990s.

competition between the main political parties in local government is causally related to the provision of patronage over public goods: clientelism is fueled, not quelled, by robust political competition. Significantly, I show that administrative quality does not drive these outcomes, but is in fact *better* in highly-competitive, patronage-providing districts, which seek to build their capacity to provide patronage.

These findings may surprise theorists of decentralization or democracy. Decentralization is expected to improve the quality of local service delivery by bringing government closer to the people (Ziblatt and O'Dwyer, 2006), while electoral competition is expected to make politicians more responsive to voters. Indeed, prominent scholarship identifies robust electoral competition as precisely what is needed to tackle clientelism in local government (Khemani, 2010). Given these theoretical expectations, how can we make sense of the relationship I find between intense political competition and patronage provision?

Political competition may have such perverse effects when an incumbent is incentivized to simultaneously improve the quality of government in order to discriminate in its delivery of services. This occurs because the logic of state building is to develop administrative capacity for patronage provision. In highly competitive districts, a party's active supporters exert maximal pressure on co-partisans in office to provide patronage. Electoral incentives to provide patronage also incentivize investments in administrative capacity to that end.

My empirical contribution is to document the close association between intense inter-party competition and the provision of patronage over public goods. My theoretical contribution is to situate this finding in an understanding of how clientelism and ethno-regional party politics combine in contexts of under-development and decentralization. At a more general level, the dissertation is motivated by a dissatisfaction with how literature on the state has remained overly focused on central government while under-studying how electoral competition shapes governing capacity.²

²A state is a territorially-bound organization with compulsory membership and a monopoly on the legitimate use of law and violence. An organization that claims to be a state claims *de facto* and *de jure* authority over the elements in this definition, which combines the classic definitions of Mann (1993) and Weber (1978).

Social scientific interest in states boomed before the end of the Cold War, with many foundational works published in the 1980s.³ This was a period of political and economic crises for developing countries, most of which were politically closed and administratively centralized. Since the end of the Cold War, however, scholarship on states has been limited in two ways. First, it has been dominated by a concern with failed states, despite their empirical rarity: most states, most of the time, are weak, but not failed.⁴ As a result, we know surprisingly little about life in contemporary quotidian states, by which I mean the engagement of a state in a multitude of otherwise mundane activities, such as taxing, licensing, zoning, schooling, immunizing, registering, or jailing its people. These quotidian states grab neither popular nor academic headlines. They are neither the strongest nor the weakest—neither Denmark nor Somalia—but they constitute the majority of contemporary developing states.

Second, within scholarship on state effectiveness there has been an overly-strong focus on central government.⁵ Scholars like Evans (1997), Weiss (2000), and Wade (2003), have focused on how globalization and neoliberalism constrains policy spaces while exposing states to the shocks of downward wage harmonization or to the contagion of climate change or financial crises (also Rondinelli and Cheema, 2003), yet such studies analyze problems from the perspectives of central government. This is also true of the literature on the ability of states to project authority over their territory (Herbst, 2000). Such ‘center-centric’ approaches fail to incorporate theoretically the changing shape of contemporary decentralized states, and to the extent that they are interested in the ‘periphery,’ it is often from the center’s perspective. But the story of a state—its capacity, its constraints, its interests—can no longer be told strictly from above.

Two decades of decentralization have changed the very shape of states in large parts of the developing world, such that most developing countries today are decentralized to some extent (Ndegwa, 2002). Downward shifts in governance are found across the developing world in countries like Bolivia

³Consider even the work of Migdal (1988), Skocpol (1979), Bates (1981), Chaudhry (1989), Skocpol et al. (1986), Jackson and Rosberg (1982b), Levi (1988), North (1981), Tilly (1992), and Anderson (1979).

⁴Where ‘failed’ indicates a failure to monopolize violence within a significant part of the territory, and ‘weak’ indicates more general state incapacity, but without sustained insurgencies or rebellions.

⁵A nascent literature has begun to examine the question of sub-national variation in state capacity, in which the main approach is to study variation across government agencies (Roll, 2013) or across territory (Lee and Zhang, 2013).

and Uganda, but also in industrialized countries, like Japan and France, and no region has been immune to the spread of local government (Weingast, 2014; Faguet, 2014). Substantial power has been transferred to subnational units for the delivery of basic public services in the areas of health, education, sanitation, and security. As Rodden (2006) notes, “[o]ther than transitions to democracy, decentralization and the spread of federalism are perhaps the most important trends in governance around the world over the last 50 years” (2). International development expenditure on local government capacity building is in the billions of dollars, and the academic literature on local governance and decentralized goods provision is enormous (Devarajan et al., 2009; Ahmad et al., 2005; Caldeira et al., 2012; Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2006).⁶

These two limitations in the literature on states—an over-examination of failed states and of central government—have meant that statisticians have paid insufficient attention to how the modal developing state has been changed by another global phenomenon: the spread of electoral competition. This has been met with enormous social scientific literatures in which democracy and elections have mostly been used as the explanatory variable to understand political order, violence, growth and prosperity. In the first field of inquiry, scholars have shown how intense electoral competition can worsen the problems of developing countries by stoking social tensions and shortening time horizons. Indeed, the suggestion by Bates (1983) that “electoral competition arouses ethnic conflict” in Africa (161) is already three decades old, and a substantial literature has followed on the destabilizing effects of electoral politics.⁷ The second field of inquiry has focused on the relationship between elections and pro-poor or pro-growth government, as reflected in the huge democracy and growth literature (Acemoglu et al., 2008).

Yet, there have been remarkably few considerations of how the strength of a state might be affected by competitive electoral politics. This is a major gap given the importance of state capacity in the comparative study of development. Although a prominent school of thought sees an effective

⁶In 2011, total Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the sector was almost \$2bn. The figure for ‘public sector policy and administrative management,’ which typically involves local government capacity building, was almost \$4bn. Source: OECD.

⁷See Mansfield and Snyder, 2001; Bates, 2008b; Cederman et al., 2010, 2013; Collier, 2010; CCAPS, 2013; Osorio, 2012; Wilkinson, 2004.

state as necessary for democracy (Linz and Stepan, 1996), there are only a few studies that explicitly consider how state capacity as a dependent variable might be affected by democratization and elections (Slater, 2008; Cruz and Keefer, 2012). I attempt to address these limitations by studying how electoral competition affects the everyday behavior of a state at the local level.

The chapter proceeds as follows. Part 1 elaborates on the theory in greater detail. I explain how clientelism works and how strong, ethno-regional parties limit voter mobility. Since voter mobility is low, elections are won by mobilizing rather than persuading voters, which elevates the leverage of party's own activist supporters on whom they depend for electioneering. These party activists, and their variable ability to extract goods from their co-partisans in office, are the mechanism linking politician incentive to district assembly behavior. Part 2 discusses the implications of my argument for our understanding of the 'modern' state. Part 3 justifies Ghana as the site of research. Part 4 highlights the methodology and main research activities. Part 5 lays out the plan for the remaining chapters.

1.1 Explaining variation in local government behavior

The empirical phenomenon to be analyzed in this dissertation is the relationship between political competition and variation in local government administrative quality and service provision; that is, how a local government organizes itself administratively and how it provides goods and services. I argue that a significant determinant of the behavior of a local government is to be found in the nature of the political party system, and that intense political competition may incentivize the provision of patronage over public goods where low voter mobility raises the electoral value of party activists over voters.

1.1.1 The argument in brief

First, stable parties increase the cost of defection to new parties for office seekers as well as for citizens seeking well connected patrons, while major parties have strong ethno-regional identities which signal

future behavior to voters. Ordinary voters are thus limited in their mobility by a system with only two effective parties and by strong party identities that make it almost irrational to vote for the party of the other group. Since voter mobility is low, elections are won through mobilization of one's own supporters rather than through persuasion of opposition or swing voters. Parties' reliance on mobilization elevates the political value of their mobilization agents, known locally as party activists.

Second, party activists push for rewards for their allegiance, and local government incumbents are most sensitive to them in highly competitive places. Party activists thus have the most leverage over their own local government incumbents where the risk of losing power is highest. By contrast, in less competitive places, incumbents are better able to ignore the short-term clamoring of activists in favor of engaging in longer-term development planning, including by pursuing the development plans of central government. But electoral uncertainty in competitive places increases the leverage of activists, and voter immobility means activists, not voters, gain the most. Last, incumbents facing pressure to deliver goods to activists are most reliant on having an effective administration. Empirically this takes the form of giving low-level jobs to party activists but insisting on quality technocrats at the elite level. Thus incumbents build governing capacity in order to provide patronage.

It is parties' dependence on their own volunteers, therefore, that explains why highly competitive districts engage in so much patronage provision. But why are voters immobile between parties? Why does this lead to clientelist strategies of turnout buying rather than vote buying? And who are these activists upon whom parties are so reliant? This section treats each of these in turn, and in the process I trace the logic that connects the logic of the party system to the incentives shaping the behavior of local government.

1.1.2 Why voters are immobile between parties

Ghanaian voters are immobile between parties for two reasons. First, the stability of the two main parties limits opportunities for voters to defect or for political entrepreneurs to form new parties. Second, the ethno-regional identity of parties sorts voters and further limits their mobility.

1.1.2.1 Party system institutionalization

Against any understanding that African party systems are essentially weak, recent studies shows that strength and weakness in party system institutionalization is a variable rather than a constant.⁸ Party system institutionalization is “the degree of stability or fluidity in repetitive strategic interactions between parties, the depth of party attachment, and the extent of acceptance and legitimacy of party competition” (Riedl, 2014, 25). In a highly institutionalized system parties behave as though they expect structured interactions with the opposition to persist into the future, and there is usually a consistent set of parties competing over time. Benin and Madagascar exemplify one end of the continuum, with parties born around elections as factions endlessly splinter, only to die soon after before the process repeats itself again at the next election. Parties have no social bases, and rise and fall with the political fortunes of individual party leaders. Ghana exemplifies the other end of the spectrum, with a system dominated by just two parties with significant historical roots and party identities that are well known to voters. Parties endure beyond the life of one leader and electoral performance is not subject to high volatility. Figure 1.1 is taken from Riedl (2014) and arranges countries along a continuum of low to highly institutionalized party systems.⁹ Ghana’s party system is one of the most highly institutionalized but is by no means an outlier.

The organizational strength of the two main parties actually *enhances* state power by providing for office holders an apparatus through which they can discipline, communicate to, or incentivize local actors. But for voters, strong parties limit mobility and choice. Less institutionalized party systems may make for weaker government stability, but may actually enhance the ability of voters or politicians to threaten defection by forming a new party or coalition.¹⁰

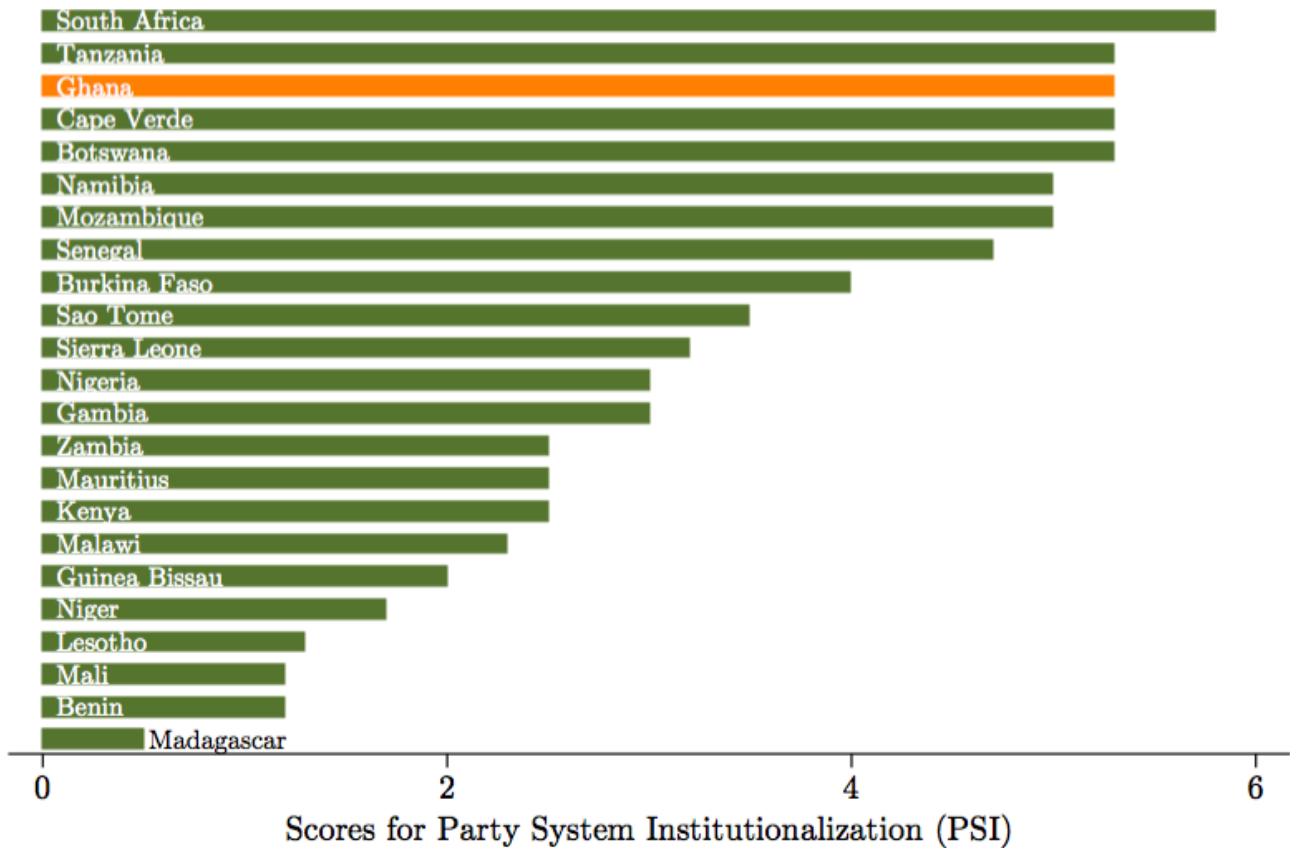
The challenge of defection is made all the more difficult given the logic of clientelism, in which allying with the opposition guarantees a defector’s exclusion from patronage networks should they gamble on the wrong party. Contrary to rationalist accounts which portray clients as participating

⁸See Arriola, 2012; Ichino and Nathan, 2012, 2013b; Ichino and Schundeln, 2012; Lebas, 2011; Riedl, 2014; van de Walle, 2003.

⁹Riedl’s measure is explained in chapter 8.

¹⁰To be clear, threats to abandon one’s party and take one’s community over to the opposition are commonplace in Ghana. Parties are sensitive to such threats where their hold on power is tenuous but as an empirical matter it is not clear that these threats are frequently acted upon.

FIGURE 1.1: Party system institutionalization across Africa



Reprinted with permission from Riedl (2013).

in voluntary exchange relationships, free to exit at any time, clientelism involves a power asymmetry between patron and client where ostracism or material deprivation is the result for a disobedient client (Hicken, 2011). Clientelism thus compounds the immobility of voters facing already limited choices at the ballot box.

1.1.2.2 Party identity

In addition to their stability, Ghana's main parties have strong brands and identities, even though they are not strongly ideological.¹¹ The NDC is strongly identified with Ewe, Ga, Fante, Muslims, and the political lineage of former President Jerry Rawlings. The NPP is strongly identified with

¹¹Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi notes in an interview "the extent of ideological position difference between the two camps is exaggerated. . . it has largely been about groups organizing to take power" cited in Riedl (2014, 186). But one must not equate the absence of a party ideology with the absence of a party brand (Lupu, 2013).

three main ethnic Akan groups, the Asante, Akuapem, and Akyem. Chapter 7 treats historical party formation in greater detail. What is important here is that actors—voters, office seekers, or party workers—exist within an inherited party political landscape that heavily shapes their allegiance. It would be strange for an Akyem woman to cast her lot with the NDC, for example, as they are not the party of the Akyem. The NPP brand signals her political community to her. To argue that parties are ethno-regional is not to fall into the trap of describing African elections as mere ethnic censuses (Ichino and Nathan, 2013a; Bratton et al., 2012). But whether or not the Akyem woman liked the NPP candidate, she will assume that the NDC candidate will divert resources to an NDC neighborhood. Her identity is known in her community to party organizers and she will be sought out for political mobilization on the basis of her presumed group membership. The party also know the greater danger is that she will not come out to vote, not that she will vote for the opposition.

1.1.2.3 Are voters actually immobile?

An observable implication of what I have argued so far is that party switching should be rare, since a voter's effective options are between only two parties, only one of which is likely to govern in their favor. But as an empirical matter, are voters actually immobile? The only nationally representative survey on voting over time in Ghana comes from the Afrobarometer. In 2012, only 5% of the 2,400 survey respondents reported switching between the NPP and NDC presidential candidates, or vice versa, in the 2004 and 2008 elections. The survey also asked who the person would vote for if an election were held 'tomorrow.' Only 5% said they would switch their vote from their 2008 choice. This compares to the 12% of voting-age respondents reporting not voting at all in the previous election. Of the less than 1% of respondents who said they were undecided, none reported switching between parties in 2004 and 2008.

The more important variable is turnout, not party switching. The number of respondents saying they would not vote in the 2012 election was *seven times* the number saying they were undecided. In the study of Lindberg and Weghorst, 9% of the 672 respondents reported voting in either the 2000

or 2004 parliamentary elections, but not both.¹² 81% of voting age respondents reported voting in the 1996, 2000 and 2004 elections, meaning that the share of voters that does not always turnout is likely much larger than the share of voters who switch parties.

This is suggestive evidence that elections are swung by shifts in turnout and that party switching is rare.¹³ The data are also a useful corrective to the discourse in Ghanaian politics which makes reference to elections being won by ‘swing’ voting (Kennedy, 2009, 90). The discourse misleads because it is imprecise: Ghana has swing districts or regions only to the extent that district A leans 49 percent NDC in one election and 51 percent in the next. The district has ‘swung’ but not due to a sea change in voting behavior. The discourse errs in confusing individual from unit-level voting, an observational mismatch common in comparative politics (Golden and Min, 2013).

The challenge the disaffected voter poses to a party, therefore, is less the threat of voting for the opposition and more so the threat to not vote at all. Since abstention is credible while defection is not, elections turn on the ability of parties to mobilize rather than to persuade. This logic is well understood by party workers I knew in the Ashanti Region, stronghold of the NPP which had lost the presidential election in 2008. They understood their loss not in terms of votes lost to the opposition but in failing to get their taxi drivers and teachers to vote in large numbers. This way of thinking about electoral strategy has historical resonance in Ghana. Observers of the 1969 election in a cocoa area noted:

“The PP assumed throughout (quite correctly as the results demonstrated) that their problem was simply one of getting electors to the polls with an understanding of the mechanism of casting a ballot, not one of persuading them to vote for the PP rather than for their opponent” (Austin and Luckham, 1975, 183).

¹²This includes only respondents over the age of 36, since younger respondents would not have been eligible and the data are presented in age brackets.

¹³The data are not consistent with two important studies on Ghanaian swing voters. Lindberg and Morrison (2005) estimated that about 18% of their sample voted for parliamentary candidates of different parties in the 1996 and 2000 elections. In addition to the non-random survey design, however, the period under question was one of growing strength of the NPP. This can be seen in their data: 95% of their respondents said they voted for the NDC candidate in 1996 and again in 2000, compared to 73% reporting voting for the NPP in both. In recent work, Weghorst and Lindberg (2013) use survey data on voters gathered in the months before the 2008 election. The claim that about half of their respondents were “up for grabs” implies that elections should be considerably more volatile than they actually are. The finding may be driven by over-sampling competitive constituencies.

When voters' options are limited in the context of pervasive clientelism and stable parties, the dominant strategy for political parties is to emphasize mobilization rather than persuasion during elections. Where defection is not a credible option, it is the value of the mobilizers, not the voters, that is raised.

1.1.3 Why parties buy turnout rather than votes

Parties buy turnout rather than votes because it is the logical clientelist strategy given voter immobility. To understand why turnout buying is especially pervasive in competitive areas, I turn to innovations in the clientelism literature.

1.1.3.1 The logic of turnout buying

Clientelism is a political strategy in which rewards are provided over repeated interactions to individuals or groups in return for political allegiance (Auyero, 2001; Grzymala-Busse, 2008; Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007; Kitschelt, 2000; Fujiwara and Wantchekon, 2013; Weitz-Shapiro, 2012). By defining clientelism in terms of allegiance, I depart from other studies which understood it as an electoral strategy. Clientelism is actually an umbrella term, beneath which is patronage, in which rewards are directed to party members, or vote/turnout buying, in which rewards are directed at voters (Stokes, 2005; Nichter, 2008). In Africanist social science, clientelism is often described as neopatrimonialism, in which allegiance and loyalty is rooted in familial or kin-based relations (Medard, 1982).¹⁴

Debates on clientelism have traditionally pitted proponents of the core and swing voter models against one another (Cox and McCubbins, 1986; Lindbeck and Weibull, 1987). In the canonical models of Cox and McCubbins (1986) and Dixit and Londregan (1996) voters with strong party or ideological attachments can only be bought at considerable expense, so parties compete for moderates (swing voters) whose votes are theoretically 'cheaper' to buy (Schady, 2000). But when parties have substantial informational advantages over voters they will direct resources to core supporters, since

¹⁴Neopatrimonialism's synonyms in Africanist political science are prebendalism (Joseph, 1998) and personal rule (Jackson and Rosberg, 1982a).

these can be delivered with certainty of political support (Hicken, 2011; Golden and Min, 2013). Despite their differences, however, the core and swing voter models share the assumption that the dominant electoral strategy centers on persuading voters.

A recent development in the literature, however, shifts attention away from attempts to persuade voters and towards attempts to simply mobilize voters (Cox, 2010; Nichter, 2008). While swing voter proponents argued that core voters “cannot credibly threaten to punish their favored party” (Stokes, 2005), core voter threats to simply abstain are indeed credible and provide incentives for parties to cater to their core voters even if core voters’ threats to defect are not credible. As Cox (2010) argues, “in such situations, parties allocate distributive benefits primarily to individuals and groups providing key coordination and mobilization services, rather than to vote-brokers expert at identifying swing voters” (342). He continues: “Lowering the number of ideologically similar competitors on the ballot and mobilizing its base are often more important to maximizing a party’s vote than is persuasion” (342).

Scholars have begun to theorize the conditions under which turnout-buying can emerge. Gans-Morse et al. (2014) develop a model of parties mixing different clientelist strategies within the same campaign in which two important features of the party system emerge (also Nichter, 2008 and Magaloni et al., 2007). First, when there is strong support for party platforms, buying turnout becomes cost effective relative to buying opposition votes, which will be expensive since the preferences of the opposition party are close to those of its supporters. Second, extreme distances between parties simultaneously makes buying opposition votes very costly while reducing the utility of even voting for voters not attracted to either party.¹⁵ The votes of the former are expensive, while the latter must be paid to turnout (mobilize) *and* vote for the party (persuade). Again, turnout buying becomes more cost effective.

Their model can usefully be applied to the case of ethno-regional parties in developing countries. First, voters have strong preferences for their party’s platform when it is understood to potentially deliver disproportionate benefits to their ethno-regional or religious group. Second, in developing

¹⁵In addition to two important features of the party system mentioned here, Gans-Morse et al. also point to ballot secrecy as making turnout buying more likely. They reason that ballot secrecy makes vote buying will be too costly to monitor, thus making turnout buying more attractive.

countries politics is often zero-sum: voters expect that the party of their kin, *and only the party of their kin*, will benefit them, and that all other groups would surely harm them. While the first condition implies voters have a strong preference for their party, this second condition implies that voters also have no real alternative. The conditions under which turnout buying may occur can be linked to the logic of ethno-regional party politics in developing countries. Outside of highly competitive places, parties have little incentive to invest heavily in buying opposition voters (who are expensive) or swing voters (who are rare). Moreover, they have little incentive to pay for turnout: in a less competitive place, party A is the majority and does not need to invest too heavily in turnout, while party B is the minority and expects little return from investing in turnout. Thus, turnout buying has the most profound implications in highly competitive places: where neither party can buy opposition voters (who are expensive) or swing voters (who are rare), but where both must invest heavily because electoral victory is most uncertain.

1.1.3.2 How clientelism works in Ghana

The form of clientelism most visible to a visitor to Ghana is vote buying around elections. This is why early literature on clientelism focused on the highly visible and often performative displays of the distribution of wealth in which an office seeker publicly hands out cash, alcohol, food or clothing. In fact, the distribution of things like clothing at party rallies is not clientelism at all, since the good is not contingent on the recipient's allegiance (Hicken, 2011). Indeed, although clientelism is often conflated with vote buying, Ghana is interesting because vote buying is *not* the dominant form of clientelism.

In the most recent cross-national Afrobarometer survey (Round 5, 2010-12), Ghanaian respondents reported some of the lowest levels of individual vote buying across 29 sub-Saharan African countries. The question asked: "During the last national election, how often, if ever did a candidate or someone from a political party offer you something, like food or a gift or money, in return for your vote?" 93% of Ghanaians said never. Other survey data add to this finding. Only 5% of respondents said "personal gifts, assistance, or promises thereof from candidates" determined their vote choice

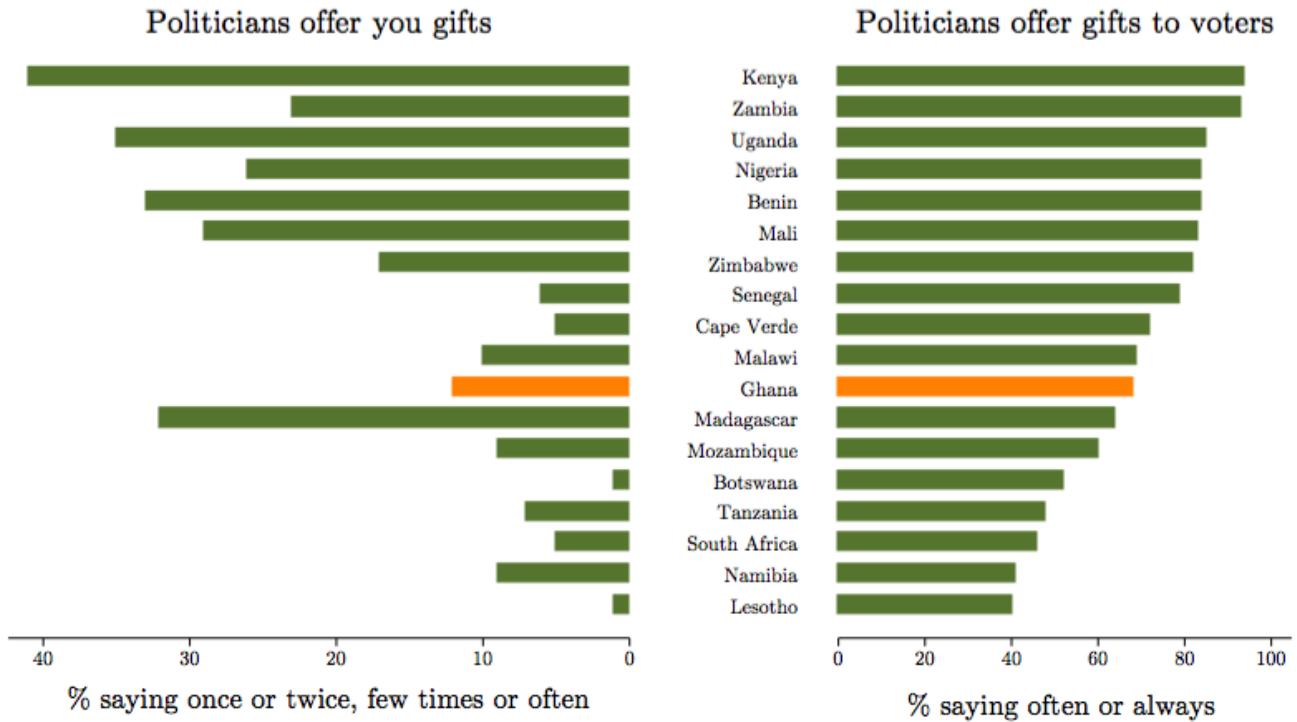
in the 2000 election (Lindberg and Morrison, 2008, 117). This suggests that individual vote buying is actually not common in Ghana.

But it could be the case that clientelism in all its forms—not just vote buying—is relatively uncommon in Ghana. Other survey data do not support this interpretation. The 2005-06 Afrobarometer asked two relevant questions. One question asked about vote buying using the same language as the question above. But another question asked about clientelism in a general way: “In your opinion, how often do politicians offer gifts to voters during election campaigns?” Note the question does *not* ask about gifts contingent on an action, nor does it specify if the gift was to vote or turnout, and nor does it specify if the gift was to the respondent. It asked about the pervasiveness of clientelism, broadly defined. The results are shown in Figure 1.2. On the right we see that clientelism in a general sense was alive and well in Ghana, where 68% said politicians offer gifts to voters ‘often’ or ‘always.’ But we see in the left bar chart individual experience of gifts in return for votes are much less common. Only 12% said this happened one or more times. So, although vote buying is rare, clientelism is pervasive. My own fieldwork revealed rewards to party members (patronage) is an especially dominant form. Office holders have at their disposal only limited resources and at the top of the distributional food chain always sits one’s party network.

1.1.4 Why party activists matter

The nature of a state’s reliance upon community-level agents of violence and social order is theoretically important because it shapes what is achievable for rulers. Work by Boone (2003) and Ziblatt (2006) consider very different times and places, but their findings are similar: national elites engaging in state (re)construction require local partners with capacity to deliver votes or social order (Remick, 2004 makes a similar argument in the Chinese context). The modal African experience has seen this role played by traditional authorities, both in the colonial and post-colonial eras, and Ghana has been no exception (Mamdani, 1996; Rathbone, 2000). But I suggest the emphasis on Ghanaian chiefs has come at the cost of under-appreciating the role of parties and their active supporters. In

FIGURE 1.2: Varieties of clientelism across Africa



Note: Data from Afrobarometer 3 (2005-06).

daily district life, the machinery of local government relies more on party machinery than it does on traditional authority. The agents upon which parties rely are known locally as ‘party activists.’

An ‘activist’ is a partisan that is active for their party even outside of elections. They may not be the official party worker in a neighborhood. Political party activists are important figures because they are the mechanism that links the generalized concept of political competitiveness to actual local government behavior. They are key to the electoral success of either party, but they also depend on their party in power to make good on the implicit contract in which the activists’ efforts are rewarded with concrete favors. Parties are the institution through which governments rule, but at the community level, a party’s control over its own activists is a variable rather than a constant. In chapter 4, I show how activists understand their ‘right’ to the bounty of the state, and how they exert pressure on their co-partisans in office. An important finding is that the leverage of party activists is causally related to the behavior of their co-partisans in local office. As one moves from less to more politically competitive districts, the ability of party activists to credibly threaten

to withdraw their service increases, and with it their leverage over co-partisans in office. In highly competitive places, it becomes too costly for local government incumbents to ignore their activist.

Were campaigns fought on the basis of ideas and policy platforms, incumbents would direct resources to swing or opposition voters. If they are fought on the basis of mobilization, however, incumbents direct resources to their own activists. Still, it is not obvious that when turnout buying is more important than vote buying in an election, that party activists should become more important than actors like brokers. The reason activists are especially important in turnout buying is that it is a much less information-intensive activity than vote buying. Brokers are key in vote buying because the broker has intimate knowledge of the political leanings of community members. This knowledge is especially valuable when ballots are cast in secret. But when an entire neighborhood is assumed to vote for the party of their co-ethnics, the informational knowledge of brokers matters less. What matters more is the raw manpower offered by activists.

1.2 Implications

1.2.1 Political competition in the contemporary decentralized state

My argument has implications for the functioning of political competition in developing countries that have experimented with decentralization. Scholars interested in problems of local government in developing countries have documented results in service delivery and accountability that are mixed at best, and clientelism has been frequently identified as the root cause (Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2006; Ahmad et al., 2005; Devarajan et al., 2009; Caldeira et al., 2012; Lambright, 2011). As Khemani (2010) explains “decentralization is subject to political capture, with local spending targeted to vote-buying, patronage, or pork barrel projects,” and “funds devolved to local governments are more likely to go towards clientelist transfers rather than improvement of public goods” (2, 25; also Khemani, 2013). The understanding of clientelism in this literature often conflates vote-buying specifically with clientelism generally, such as when Eaton et al. (2010) warned of the threat posed to decentralized when “electoral outcomes turn largely on the ability of political machines to exchange

votes for material benefits” (25). These scholars have been buoyed by researching linking better local governance to the direct election or re-election of incumbents (Janvry et al., 2010; Ferraz and Finan, 2008; Skoufias et al., 2011). This has led to an increasing acceptance of the idea that “political monopoly, or at least reduced political contestation at the local level, seems to be an important element that leads to clientelism. . . On the other hand, vigorous political competition can undermine, although not necessarily eliminate clientelism” (Diaz-Cayeros and Magaloni, 2003, 31-2; also Rose-Ackerman, 1978 and García-Guadilla and Pérez, 2002). This scholarship suggests that chronic failures in local government should become less likely as political competition becomes more robust.

Can one reconcile this belief in the value of political competition with the link I find between intense competition and patronage? The logic of turnout buying offers a way out by showing how the effect of competition is *conditional on the form of clientelism*. If voter options are limited—as they are in conditions of stable ethno-regional parties—intense political competition increases returns to turnout buying rather than vote buying. If, however, voter options were not so limited—if party switching was possible or if parties differed in ideology rather than merely in their ethnic base—elections could be won by attracting swing voters by, for example, moderating the party’s platform or providing goods to groups beyond one’s kin. This has implications for the effect of intensifying political competition on local government: turnout buying raises the value of core voters and the party workers required to turn them out.

1.2.2 Is political competition undesirable?

An obvious normative implication of my argument presents itself: is political competition undesirable? Are developing countries like Ghana ill-equipped to handle the contestation that comes with electoral democracy? I offer two reasons for optimism. First, from a political development perspective in which progress is neither linear nor to be assumed, one should be agnostic about the long-term effects on Ghana’s democracy of the phenomena I observe. The perverse effects of political competition should not be assumed to be either disastrous or permanent. Scholars of distributive

politics note, for example, that even if clientelism does not die it mutates and is not incompatible with economic growth and raised living standards (Roniger, 2004; Khan and Sundaram, 2000). The phenomena I outline here say nothing about macro-political or macro-economic forces that will powerfully shape living standards, forces that have in fact underscored very real progress in standards of living for many Ghanaians in the past decade or so. The phenomena I describe are not inherent or permanent. My dissertation simply captures a cross-section of institutional behaviors across Ghana. It is a snapshot in time.

Second, my findings are couched in the careful language of incentives: politicians have *incentives* to behave in a clientelistic fashion. But this account is not deterministic. Office-seekers across time and space have incentives for all sorts of undesirable behavior. If there is a core difference between politicians in developing and developed countries it is not that their *incentive* structures are so different. It is that their *constraints* vary considerably. All politicians have incentives to plunder public resources for their constituents. Some are able to accomplish this. Others face constraints in the form of moral codes, independent and muscular legal systems, or engaged civil society.

1.2.3 State capacity: over-use of a useful concept

My findings have important implications for theory on state capacity and the state in Africa. In studying politics across local governments I find neither ‘strong state’ nor ‘weak state’ effects. At the beginning of my research I expected that the districts which were under-providing public services would be those with weak administrative capacity, and the goal would be to figure out why their capacity was thus. By the end, however, I found evidence that the opposite may in fact be true. So unimportant did state capacity appear to be as an explanatory device that informants found it strange when I persisted in asking about it. State capacity as a conceptual variable *does* matter, but it never approached levels of significance that would allow me to explain variation in the behavior of local governments across the country. A focus on state capacity would simply obscure deeper political phenomena. Scholars of developing countries attribute significant explanatory power to state capacity, and I include myself in that community. I suggest we have over-used the concept of

state capacity and I issue a modest call to rein in its analytic reach. Moreover, the local government officials I knew did not fit the image of the African local government official as incompetent or corrupt. The constraints on better governance were technical or administrative. On the whole, civil servants were respected for their skills and impartiality. Defects in local governance were not to be found in bureaucratic quality, but rather in the very real political constraints that shape incumbent behavior. In a later chapter, for example, I tell the story of an ambitious revenue generation scheme developed by a budget officer, who was disappointed to learn that his political superiors had no interest in making tax collection more efficient. I conclude by suggesting the merit of a new research agenda, focused not simply on the incompetence or malfeasance of local government officials, but instead attuned to how political constraints produce complex political economies for governing authorities.

1.3 Why Ghana?

Ghana is a useful place to study how competitive electoral politics affects the behavior of a decentralized state in a contemporary developing country. I justify it on theoretical and empirical grounds. First, key institutional features make Ghana a worthwhile place to examine the consequences of political competition in a decentralized developing country. Like so many developing countries over the past two decades, Ghana has gone through periods of structural adjustment, a transition from authoritarianism, and decentralization of the state.¹⁶ State retreat from the economy enabled the growth of a new class of politico-economic entrepreneurs for whom the state is a dispenser of contracts, while decentralization remains incomplete. Central government retains important sources of control over local governments, especially through the president's power to nominate or fire the heads of local government. The fact that the central government retains such control has the virtue for my research design that variation in the behavior of local governments can not be strongly attributed to the variation in local social preferences, since mechanisms to transmit these preferences are weakened by the center's control over heads of local government.

¹⁶The empirical decentralization and local government literatures are enormous. See Bardhan and Mookherjee (2002, 2006), Enikolopov and Zhuravskaya (2007), Caldeira et al. (2012), and Ziblatt and O'Dwyer (2006).

Second, it remains one of Africa's 'star performers,' and is rightly lauded for its political stability and economic growth. The utility for my research is that the modes of politics I uncover at the level of local government—the level at which most Ghanaians experience government—appear strikingly disconnected from the national level discourses of peace and stability. The nation that is seen by outsiders as a model for its neighbors is seen in towns and villages as instead a model of corruption, rentierism, and inequity.

A survey of 1,000 adults in 129 countries asked "Is corruption widespread throughout the government in [country], or not?" 89% of Ghanaians agreed with the statement, an extremely high figure that was similar to that in Nigeria, Indonesia, Thailand, and Cameroon, and higher than Russia and Zimbabwe.¹⁷ Of countries listed by Freedom House as having a free press, this put Ghana's perceived level of corruption third highest globally (Gallup, 2013).

This image is buttressed by further survey data. Afrobarometer 5 (2010-2012) asked 2,400 people in each of 34 countries about government corruption. Ghanaian perceptions of corruption were above the median for the sub-continent.¹⁸ While outsiders commend the stability and growth of the Republic of Ghana, in towns and villages such accolades are hollow succor to ordinary men and women suffering the daily indignities of arbitrary justice, power outages, demands for bribes, and dilapidated schools. Indeed, research on electoral fraud uses Ghanaian elections as a laboratory precisely because of the existence of over-voting, ballot stuffing or voter intimidation (Asunka et al., 2013; Ichino and Schundeln, 2012). This disconnect between external image and local perception is worthy of close analysis precisely because of Ghana's reputation.

These popular views are reflected in more fine-grained indices of state capacity, in which the Ghanaian state emerges as quite an 'average' developing country. Englebort (2002) used International Country Risk Guide's (ICRG) data to develop his *Developmental Capacity Index*, which ranked Ghana lower than 18 other SSA countries (31). In the *Ibrahim Index of African Governance*, Ghana ranks 16th in Africa on indicators that relate to state capacity, such as statistical capacity and revenue collection, and 20th for infrastructure. And it can also be seen in the *Quality of Government Expert*

¹⁷Agreement responses in these countries were 92%, 88%, 87%, 89%, 80%, and 78%, respectively.

¹⁸35% said 'most' or 'all' government officials were involved in corruption, compared to a median of 26% for all 34 countries.

Survey, in which country experts scored the professionalism of the Ghanaian bureaucracy lower than Mauritius, Cameroon and Tanzania (Teorell et al., 2011). Finally, Lee and Zhang (2013) use an index developed by demographers to measure the quality of censuses, where higher scores indicate more errors in the census.¹⁹ Figure 1.3 shows the average quality of censuses in Africa since the 1960s. The dot shows the exact value for Ghana, which is consistently above the median, meaning they conducted their censuses with *above-median* error.²⁰ Taken together, proxies for the power of the Ghanaian state suggest it is not an outlier in terms of the quality of its institutions, despite an international reputation to the contrary.

Third, the secondary source material for Ghana is very strong. Since my units of observation are small (most with a population of 100,000), finding good historical or anthropological accounts can be quite difficult. It was important, therefore, to choose a country that has been extensively studied by a range of scholars across multiple disciplines and across time.

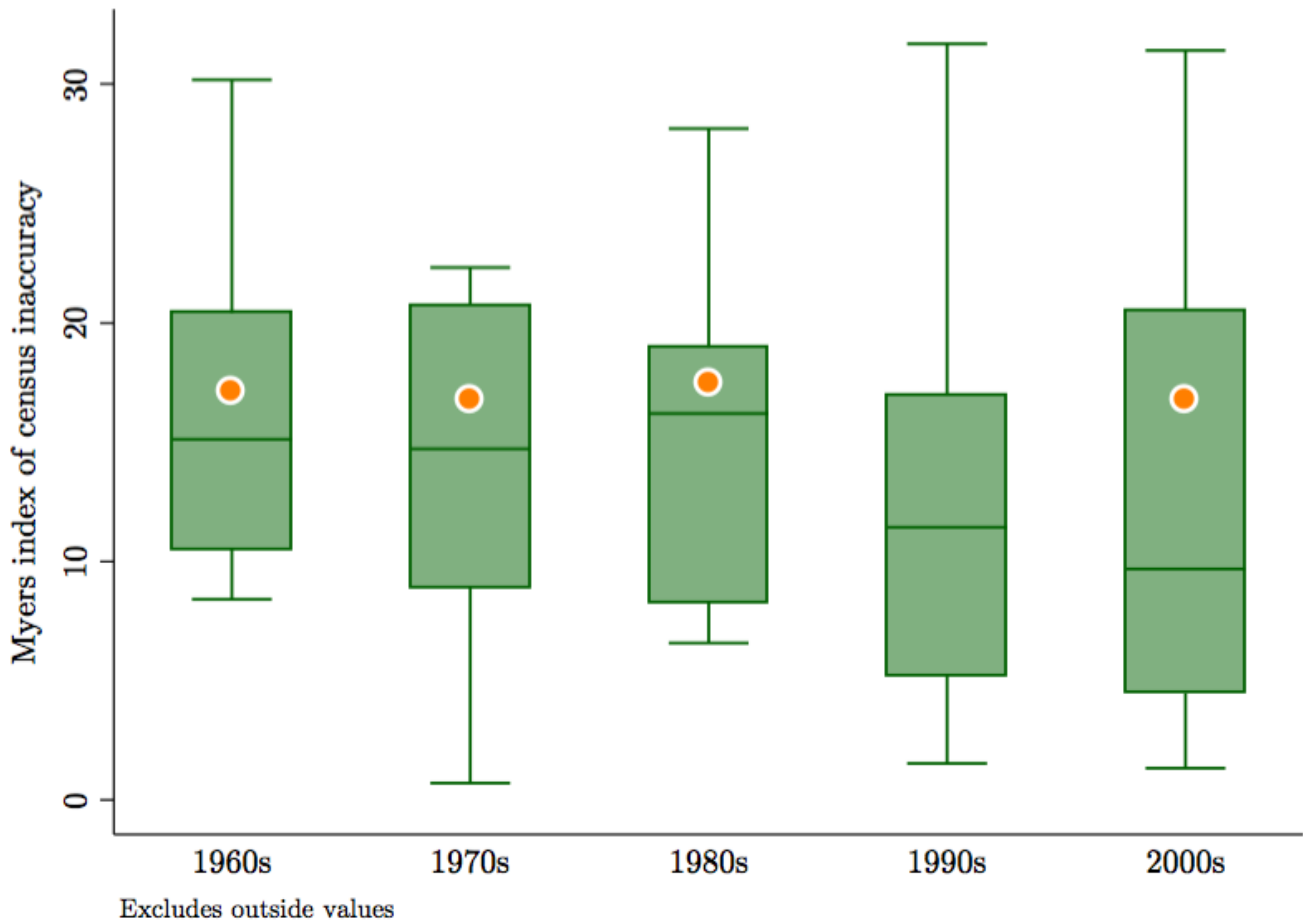
1.4 Methods and data

My mixed methods research design emphasized small-N qualitative case study research nested within large-N subnational survey research. The value of a ‘nested analysis’ is that large-N data may guide case selection, statistical analysis can then test emergent hypotheses from case studies, and small-N data ultimately allow the researcher to validate or amend the causal logic (Lieberman, 2005). The value of a subnational approach is to allow me to hold constant important macro variables (Snyder, 2001). Cross-national comparative research on the nature of political party competition suffers from the twin challenge that electoral and party systems are highly varied across countries and that in each case the reverse causality concern is present: the extent of competition can be driven by, rather than drive, the quality of government. But although subnational inquiry allows one to hold constant major institutional variables, it does not remove the need to relate local level findings ‘back up’ to

¹⁹The Myers Index measures deviations in a censuses age distribution, since the age of populations should follow a normal distribution, and the method controls for shocks like wars and human calamities. A higher Myers Score is associated with a more error-filled census.

²⁰In the 2000s, the country with the worst census (highest score on Myers Index) was Ethiopia, and the best was South Africa. In the 1960s, Zambia had the best and Nigeria the worst.

FIGURE 1.3: Average quality of censuses in sub-Saharan African countries over five decades



Note: Higher scores indicate ‘worse’ censuses. Dot is value for Ghana, which did not conduct any census in the 1990s. The dataset includes 8 censuses in the 1960s, 19 in 1970s, 17 in 1980s, 17 in 1990s, and 24 since 2000. Data kindly provided by Lee and Zhang (2013).

the national level (Sinha, 2012). Studies of local governments should not be treated in isolation from their supra-local contexts (Riker, 1964; Rodden, 2006; Wibbels, 2006; Zhuravskaya, 2000). I explicitly attempt to avoid this pitfall by showing how Ghana’s central government is constrained by their dependence on party activists in neighborhoods and villages throughout the country. To focus on local government units as the key units of analysis, therefore, is not to blind oneself to the importance of broader contextual forces.

I conducted a total of 14 months of fieldwork across three trips from 2009-2012, including nine months living in the middle of the country in 2012. The first two-thirds of 2012 was spent

conducting case study research. I situated my case study research in the study of ‘normal politics,’ which is a term for the study of the everyday practice of government in a community. It is a mode of inquiry that begins with the knowledge that what happens most of the time in most of the world is neither hotly contested elections nor boisterous riots. Instead, everyday governance is comprised of a hundred small interactions between authorities and those they purport to govern. These interactions may involve the paying of licenses, petitions for patronage, the collection of I.D. cards or requests for the waiving of school fees, and they are a key site of intersection in which bureaucrats, politicians, and ordinary people either change or renew their beliefs about one another.

In the final third of my fieldwork, I implemented a survey of district assembly bureaucrats and politicians. Working with a team of over 200 research assistants, I completed what I believe to be the most nationally representative survey of local governments ever conducted in sub-Saharan Africa. The survey methodology is explained in the Appendix.

My research was motivated by the field of fiscal sociology, which is concerned with how a ruler’s imperative to raise revenue obliges them to interact with their citizens and shapes how they do so. “The budget,” Goldscheid argued, “is the skeleton of the state stripped of all misleading ideologies” (cited in Schumpeter, 1954, 6. See also Levi, 1988; Brautigam, 2008; Campbell, 1993). Taking a ‘street-level bureaucrats’ approach, I began by spending time with tax collectors and the object of their activity, which was predominantly market traders (Lipsky, 1979; Blundo, 2006; Crook and Ayee, 2006). I initially focused on pressures tax collectors may come under and on the experience of tax payers. I found to a striking degree, however, that while market traders were uniform across districts in their sense that little was received in return for taxes paid, actual services did appear to differ. After several months, I pivoted from a narrow interest in the process of tax collection to a more broad interest in the forces shaping district assembly behavior. Once re-framed it quickly became clear what my research had been missing: a concern with political parties and how they infused local governance. Party activists fill the hallways, waiting rooms and offices of local government bureaucrats and politicians.

1.5 Organization of the dissertation

The dissertation proceeds in four parts. Part 1 introduces the research problem, argument, and research design. It consists of three chapters. The present chapter has introduced the research problem and the argument. Chapter 2 provides important historical context for the later discussion of themes of party system institutionalization, clientelism, and the logic of local government. It does this by asking a seemingly simple question, ‘why are some districts more competitive than others?’

The chapter develops a historical-institutionalist account of party and state formation, in which cocoa migration and party system formation are shown to shape the long-term spatial distribution of ethno-regional groups who would, over time, become identified with major political traditions. The key finding is that the behavior of patronage-providing districts does not drive their level of competitiveness. Rather, district inter-party competitiveness is rooted in migration and party formation that were chronologically prior to the present district assembly system. The historical route the chapter takes to explaining why some districts are competitive also serves as a basic introduction to the Ghanaian context. Chapter 3 then describes my case selection and qualitative methodology, as well as my daily research activities, and contextualizes the research activities with an overview of the local government system and with important political events happening during the research.

The two chapters in Part II use qualitative data to describe causal mechanisms. Chapters 4 and 5 draw primarily on qualitative data to describe how a district ‘really’ works. Chapter 4 describes the lives of political figures, and chapter 5 district officials. These chapters are intentionally descriptive. The aim is to immerse the reader in the worlds of these actors, and thereby ground the more abstract statistical analysis of later chapters.

Part III uses quantitative data for statistical analysis. In chapter 6, I find that relatively high political competition at the district level is associated with the over-provision of patronage and the under-provision of public goods. Chapter 7 engages alternative hypotheses. It reports the counter-intuitive finding that highly competitive districts are not only no worse in their internal

administration than other districts, but are actually more internally efficient and meritocratic than relatively less competitive districts.

Part IV concludes by discussing major themes of the dissertation in comparative context. Chapter 8 situates political competition in comparative perspective, in which lessons from Ghana are connected to subjects of interest to Africanists and to political economists. This includes an analysis of party system strength and clientelism across Africa, in which I show that vote buying is less common in more highly institutionalized party systems. I then turn to a re-examination of the role of the Big Man in Africanist political science. I argue for returning the concept to its original use, in which the Big Man was a figure with real constraints rather than a unchecked center of despotic power. Last, I discuss the implications for this research on our understanding of the state in Africa. I lay out a research agenda that calls for studying today's African states at the point where most people experience them—at the local level. Scholarship on the African state has remained overly focused on central government. This proposed research agenda departs by going beyond the view of local governance as mired in administrative incompetence. The problems of African local governance are much deeper and more complex than bureaucratic weakness. This research agenda challenges such assumptions by instead focusing on the political constraints that may lead incumbents to frustrate improvements in their own governing capacity.

Chapter 2

Why are some districts competitive?

Introduction

The causal logic leading from political competition to local government behavior is threaded through the mechanism of the party activists, on whom the national party in power relies for electoral mobilization, and to whom incumbents are most responsive. But could local government behavior be driven by competitiveness rather than the other way around? Because my fieldwork was conducted across several districts at one point in time, I did not observe the effect of changes in political competition on district behavior within one district. Thus my causal story could just as easily be told in reverse: patronage-providing districts might stir political contestation and become competitive as a result. To argue that political competition has a (mostly negative) causal effect on local government behavior, I need to demonstrate that district competitiveness is not in fact endogenous to local government behavior. This problem can be re-formulated as a research question: Why are some districts more competitive than others? This chapter answers this question by showing how the factors that made some districts highly competitive were historically prior to the present district assembly system. This historical approach to understanding district competitiveness also has the virtue of explaining how and why Ghana developed a strong party system that remains today. This

strong party system is in large part why districts have generally remained at their given level of competitiveness over recent elections.

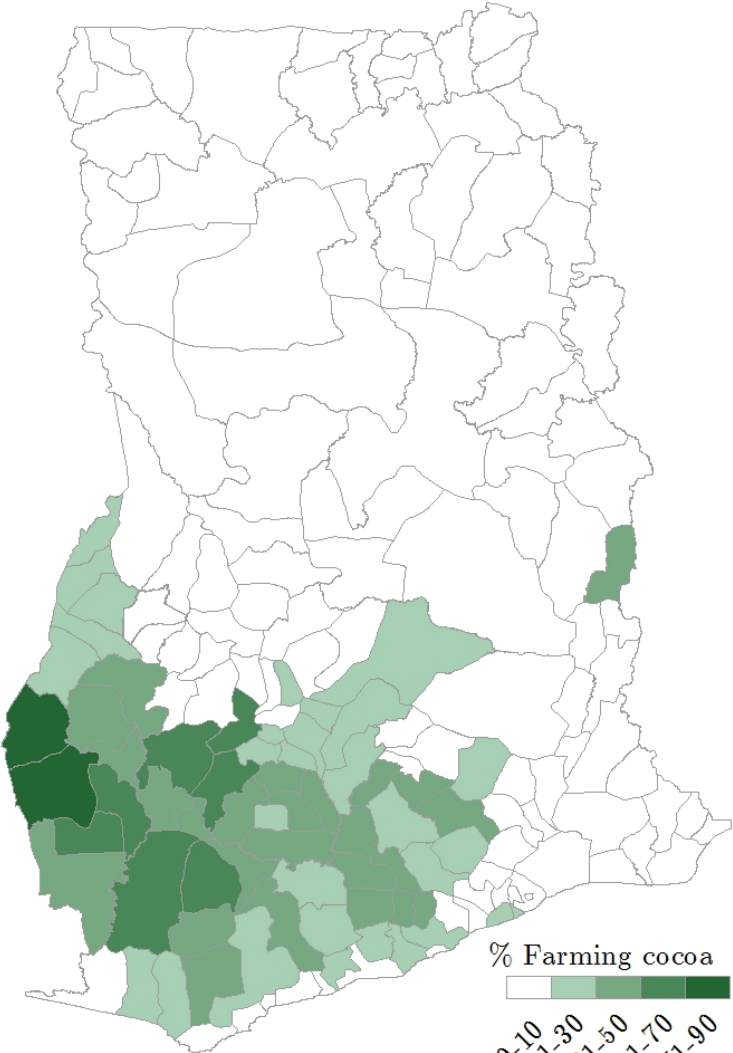
I show how district-level competitiveness has been shaped by political party formation and economic migration which crucially predate the present district assembly system. Thus, *party formation preceded state formation*. The 1950s-1970s was a period of *party* formation in which communities began to align behind long-term political traditions that dominate politics up to today. It was also a period of immense socio-economic flux due in large part to migration west and south-west for cocoa. Cocoa is extremely important in my story since highly competitive districts today are concentrated in and around the cocoa regions (see Figure 2.1). Cocoa migration had the effect of making neighbors out of various ethno-regional groups who became enduringly aligned with distinct political traditions. This is a main reason why most of the competitive districts today are in the cocoa regions.

The 1980s-1990s was a broad period of *state* formation in which the structures of the modern state took shape under President Jerry Rawlings. In the late 1980s, his military government introduced the modern district assembly system onto communities which were already aligned behind distinct political traditions. Districts in which the community was majorly aligned with one political tradition emerged as strongholds and remain so up to today. Districts in which communities were split between the two traditions emerged as highly competitive and remain so today. Thus, district assembly politics reinforced district-level political fissures. It did not create them.

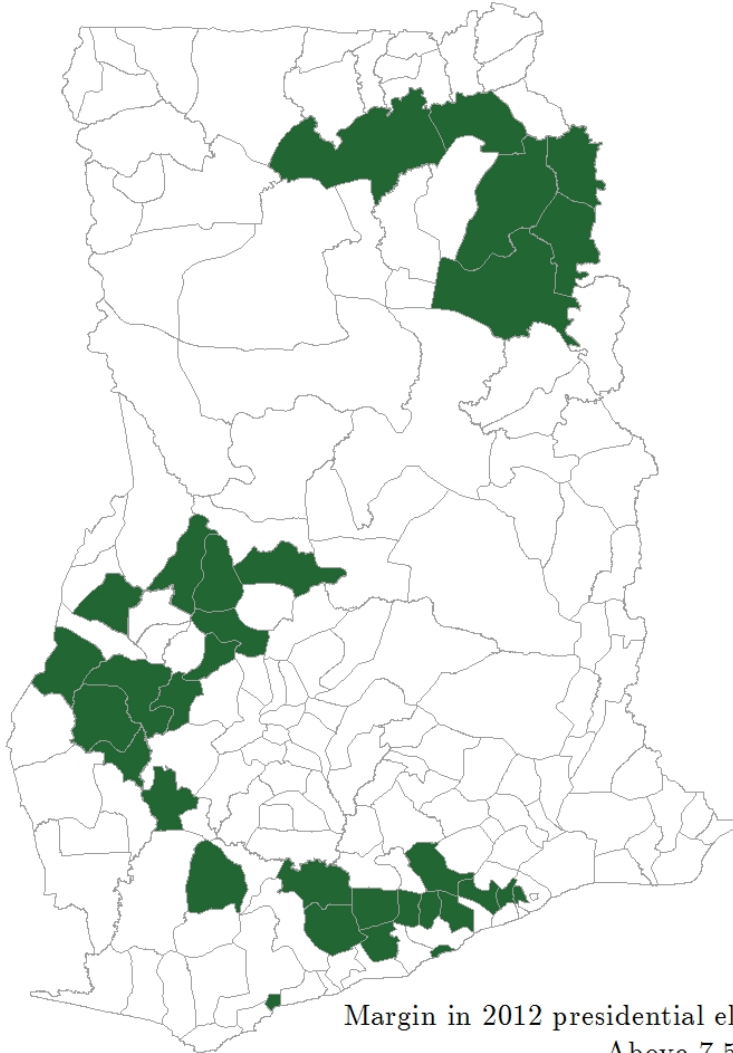
FIGURE 2.1: Map of cocoa production and political competition

(A) Cocoa production

(B) Political competition



Data from GLSS5 (2005)



In adopting a historical-institutionalist approach, the chapter assumes actors make choices given their incentives, information and constraints, and that these choices generate path dependence over time: equilibria from which actors have neither the incentive nor the capacity to deviate. But shocks occur, so in historical-institutionalist research continuity and change are phenomena to be explained rather than assumed (Thelen, 1999; Pierson, 2000). The key path dependent development in this chapter is the emergence decades ago of a political party system centered around two party traditions, a party system which endured over time. The key shock in this chapter is the discovery of cocoa, which distributed politically aligned groups throughout the country in ways that deeply impacted today's distribution of district-level competitiveness.

I divide the chapter into three sections. The first two sections explore the twin phenomena of cocoa migration and party development. Cocoa formed an early cleavage during the emergence of party politics in the 1950s, and the effects of cocoa migration today can be seen in the distribution of (often northern) migrant laborers now living in cocoa areas. The third section covers the elaboration of the present district assembly system in the 1980s-1990s. The district system marked a considerable break from the past in terms of local control and possibilities for local elites to access state patronage, but by that point significant political alignments had occurred throughout the country which Rawlings could not unmake. Since the development of the cocoa economy is chronologically prior to important developments in party formation, our story begins with cocoa and migration in the early 20th century. It provides some of the essential backdrop for understanding patterns of party formation, discussed in the second section.

2.1 Cocoa and migration

2.1.1 Southern cocoa, Northern labor, and the growth of stranger communities

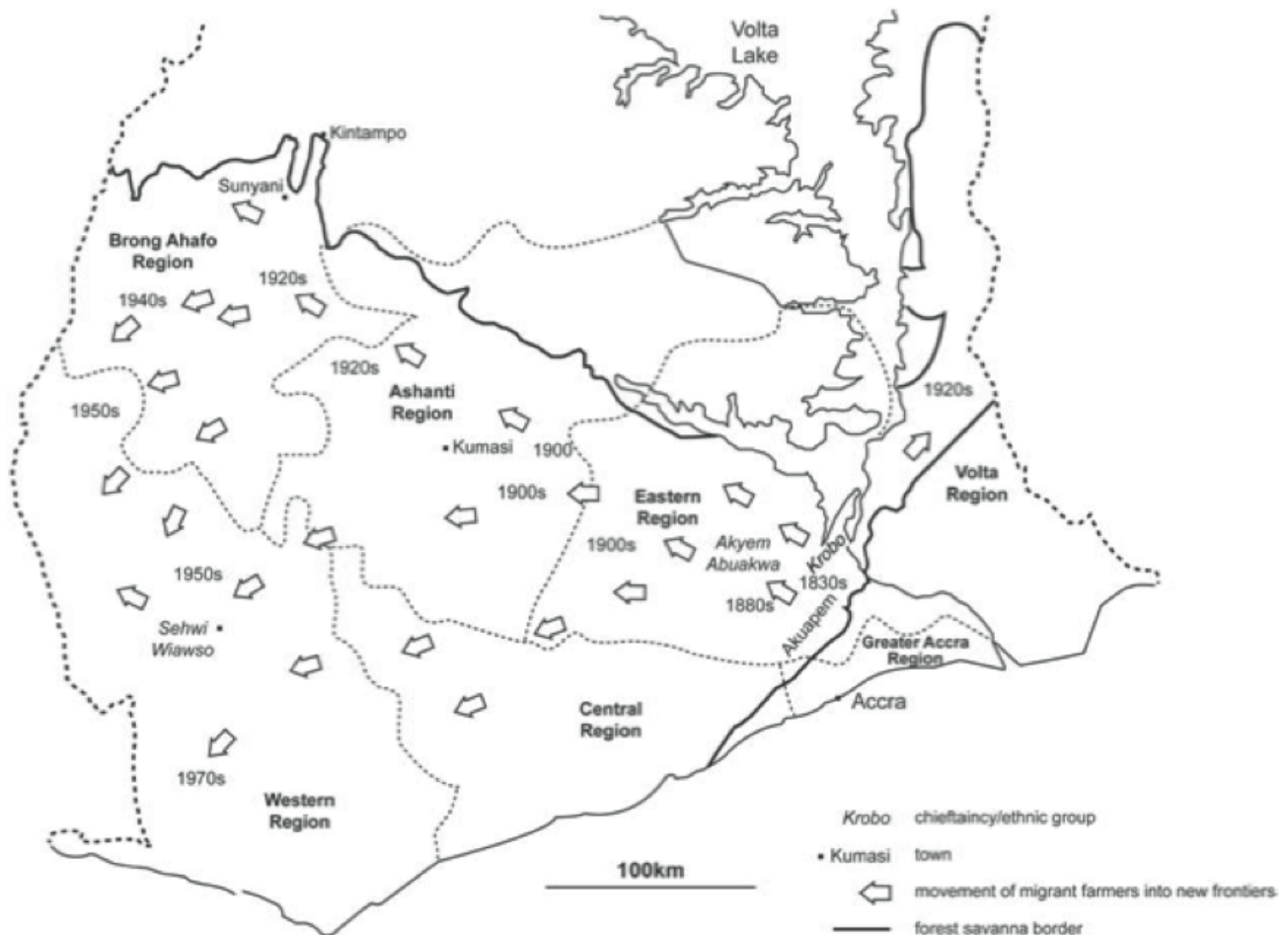
Ghana's cocoa economy is today concentrated in the southwest of the country.¹ It has its roots in the late 1800s in areas north of Accra, but only with its move westward into forested areas from the turn of the century did it begin to boom and transform the country (Hill, 1963). By 1911, Ghana was the world's leading exporter of cocoa but the crop did not boom all at once throughout the country. As shown in Figure 2.2, cocoa spread over decades in a counter-clockwise direction, from Eastern Region around 1900, to Ashanti Region around 1900-1920, westward again to Brong-Ahafo Region by 1940, and then southward into Western Region which by 1970 was the center of cocoa production and remains so today.²

In the early stages of the shifting cocoa frontier chiefs of small polities were typically welcoming of farmers willing to clear their forests, improve their land and pay for the privilege. In the early 1900s the dominant migrant farmers were Asantes, the major Akan group (Hill, 1961; Mitchell, 2013). Over time the selling (leasing is more accurate) of land to 'strangers' by chiefs often fanned local conflict as those viewing themselves as 'indigenes' lashed out at the land scarcity created by 'strangers.' While 'citizens' of an area traditionally had customary rights to land, 'strangers' had to negotiate usage rights with chiefs who had the right to lease land to strangers but not to sell it. Thus the use—and increased scarcity—of land following the influx of migrants fed into local citizen-alien tension and played into broader discourses of autochthony, meaning the tension between indigenes and aliens (Boone and Duku, 2012). The persistence of autochthon-stranger, or citizen-alien, conflict in cocoa areas is important because it explains patterns of non-incorporation of migrants (especially later non-Akan migrants) into host communities, divisions that would ultimately be politicized by political parties.

¹My understanding of cocoa and migration has benefited enormously from the scholarship and advice of Matthew Mitchell.

²Map taken from Amanor (2011, 109).

FIGURE 2.2: Growth and movement of cocoa frontier



Around the 1920s, motorable roads helped substantially larger numbers of migrants to arrive from outside the Akan linguistic family (Dunn and Robertson, 1973, 61). It is these next set of migrants—mostly northerners, and often Muslims, from present-day Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali and also northern Ghana—who today constitute the ‘stranger’ neighborhoods in a typical cocoa town. In these towns, people refer to clusters of (usually poor) neighborhoods as the ‘Zongo’ (or ‘stranger’) part of town. Ask ‘who lives in the Zongo?’ and you will be told, ‘that is where the northerners and the Muslims live.’³ As the cocoa economy spread, so did Zongos, both in their size and in their numbers. But it was not always the case that northerners were treated with hostility as aliens. Indeed, contrary to what my Ghanaian friends would tell me, Zongo does not mean ‘stranger.’ It

³See Berry (2001, 153) for a discussion of this theme.

is actually the Hausa word for caravan. In the pre-colonial period northern areas were linked to southern Ghana by trade routes and in particular by the slave trade. These northerners were not just present-day northern Ghanaians but also from Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), Nigeria, Mali, Niger, Dahomey (Benin) and Togo. A Zongo in this period referred to the camping place of a caravan of traders. In this pre-colonial period Muslim traders from the north even inter-married with Asante and were generally welcomed in Kumasi (Schildkrout, 1978, 67; also Berry (2001, 19). But it is significant that for many people I knew the terms Muslim, northerner and Zongo were almost interchangeable. Today, these are neighborhoods of historically non-incorporated economic migrants.

This picture of a relatively harmonious relationship between the Asante state and Muslim traders in their Zongos is disrupted with British defeat of the Asante in 1874 and with increasing colonial control over the Asante state in the decades that followed. The British actually recruited northerners to fight against the Asante, and with the destruction of its sovereign power the Asante state lost the ability to regulate the flow of migrants through its borders. This not only meant that northerners could enter in greater numbers, it also meant that the growing Kumasi Zongo depended on the British for support and moreover that its own growth was implicated in the destruction of the Asante empire (Schildkrout, 1978, 71). This was the beginning of the shift in perceptions of northerners, from traders to be treated civilly, to social and cultural aliens to be resented and isolated.

By 1920 northern laborers had become a second tier in Zongos in the burgeoning cocoa regions. These unskilled laborers were often from traditionally non-centralized societies and many were not Muslim. This contrasted with the first tier of Zongo residents, who typically were Muslims from centralized societies like the Hausa, Yoruba and Mossi. The identity of the initial settlers shaped the development of Zongo identity over time. Yet the definition of a Zongo person was situational: “one of the main characteristics that all members of the Zongo have in common is that they are neither Asante, southern Ghanaian, European, Lebanese, or Indian—the other main groups in the town. The Zongo exists in conceptual opposition to these other categories. Its existence depends on the maintenance of the distinctions between strangers and indigenes, aliens and citizens, Asante and non-Asante, and northerners and southerners” (Mikell, 1989, 88). The fact that host communities

were generally non-Muslim, and that early Zongo inhabitants were Muslim, partly explains why today Islam is often an important part of Zongo identity.

The incorporation of non-Asante economic migrants into Asante society before colonialism was not repeated in the colonial period. Although some inter-marriage did occur between Akan and migrants such as the non-Muslim Mossi, for the most part inter-marriage did not occur, and the social isolation of northern migrants further ghettoized them as a group. As Mikell noted, “Brong-Ashanti farmers in the 1940s and 1950s did not generally approve of northerners (Mossi or others) who stepped across ethnic boundaries into new social and economic roles” (Mikell, 1989, 130). It was a fact of social life at the time, and to a very great extent still is today, that not only did ‘indigenes’ see migrants as ‘strangers,’ but ‘strangers’ themselves retained the identities of their homes, even into later generations: “the upheaval and migration during the Ashanti wars and British conquest, as well as in response to the mobility of the cocoa economy, had resulted in considerable ethnic heterogeneity within rural cocoa areas. . . The problem was that each people had tended to retain allegiances to their hometown and ethnic origin, even while sinking new roots into other communities within the cocoa belt” (Mikell, 1989, 159). Boni’s study of land tenure in the Sefwi Wiaso kingdom in today’s Western Region noted: “Since the introduction of cocoa, immigrants were excluded—at times retrospectively—from a Sefwi ethnicity. The process of hybridization of identities that had taken place up to then was halted” (Boni, 2005, 82). What is significant is not only that cocoa spread groups across the territory, but that the form it took—the non-incorporation of non-Akan migrants—had lasting socio-political consequences.

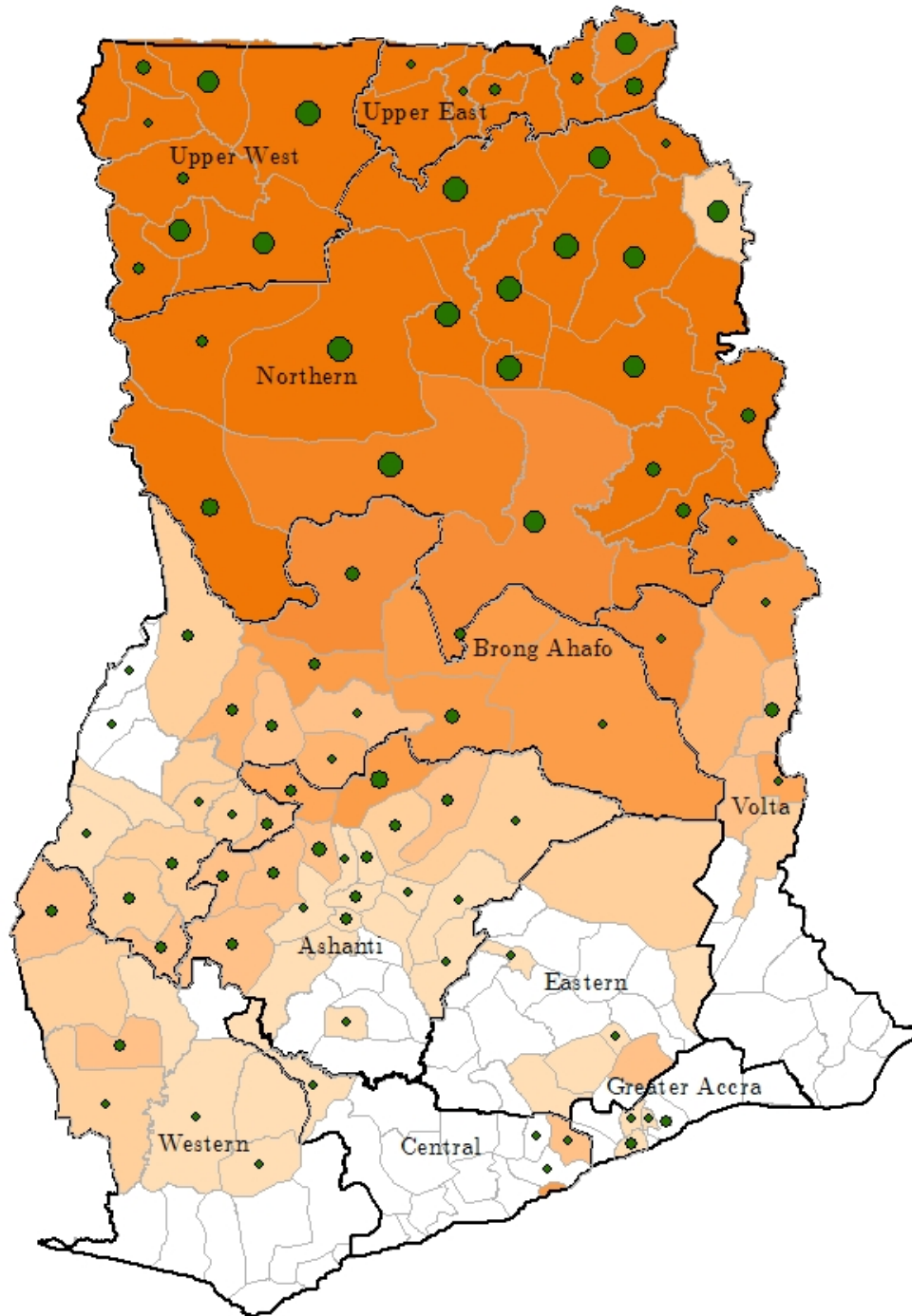
2.1.2 Long-term settlement patterns

Increases in population in western and southwestern Ghana from the early 1900s up until the 1970s were dramatic. From 1931 to 1960, for example, important towns in the country’s mid-west experienced huge growth: roughly ten-fold increases in the important towns of Berekum and Nkoranza; five-fold in Sunyani; treble in Techiman, and double in Wenchi (Mikell, 1989, 76). In the 1970 census, a quarter of all residents in the cocoa-growing Brong-Ahafo Region said they came from a different

region, a high share that was second only to Accra which was beginning to rapidly urbanize. 76% of all migrant northerners lived in either Ashanti, Brong-Ahafo or Western Regions.

The last major shift in the cocoa frontier brings us up to today. This was the movement into the southern Western Region, the very southwestern corner of the country, in the 1980s as cocoa prices and the economy began to recover (Awanyo, 1998). The tide appears to have settled by the 1990s, by which time most land had been taken and prices had risen dramatically (Moller-Jensen and Knudsen, 2008, 318). Even data from the 2010 census suggests a continuing link between northerners and cocoa regions. Of northerners enumerated outside their region of birth, over one-third were found in just the Western and Brong-Ahafo regions alone.

FIGURE 2.3: Ethnic Northerners and Muslim populations



Note: Dots show the size of district Muslim populations in the 2010 Census where at least 10% of the district population are Muslim. Dark shading indicates the presence of major northern ethnic groups using the 2010 Census where at least 10% are ethnic northerners, defined as the sum of Mole-Dagbon, Grusi, Gurma, Guan and Mande populations.

Figure 2.3 shows the distribution of ethnic northerners today. Recalling that cocoa is concentrated in the west and southwest, the settlement pattern of northerners living outside of the north is striking, as shown by the darker shading. Dots show the presence of Muslims, with dot size varying by group size. The map illustrates that with the spread of northerner labor southward for cocoa came the spread of Islam.⁴ But note the heterogeneity in the phenomenon. There are areas in the north where Islam is not strong (small dots) and there are cocoa areas with sizable northern migrant populations (dark shading) but with modest Muslim populations.⁵ This data is shown by way of counseling caution in assuming that northern equals Islam. The map does not try to illustrate all migration for cocoa. Such a map would include Fantes from the coast, Ewes from the east, as well as Asantes from the center of the country.

2.2 Party formation and political alignments

Cocoa, and the movements of northern migrants marginalized as Zongo people, formed the important backdrop against which important developments in Ghanaian party politics emerged in the 1950s. The main parties today trace their lineages back to the late colonial period (Kelly and Bening, 2013; Whitfield, 2011).⁶ The New Patriotic Party (NPP) is understood in terms of its ‘Danquah-Busia tradition,’ which is a reference to precursors to the modern NPP which began under the leadership of Dr. J. B. Danquah and then under Kofi Busia. National Democratic Congress (NDC) supporters occasionally refer to their Nkrumahist, populist legacy stretching back to the 1950s, though this is highly contested even within their own ranks. In fact, although the 1950s was a period of party growth, it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that major lineages took hold in the country. This section traces the gradual alignment of ethnic groups behind political parties, and highlights the intersections between migrant ‘stranger’ communities and the emerging political cleavages.

⁴Though Islam was present in the Ashanti Kingdom before cocoa.

⁵Using 2010 Census data the correlation between district Muslim population and district ethnic northern population is 0.65.

⁶Boahen (1989) traces the CPP and UGCC/PP tradition to the 1920s, long before Nkrumah and Danquah.

2.2.1 Initial party formation in the 1950s

Although the NPP and NDC today have strong ethno-regional overtones, in the pre-independence period (approximately 1940s and 1950s) the evidence for ethnically aligned parties is actually not strong (Fridy, 2013). What makes this period significant is not that it saw the emergence of present-day political alignments, but rather that this period witnessed the birth of attempts at mass political organization spanning the whole territory of modern Ghana.

In 1947, Kwame Nkrumah had become General Secretary of the new United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), which was a conservative elite-based movement pressing for greater self-government that had been founded by Danquah that same year (Austin, 1976). Nkrumah broke from the UGCC and formed the more radical and populist Convention People's Party (CPP) in 1949. Under the twin themes of rejecting the aristocratic power of colonial-backed chiefs and of ending British abuses in the cocoa sector, he and the CPP emerged as the populist force for the 'common man.' The CPP was thus explicitly *non*-ethno-regional in origin, and it is perhaps unique in Ghanaian history as a politically dominant force that was primarily ideological in nature.

Nkrumah and the CPP dominated pre-independence elections of 1951, 1954 and 1956. He and the CPP worked tirelessly to build a political organization spanning territory and societies that had never before been united: "The strengthening of the party during these years in order to spread its power through as many channels as possible was a constant preoccupation on the part of the leaders. Again and again, the structure was examined, amended, and added to, in an attempt to produce a militant, disciplined body of followers out of a strongly localized society" (Austin, 1970b, 175-6). So determined and energized was this political expansion that people spoke of 'Cippippification' (CPP-ification), a term that "denoted as much political as "religious" conversion to CPP... This had involved the touring day and night of the towns and villages of the central and other regions of Ghana by a small but dedicated group of party activists" (Owusu, 2006, 209).

The CPP grew quickly in the early 1950s and was dominant from independence in 1957 to Nkrumah's violent removal in 1966. But the CPP was new, not deeply rooted, and its dominance

is easily over-emphasized.⁷ For example, numerous caveats need to be added to its impressive 1951 electoral victory: no other party had time to organize for the elections; there was low hanging fruit in the form of complaints about economic hardship and the compulsory cutting of cocoa trees, issues about which office-seekers could campaign without alienating voters; and many people were disqualified from voting since one needed to be a ratepayer (Owusu, 2006, 215). After 1951, however, it became obvious that access to political office—including to the Cocoa Purchasing Company—came with huge benefits and this enhanced incentives to form parties. Thus, after its electoral successes as the first mover in the early 50s, in the 1954 election “the CPP began to falter, and a dangerous quarrel developed over the nomination of candidates as local interests were asserted in defiance of the authority of the central committee. . . Its constituency executives split into warring groups, and ‘rebel candidates’ appeared” (Austin, 1970b, 201-2).

As the CPP expanded in the early 1950s, regional parties grew with diverse concerns. Nkrumah’s CPP had represented itself as the party of ‘young men’ and as the party of the common man against elites. In the 1940s and 1950s ‘young men’ were understood to be “those who sought power through channels other than those associated with the institution of chieftaincy” (Schildkrout, 1978, 209). Nkrumah’s rhetoric exerted a centrifugal force by compelling distant forces to ally with one another. The Northern People’s Party was formed in 1954 and its strength was based on fears that Nkrumah was against traditional authorities (Austin, 1970a). The eastern-based Togoland Congress was formed in 1951 to unite Ewe people in British Togoland and French Togoland. The fact that the Togoland Congress did not run candidates in Ewe areas outside of Volta/Togoland reveals that the Togoland Congress, as with other parties at the time, were motivated by the issue of what form the state should take rather than by ethnicity per se.

In the 1954 election, CPP candidates promised higher cocoa prices after having froze them in 1951, but after their electoral victory they reduced cocoa prices further (Boone, 2003, 160). This is what gave rise to the Ashanti-based National Liberation Movement (NLM) in 1954. The NLM is historically significant as it marked the first Asante-dominated political party. Its goals were low

⁷The fact that the CPP was weaker than is usually appreciated is an important finding running through the works of Austin (1970a), Owusu (2006), and Dunn and Robertson (1973, 329).

taxes on cocoa and a federal constitution which would reduce Nkrumah's power over Asante (Allman, 1993, 29). From the outset the NLM brand married cocoa with Asante identity. In 1955, attendees of a rally just outside Kumasi were told: "The NLM was the Ashanti Nation and the Ashanti Nation the NLM. It was therefore the duty of every Ashanti to support it" (Allman, 1993, 97). An early NLM pamphlet asked rhetorically, "Ashantis produce more cocoa than the colony. Is there any cocoa in the northern territories? No! Why should Government tax cocoa farmers to develop the country in which Ashanti's suffer most?" (Allman, 1993, 28). It is significant that almost 60 years later, a political storm erupted when a former NPP finance minister was recorded complaining that although most of the country's natural resources come from Akan areas, it is ethnic northerners in government who control them (Daily Graphic, 2015).⁸

This Asante nationalism at the heart of the NLM was precisely what hurt it elsewhere in the country, since Asante votes alone would not see it win a general election. The party had trouble convincing cocoa farmers outside of Asante land that it could stand for them. As cocoa producers in the south "listened to the propaganda coming out of the Ashanti capital, and saw the preparations being made for the expansion of the party into the Colony [on the coast], they saw the NLM not as the farmer's friend but as the spearhead of a new Ashanti invasion of the South" (Austin, 1964, 344). These fears of Asante domination were also historically rooted in memories of oppression by the Asante Kingdom in the collective minds of Akan groups in today's Central, Western and Brong-Ahafo regions (Mikell, 1989, 161). At the height of the Kingdom's power in 1820 the British Consul had noted that "every town and village were overawed by a dread of the vengeance of Ashantee" (Austin, 1976, 68).

Despite internal optimism that allies outside of Asante could carry them to victory, the NLM ultimately fared badly not only across the country but even within Asante. The CPP won 71 of the 104 seats in the 1956 election. Although the NLM won 13 of 21 Asante seats, the combined CPP in the region vote was still a respectable 43 percent.

By the mid-1950s no communities could escape the invasion of party politics, and elites and voters alike were compelled to take sides. Studying developments in northern communities Austin

⁸Akan is the language family that includes the Asante ethnic group. Ashanti is simply the English spelling.

noted: “It was recognized by 1956 that parties were more than labels, that they were avenues to power not only remotely in Accra, but in Kassena-Nankanni and Bongo... There were many now, including chiefs like Pagapio, who began to argue that the sensible way to behave was to show one’s loyalty to the new government by joining the party. ‘The CPP is strong.’ ‘They can do anything.’ ‘They are the new white men.’ These were the sort of phrases used” (Austin, 1976, 82-3; also Dunn and Robertson, 1973). As a measure of how party politics was forming and becoming institutionalized in this period, the number of independent candidates declined from about half in the 1954 election down to about one-quarter only two years later.⁹ The number of winning independent candidates went from 31% to 6%.

The growth of Zongo communities also played into emerging party politics, as national level political entrepreneurs came looking for votes. What outside forces had to offer Zongo elites was the all-important power of formal recognition (Schildkrout, 1978, 207). At various times in Kumasi’s history, for example, it was the British and then the Asantes who had the power to decide Zongo leadership. In the emergent independent state, the power to control the Zongo would again come from Accra.

By 1956, those who had failed to back the CPP had to cross the floor or be punished. Not only had Nkrumah defeated the Asante-based NLM, the new political economy meant forest rents could now be spent anywhere in Ghana (Austin, 2005). Nkrumah and the CPP emerged victorious and led independent Ghana from 1957. The CPP used local offices to secure alliances and punish the opposition, though the country would not become a one-party state until 1964. Nkrumah installed CPP faithful in communal governance positions in places like the Kumasi Zongo and banished or exiled many of the Zongo’s more critical opponents of the CPP (Mikell, 1989, 174). But in 1966, after persistent declines in world cocoa prices, Nkrumah was removed in a coup.¹⁰

⁹152 out of 316 candidates were independents in the 1954 elections, and 45 of the 194 candidates in 1956.

¹⁰The National Liberation Council military regime governed from 1966. The Progress Party’s Busia was elected in 1969 but removed by a coup in 1972 at the hands of Acheampong and the National Redemption Council. Rawlings and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council replaced the previous regime in 1979, but they allowed elections to go ahead and Limann was elected the same year.

The significance of this period was *not* that it set in stone today's political allegiances. Rather, it was in the initial development of supra-local political organization that was compelling communities to take sides. Nkrumah's non-ethnic posture forced an ethnically-centered reaction among the Asante, and the chain reaction was ultimately to force others to mobilize against the Asante.

2.2.2 Emergence of ethnic politics in the 1960s-1970s

The 1969 election was notable for three reasons. First, it was perhaps the first and last time the country witnessed pan-Akan voting. With Nkrumah and the CPP so unpopular, and Nkrumahist parties banned, the Danquah-Busia tradition overwhelmingly won the election under the leadership of Busia and the Progress Party (PP).¹¹ Despite its lineage it differed from previous Asante-dominated parties because it "succeeded in rallying coastal and inland Akan under one umbrella" (Chazan, 1983, 222). It was able to present a pan-Akan front because Busia was a non-Asante Akan, and the party was able to take advantage of anti-Ewe and Ga sentiment arising from their dominance in the post-Nkrumah military regime.

Second, the 1969 election marked the alignment of Ewes against the Asante/Akan party, which is continued in the allegiance of Ewes to the NDC today. In the 1950s Ewes in the Volta Region had given their support to the Danquah-Busia line because of coinciding interests on the issue of separatism and in the 1969 election Busia's PP "did not expect to be so heavily trounced in Ewes areas" (Dunn and Robertson, 1973, 349). In 1969, the Nkrumahist National Alliance of Liberals (NAL) was led by Ewes to large victories in their home Volta Region but large losses elsewhere.

Third, the 1969 election and ensuing government marked the heightened salience of ethnicity in government. While elections in the 1950s saw a "nationalist party dominating several parochial parties, this first post-independence election was defined by competition between ethnic blocs" (Fridy, 2013, 21). Observing the election in Abuakwa, Peasah noted "the increased use made of ethnicity to gain political support. . . . almost to a man, the Ewe in the constituency rallied to the support of the NAL, and the overwhelming majority of the Akim (barring highly localized and deep rivalries)

¹¹Danquah died in prison under Nkrumah.

gave their support to the PP” (Peasah, 1975, 230). The 1960s were more generally a period of identity-based divisiveness. The 1963 Aliens Act required residence permits from foreigners wishing to engage in commercial activity. The shift in legal language was significant. Whereas a stranger is akin to a guest to whom a host is obliged to provide respect, an alien is a figure to be barely tolerated.

Busia and the PP introduced the Aliens Compliance Order (1969) which gave non-Ghanaians two weeks to obtain residence permits under penalty of expulsion from the country. Mitchell (2013) describes the socio-economic backdrop quite well: “On the economic front, unemployment was rampant during the months leading up to the order. There was also much concern over the extent of foreign monopolies, as aliens were over-represented in many industries. Finally, the decline of the cocoa frontier in the late 1960s also contributed to the economic malaise of the period. Many in government circles and the media blamed immigrants that had originally migrated to Ghana to work in the cocoa sector but had since taken up petty trading because of the worsening conditions in the cocoa sector” (19). The Order reinforced the social distance between northerners and Akans in cocoa areas (Schildkrout, 1978, 42). When I asked why people in the Zongo vote NDC, the answer invariably included a reference to the Aliens Compliance Order. In the 1996 presidential election the NPP candidate was alleged to have threatened to deport migrants, an idea quickly seized upon by Rawlings and the NDC to mobilize Zongos throughout the country, despite little evidence that the statement had ever been made (Mitchell 26).

Busia’s Aliens Compliance Order (1969) was followed by the Ghanaian Business (Promotion) Act of 1970 which was another attempt to ‘indiginize’ businesses. This was also seen as an attack on Ewes, who were disproportionately being removed from the civil service. As Chazan notes “The Busia government, unabashedly neo-traditional in outlook, sought, like other Ghanaian governments, to use ethnic affiliations for its own purposes... The Ewe alienation was accompanied by growing disaffection among the Ga [in Accra] and certain northern groups. By 1970 the Akim areas and the coastal Fante were slowly beginning to break with the core Akan groups that led the Busia government. This gradual whittling away of Akan’s solidarity was cast in ethnic terms, in no small measure as a response to the regime’s own ethnic posture” (Chazan, 1983, 226). Busia was overthrown

by the military in 1972. His government had been associated with an upsurge in tribalism, and the military not only banned Nkrumahist and Danquah-Busia parties but even the word tribe itself.

While the 1950s was a period of party formation along ideological and regional lines, by the 1970s the country had taken an explicitly ethnic turn. Ewes and Asantes were now aligned in opposition to each other, a situation which remains today. Busia alienated not only Ewe, but also Ga, Fante and northerners, groups which today comprise the core of NDC's support. When party politics re-appear in 1979 following a coup by Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings, elections were won by the party of the Nkrumahist tradition, the People's National Party led by Limann from the north.¹² Running openly as an Nkrumahist, Limann won comfortably in the second round with large margins in all but Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo, with turnout a lowly 35% in the first round.¹³ Similar to the NDC today, Limann's party won large victories in the north and amongst Ewes in the Volta Region.

2.2.3 Rawlings and the modern two-party system from the 1980s

Rawlings' second coup came in 1981 and it began his two decades in power. In the early 1980s his military government battled economic collapse. The Economic Recovery Program was controversial and severe, though by the late 1980s the economy had recovered with the state considerably more liberalized than before. By the late 1980s, however, political dissent was growing in the face of regime suppression (Nugent, 1995). In the face of domestic and international pressure, Ghana entered into a period of constitutional reform in the late 1980s and early 1990s, culminating in the present democratic constitution of 1992.

Rawlings liberalized Ghana's political system from a position of strength. This is important for understanding why the resultant electoral system favored the emergence of a party system centered around two main parties, rather than a multi-party system (Riedl, 2014). As a senior figure in the Rawlings government explained, "we could have resisted the [reform] pressures to a greater degree,

¹²Rawlings' first coup attempt was on May 15, 1979, for which he was imprisoned. The People's National Party was the successor to the National Alliance of Liberals, which itself was seen as the successor to Nkrumah's Convention People's Party.

¹³This was down from 63.5% in 1969.

but we took the decision at the time necessary to be able to control the process.”¹⁴ Throughout the constitution drafting process political parties were banned and were made legal only shortly before the 1992 election. After the ban on parties was lifted the PNDC became today’s National Democratic Congress (NDC). The Danquah-Busia tradition re-emerged in the form of the New Patriotic Party (NPP). It was symbolically significant that it chose as its party symbol the elephant, “the ultimate embodiment of wealth and power within Akan thought” (Nugent, 1995, 224).

Rawlings was able to erect high barriers to entry for political parties into the new electoral system, which in effect created Ghana’s present two-party system. But it was not only Rawlings and the NDC that had an interest in a minimal reform of the political process. The NPP, too, became focused on winning the election rather than on influencing the democratization process itself. Riedl (2014) describes a “shared agenda for limited reform,” in which two dominant parties were content to see a two-party system become a reality: “As the energies of the new political parties were channeled into the struggle for state power, the opposition made minimal contributions to the debate about the future of democracy in Ghana” (188). What emerged in elections in the 1990s is largely what remains today. A two-party system dominated by the NDC, with its support base amongst Ewes in the east, northern Muslims, southern Gas, and many Akans, and the NPP, with its support base predominantly amongst Asantes and Akyems.¹⁵

The Nkrumahist tradition effectively died in the 1992 election. Nugent described it in terms of “mutual suspicion between the CPP old guard and the more youthful Nkrumahists, together with the dilemma of what to do with former President Limann” (1995, 22). The United Nkrumahist Front was created, followed by the National Independence Party, from which Limann broke to form the People’s National Convention. But “well in advance of polling day, the rout of the Nkrumahist parties was widely predicted. Rather than waste their vote, it seems that many former CPP and PNP supporters switched their allegiance to Rawlings” (243). To say that the NDC inherited the Nkrumahist tradition is really to say that it inherited Nkrumahist voters.

¹⁴P.V. Obeng interview with Riedl (2014).

¹⁵Although it is common to refer to ‘northerners’ as NDC supporters, the region is of course highly heterogeneous and the NPP has often been able to gain a foothold by inserting themselves into chieftaincy disputes (Kelly and Bening, 2013; Lentz and Nugent, 2000; Kelly, 2007, 476).

Reflecting on this overview of Ghana’s parties, one can speak of a Danquah-Busia tradition insofar as it refers to an Asante-dominated party tradition. But it is not an *Akan* party tradition and, despite the quick rise and fall of the Asante-based NLM in the 1950s, the Asante have been a solid voting bloc only since 1969.¹⁶ It is the 1960s and 1970s, not the earlier period, in which key present-day alignments occurred. Parties emerged in the 1990s in the form we recognize today, but by the 1980s the long-term determinants of political competitiveness at the district level were in place: cocoa migration to the southwest and the development of party politics had aligned major ethno-regional groups behind various political lineages while also distributing these groups across the country. In the next section, I show how the present district assembly system that emerged in the 1980s was placed on top of these conditions, rather than supplanting them.

2.3 State formation and the creation of the district assembly system

Prior to the 1980s reforms of Rawlings, the picture of local government in Ghana is one of constant change. By the mid-1940s, the British had begun to withdraw chiefs from local government (Rathbone, 2000). After independence, Nkrumah moved to control the hiring and firing of senior local government officers and local government elections were postponed several times (Young, 2012, 168).¹⁷ Reforms under the Local Government Act 1961 (Act 54) planned for District Councils to be entirely elected following the elimination of traditional representation, but local elections were a sham in the one-party state, even before one-party rule became *de facto* (Schiffer, 1970, 69).¹⁸ This was not only the period of persistent Nkrumah attacks on chieftaincy, it was also a period of creeping authoritarianism: “District Commissioners at the local level and the regional commissioners at the regional level sometimes wielded and exercised “tyrannical” power which Nkrumah could not control

¹⁶Fridy (2013) would point to the NLM’s relatively weak performance even in its home region as evidence against the idea that the Danquah-Busia tradition has always been entangled with Asante identity.

¹⁷Staff (Local Government Council) Regulations 1955.

¹⁸As Nkrumah and the CPP fell, the fortunes of chiefs rose again: the 1969 Constitution gave them one-third of seats and brought them into Regional Councils. The one-third reservation again featured in the 1979 Constitution, but was then removed by Rawlings and the PNDC in 1988 and remains thus to this day.

and often did not approve of” (Owusu, 2006, 292, also Apter, 1972, 377 and Dunn and Robertson, 1973, 154). Two years after Nkrumah’s ousting in 1966 a government commission reported that the local government system “is at present in a state of chaos,” and the military government placed each district under the command of one police officer and one civil servant (Eriksen et al., 1999, 87). There was to be no popular representation. Later reforms in the 1970s sought to make local governments agencies of local development by giving them powers of taxation and by decentralizing key departments like health and education, yet no local democracy was planned.¹⁹ After several years it was clear to observers that implementation was weak: most local governments appeared unable to raise revenue, regional administrations were not established, and the transfer of functions was not accompanied by the transfer of means. This would soon change with the beginning of two decades of rule under Jerry Rawlings.

2.3.1 Rawlings and the 1988 Local Government Law

When Rawlings and the PNDC came to power in 1982, local authorities were dissolved and replaced by government-appointed management committees. A system of local government eventually emerged as a means of strengthening and extending state power, culminating in Local Government Law 1988 (PNDC Law 207). This converted the existing 65 Councils into 110 district assemblies, which would be the highest local political authority and would be vested with deliberative, legislative, executive and administrative powers (Ahwoi, 2010, 46). Perhaps the most important innovation was that the head of the local government—the district chief executive—would now be subject to some local control. This was a significant move away from the previous system with its non-local, centrally appointed district commissioner who governed without a local assembly. In that system, a retired assembly member recalled, “the government thinks for me” (Author interview 2012b). In the new system, however, with an elected representative body and an elected executive, local preferences over planning and distribution would be legally protected. This system was enshrined in the 1992

¹⁹Reforms followed the release of three important reports: Mills-Odoi Commission 1967; Siriboe Commission 1968; Akufo-Addo Constitutional Commission 1968.

Constitution, which provides for most functions and staff of central government to be decentralized to district assemblies.

Just as we saw in Rawlings' reforms to the political system, his reforms to local government were carried out from a position of strength. A senior Rawlings advisor made it clear that the intention was to "obstruct demands for liberal democratic reforms."²⁰ Local government structures and the non-partisan 1988 elections were used as part of the PNDC strategy to retain control of the country more generally. As the Minister for Decentralization revealed: "the local district elections of 1988 provided the incumbent party with experience overseeing elections and installed loyal regime agents at the district level."²¹ Rawlings' elaboration of the district assembly system was precisely the kind of advantage that made easy his decision to embrace elections in 1991/2: "The local government reforms enabled the PNDC to strike up working relations with the most influential power brokers at the community level. . . . those who were elected to the district assemblies tended to be the very same figures who conventionally dominated community affairs" (Nugent 1995, 205).

The district assembly system is thus rooted in attempts by Rawlings to consolidate power by extending the bounty of the state to local elites. This system has been in existence for about a quarter of a century now, making it easily the longest-lasting, most stable and most locally responsive local government system in the history of independent Ghana. But the extent to which Rawlings transformed the landscape should not be over-emphasized. The district assembly and electoral systems emerged under his administration and both served his interests, but he could not erase decades of ethno-regional alignments and historical memories.

2.3.2 Migration patterns & pockets of competitiveness

National and local elections since the 1990s have produced a consistent pattern of electoral competitiveness. On one side sit the Asante and some smaller Akan groups. Opposed to them sit several groups: Ewes, alienated by Busia decades earlier and excited by the prospect that Rawlings, a son of

²⁰P. V. Obeng in an interview with Riedl (2014).

²¹Kwamena Awhoi cited in Riedl (2014).

their soil, would channel resources their way; Muslims, alienated by Busia and treated as ‘strangers’ in the south; and Akans such as the Fante with deep memories of domination by the Asante Kingdom. These basic alignments survived into the 1990s and up to today, and Rawlings’ district assembly system was placed on top of these existing divisions.

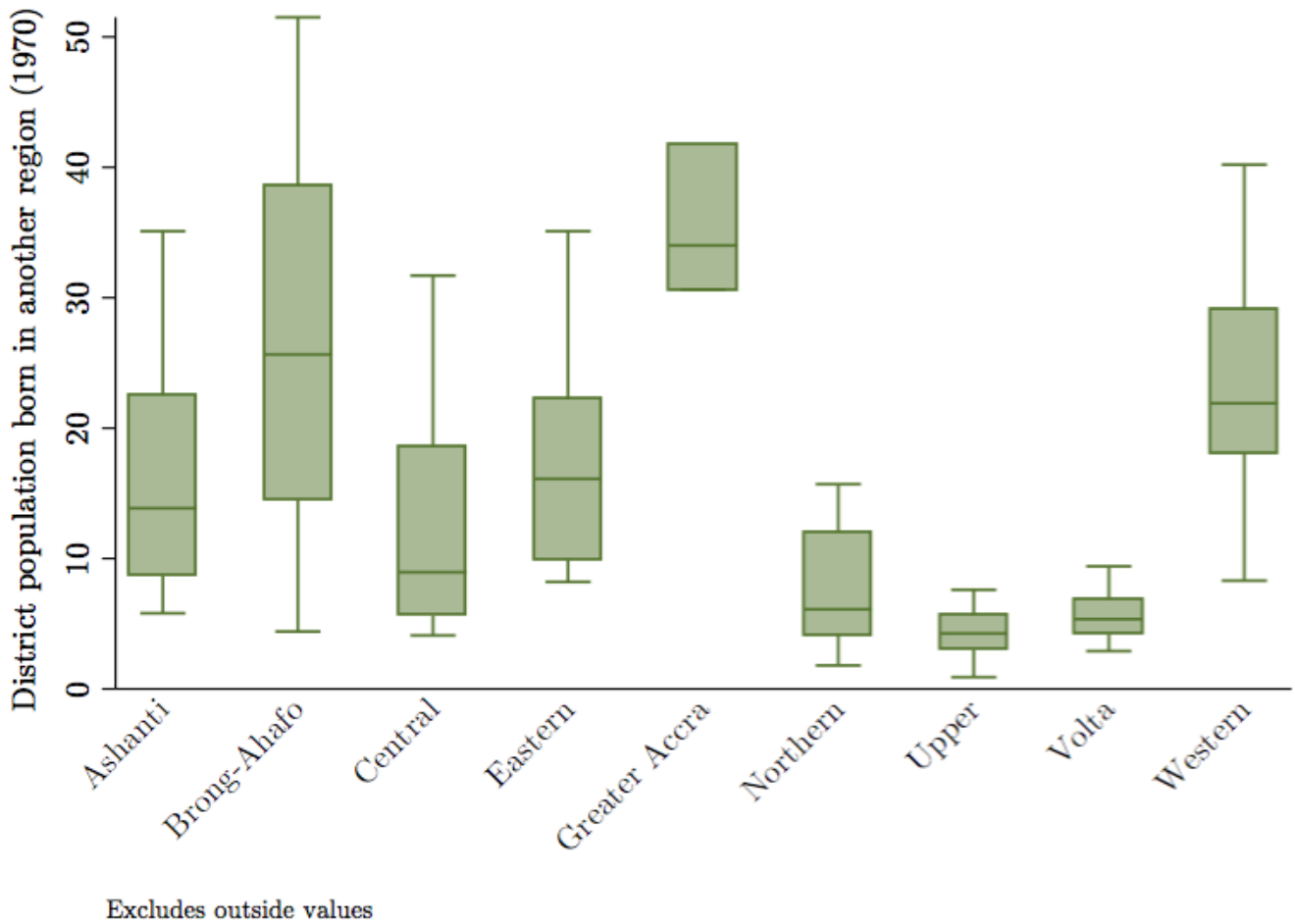
This section describes the enduring importance of these historical patterns of party formation and cocoa migration for present political competitiveness. I use migration data from 1970 to predict the presence of district-level competitiveness in recent elections. Tribal and ethnic data was not collected in the 1970 census. I have, however, been able to collect data from that census which records whether or not a person was born outside their region of enumeration, and the data is coded at the district rather than regional level. Figure 2.4 shows the distribution of district means across regions. In 1970 the districts with the largest migrant populations were Greater Accra followed by the major cocoa regions Brong-Ahafo and Western.

To analyze the correlation between 1970 migration and present district-level competitiveness I matched the 141 local government areas used in the 1970 Census with the 110 districts in existence from 1988-2004.²² The dependent variables are the district margins between the NDC and NPP candidates in the 1996, 2000, and 2004 presidential elections. The explanatory variable, *Born in another region (1970)*, is the district share of residents who were born in another region in 1970. I include regional controls since strongholds of the NDC and NPP are concentrated in specific regions. This is the best alternative to the inclusion of other controls like wealth, which are not available.

Results from OLS models for the margin in presidential elections are shown in Table 2.1. I find that districts with greater in-migration in 1970 are more competitive today. In model 1, the explanatory variable is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. Substantively, holding other variables at mean values, going from the min to the max of the explanatory variable is associated

²²Matching local government areas was made relatively straight-forward since many local governments changed neither their name nor their boundaries. Assin Local Council in 1970, for example, was Assin District Assembly from 1988. Many Districts combined, of course, since the number of local governments went from 141 to 110. This involved joining two local governments without changing the boundary. Konongo-Odumasi Urban Council and Ashanti Akim Local Council, for example, became Asante Akim North Municipal Assembly in 1988. In these cases the original (1970) districts are retained in the dataset and their original values for migration are retained. For their political competitiveness values I use Asante Akim North’s election data for both. After 2004 the number of districts increased so matching to 1970 districts was done with increasing error.

FIGURE 2.4: Migrant populations in 1970



with a decrease in the electoral margin of over 50 percentage points. The model is robust to the inclusion of regional controls, and to varying the electoral period.²³ The statistical significance of the coefficients for *Ashanti Region* and *Volta Region* is not surprising, since these are the heartlands of the NPP and NDC, respectively.

These findings mean districts with the largest migrant populations in 1970 are the most politically competitive today. Cocoa made neighbors of distinct ethno-regional groups, some of which would find themselves politically opposed over time (Boone and Duku, 2012; Amanor, 2011). This explains why highly competitive districts today can be found along a boomerang-shaped pattern

²³It was not possible to estimate the effect of 1970 migrant populations on elections after 2004 because a proliferation of districts and constituencies made it too difficult to match 1970 units with present units.

TABLE 2.1: 1970 migrant populations predict contemporary competitiveness

	(1) Margin (1996)	(2) Margin (2000)	(3) Margin (2004)
Born in another region (1970)	-0.813*** (0.187)	-0.791*** (0.171)	-0.342** (0.160)
Ashanti Region	1.472 (5.080)	11.880** (5.410)	13.027** (5.408)
Volta Region	22.049*** (8.305)	12.439 (7.671)	31.032*** (8.810)
Western Region	-1.511 (5.520)	-6.637 (5.728)	-10.530 (7.032)
Brong Ahafo Region	0.404 (8.881)	6.263 (7.849)	-6.429 (5.249)
Greater Accra Region	13.798 (12.580)	7.934 (9.555)	8.958 (7.763)
Constant	49.234*** (4.103)	45.301*** (4.483)	37.006*** (3.749)
Observations	147	138	102
R^2	0.169	0.148	0.243

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

around Kumasi and into the cocoa regions. Importantly, this migration pre-dates the present district assembly system by almost two decades. It was this combination of cocoa migration and ethno-regional political alignments in the decades *before* the modern district assembly system that accounts for much of the present distribution of highly competitive districts.

2.3.3 The permanence of boundaries

It is neither obvious nor logically necessary, however, that the balance of NDC and NPP support within districts should have remained stable since the 1990s, since entrepreneurial governments could change district boundaries. This requires a brief discussion of the history and process of boundary formation. Today's district boundaries were founded in the colonial period upon the presumed extent of 'native states,' meaning the domains of chiefs. Until the 1940s, the Gold Coast was ruled through a dual system of central government and local government, called the Native Administration, which was dominated by chiefs (Berry, 1992). The British relied on chiefs not only for everyday maintenance of law and order, tax collection, and dispute settlement (Eriksen et al., 1999; Schiffer, 1970; Arhin,

1985b,a), but also in crucial periods of institutional creation like the formation of internal boundaries. In 1906, a two-member commission was set up to collect information on land ownership and the spheres of influence of chiefs with due regard to “tribal boundaries” (Bening, 1999, 23). This was no trivial task since even within the well established Asante federation boundaries between polities were not precisely defined (Austin, 2005). Even outside of institutionalized polities such as the Asante, the drive to delineate, document and codify the contours of ‘native states’ was often complicated by the very absence of such institutions. In 1907, the following policy was used when managing boundaries in the creation of Gold Coast Colony districts:

“Re-adjust them as far as possible in conformity with the boundaries, so far as they exist, of the Divisions of the Native Headchiefs. The absence of the territorial principle in native jurisdictions, and the consequent circumstances that a village owing allegiance to one Headchief may be surrounded by villages owing allegiance to another, rendered in some instances the realization of this ideal impracticable; in such cases obvious natural features and boundaries defined by the Courts of the Colony have been put to use” (Gold Coast, 1908, 101).

Thus, subnational boundaries in the early 20th century corresponded to British understanding of traditional domains. This was also true when British Togoland (most of today’s Volta Region) was joined with the Gold Coast in 1920: “The boundaries followed the pre-1914 German administrative boundaries which were based on ethnic limits and were generally well-known to the people” (Bening, 1999, 41). The importance of traditional boundaries in early state formation continued into the late colonial period. As the pre-eminent scholar on Ghana’s internal boundaries records, “Native Authority boundaries of 1946 were to form the basic pattern of future administrative divisions after 1952, when modern local government was inaugurated in the country” (Bening, 1978, 150). Although the role of chiefs in local government had significantly weakened by the 1950s, the report of a commission on local government in 1957 provides useful insight into their continuing importance. The report began by acknowledging that the 1951 Local Government Ordinance had based local authorities “in general on existing native authority areas, which had been originally founded on

native states” (2). It went on to explain the role of chiefs in widespread opposition to plans to amalgamate smaller units into larger ones:

“A chief whose area of authority coincides with an existing local council feels that if it is joined with its neighbor his status will in some way be affected and make him subservient to the chief of the neighboring area. There is still a deep rooted feeling—particularly in Trans-Volta/Togoland—that areas of local government and traditional authority must coincide. It is a matter of personal prestige on the part of individual chiefs to have a council which coincides with his area of authority. To countenance an amalgamation would be a blow to that prestige. Moreover, I have gained the impression that in the minds of some chiefs independence for Ghana means casting aside all forms of local administration established in the past 15 years and reverting to small independent units with themselves in undisputed control” (Greenwood, 1957, 5).

Chiefs could not countenance the idea that their boundaries would be damaged, either by being forced to join with a neighboring chief, or by having their people split across two administrative units. The report also acknowledged a material role for these calculations: “Stool holders [chiefs] feel that if a local council area includes stool land in two separate ownerships they will not receive their fair share of the revenue from their particular pieces of land” (5).

Today, the alteration of district boundaries or creation of districts is the sole responsibility of the president acting through legislative instrument passed by parliament and implemented by the national Electoral Commission.²⁴ But while governments have changed the number of districts over time, to a remarkable extent the boundaries made in the colonial period have stuck (Berry, 2001, 12). This partly explains why boundary disputes today are almost always disputes between chiefs about the ‘true’ extent of their respective domains. So persistent is the issue of district boundary disputes that in 2010 the government commissioned a *Report of the Committee on District Boundary Disputes Relating to the 2010 Population and Housing Census* (Government of Ghana, 2012). Chiefs and

²⁴The legal framework for district creation is provided in the 1992 Constitution and the Local Govt Act 1993 (Article 1 sub-clause 2).

traditional authority figures appeared throughout the 31 district boundary disputes they examined. This is also why no map of traditional authority in Ghana has been produced since 1946.²⁵ The significance of these boundary issues is that any attempt by politicians to gerrymander boundaries today would fall flat on its face if such boundary changes were perceived to violate a chief's area.

Conclusion

This chapter has engaged with the possibility that district competitiveness might be the outcome, not the cause, of district behavior. I pursued a historical institutional analysis which attempted to unearth the deep roots of present-day competitiveness. I began with a simple research question: Why are some areas more competitive than others? Answering this question required me to examine not only the political alignments of major groups, but how these voters came to be spatially distributed as they are. I argued that cocoa migration was a long-term phenomenon and it had long-lasting effects.

It has not been my goal to pursue an overly deterministic structural account of Ghanaian politics. Migration alone does not explain all of the variance in Ghana's inter-party competitiveness, and cocoa migration is just one part of the country's bigger migration picture. My aim has been more modestly to suggest that some important factors in contemporary political behavior have deep roots, and that at a minimum the presence of intense district-level party politics cannot be explained in terms of the behavior of district assemblies themselves. District-level competitiveness was shaped in fundamental ways in the period before district assemblies.

²⁵Author interview, 8/2/2010.

Chapter 3

Research design and context

Introduction

There is a rich tradition in the fiscal sociology literature of understanding the behavior of states as structured by the logic of revenue. As Levi (1988) famously wrote, “The history of state revenue production is the history of the evolution of the state” (1).¹ Using taxes to study states has three benefits. First, state behavior is endogenous to state capacity: a state has a sense of what it can achieve logistically and politically, and factors this capacity into their behavior, thus rarely revealing the upper-bound of their ‘true’ capacity. The utility of studying taxation is that it illuminates the *lower*-bound of a state’s capacity, since a state that cannot fund itself could justifiably be called weak. Second, absent capacity and absent incentive are easily confused: does the north-east of Ghana lack good roads because the state is weak, or merely because north-easterners lack political access? Taxes do a better job than public goods at revealing capacity if one assumes that governments actually *want* to collect taxes, irrespective of what they intend to do with the money afterwards. Third, an effective state must engage with non-state actors if it wants to effectively monitor, regulate, and shape society. Taxes necessarily involve state and non-state actors engaging, and allow the researcher to observe the terms of this interaction.

¹Also Schumpeter (1954); Tilly (1992). Prominent contemporary works include Lieberman (2003, 2002); Brautigam (2008); Gehlbach (2008).

Revenue collection was of little inherent interest to me. On its face it is a dull, uninteresting and uncontroversial topic, but it can be used by a researcher to get at questions of power by asking about what appear to be mundane issues. Most of my time was spent at the district building engaging with politicians and bureaucrats. Taxation not only offered me a subject to discuss with respondents and informants, it also guided my case selection. Using selection criteria outlined below, I used relative performance in tax collection to choose six districts for in-depth case study. My case study data thus comprise ethnographic and interview research in six of Ghana's 170 district assemblies.² This chapter explains my case selection process and main research activities. Thereafter I provide an overview of the national backdrop against which my fieldwork was undertaken, including a discussion of the local government system.

3.1 Case selection methodology

3.1.1 Estimating tax capacity

Estimating the quality of district tax collection took the form of regression analysis to compare what a district actually collects with what it 'could' collect. The methodology is drawn from the tax capacity literature, in which actual income from taxation can be compared to a hypothetical yield given a tax base, such as GDP in the case of a country or agricultural or industrial output for a subnational unit (Pessino and Fenchietto, 2010; Stotsky and WoldeMariam, 1997; Le et al., 2008). The difference between what a polity 'could' collect and what it actually collects is a measurement of capacity to tax. At the Ministry of Local Government in Accra, I gathered data on district revenue, which included locally collected taxes as well as transfers from central government. Figure 3.1 maps tax collection by district. The shading indicates the median amount collected in local revenue (as opposed to central government transfers) per capita. The median is collected over all available years for that district, which varies depending on the age of the district.

²At the time of writing this number has increased to 212.

Analysis took the form of a simple OLS regression in which the dependent variable was locally collected taxes and the explanatory variables were covariates that should plausibly affect tax collection using available data, such as agricultural output, urbanization, population density and distance to major markets. Results are shown in the Appendix. Estimated models do not include tax rates, since these data were not centrally housed at the Ministry of Local Government. Although tax rates would affect actual collection, I was not overly concerned with how this might affect my case selection, because if variation in tax collection was driven by differential rate settings, understanding the reasons for these differential rates would simply open a line of inquiry for my interviews. From this regression I obtain a residual, which is the difference between a district's actual tax collection and a district's predicted tax collection using the regression estimates. This residual becomes a rough measure of the quality of a district's tax collection, where residuals above zero indicate better than expected tax collection.

3.1.2 Selecting cases

My measures of tax capacity allowed me to sort all districts from best to worst. I used five criteria to narrow the list from 170 districts to a few cases for immersive study. First, cases needed to vary along my explanatory variable of political competition. It was not possible to simultaneously study a competitive district, an NPP stronghold and an NDC stronghold, since nowhere in the country can one find such districts near one another. My strongholds are thus NPP strongholds, since I was based in the Ashanti Region. Second, I narrowed my sample to Akan districts to take advantage of my training in the Akan/Twi language and to control for potential effects of differences in ethnic social structure or the nature of traditional authority. Third, I excluded districts with very large populations since I did not feel I could adequately get to know key actors in huge districts with my limited resources. Since two-thirds of Ghanaians live in districts with populations under 125,000, this criterion did not severely restrict the sample. Fourth, I chose districts that varied in age, since the number of districts has increased over time and institutional continuity and learning should affect the quality of government.

These considerations reduced the list of possible cases from 170 to 19. Five of the 19 met my definition of a party stronghold with 75 percent vote share for one party in the previous election. Three of the 19 met my criteria for a competitive district, which was an average margin between the NDC and NPP presidential candidates from 2000-2008 of no more than 10 percent. From these remaining districts I chose cases where performance in tax collection above or below expectation, defined as at least one quarter of one standard deviation above or below zero for tax collection residuals.

FIGURE 3.1: Local taxes collected over time, per capita

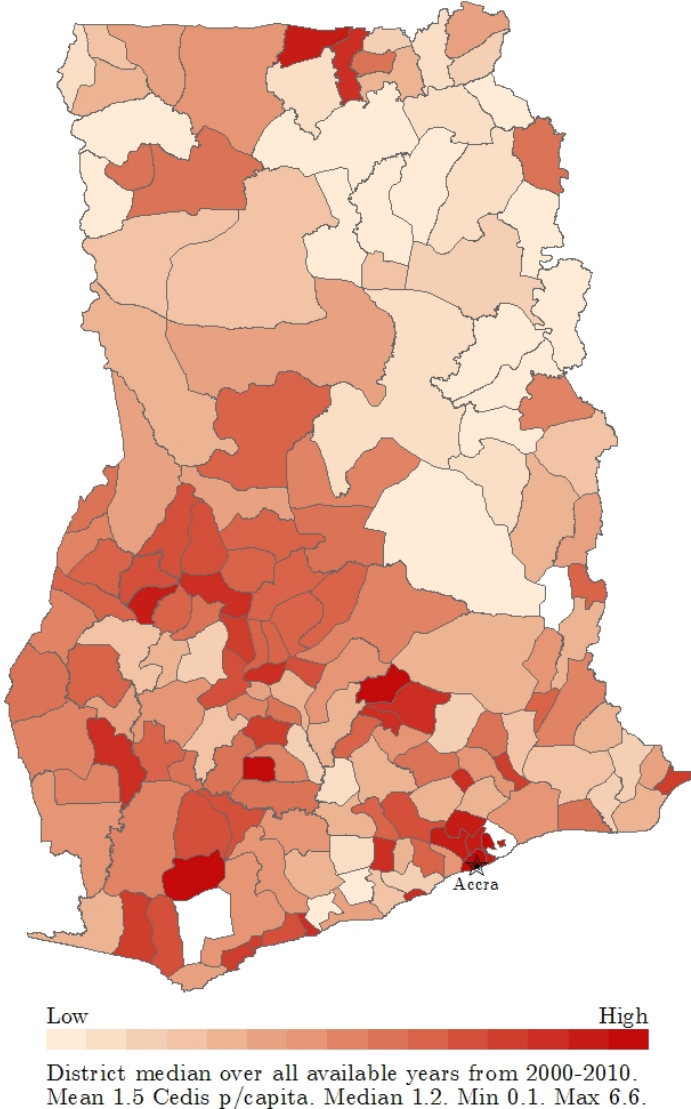


FIGURE 3.2: Map of relative tax performance

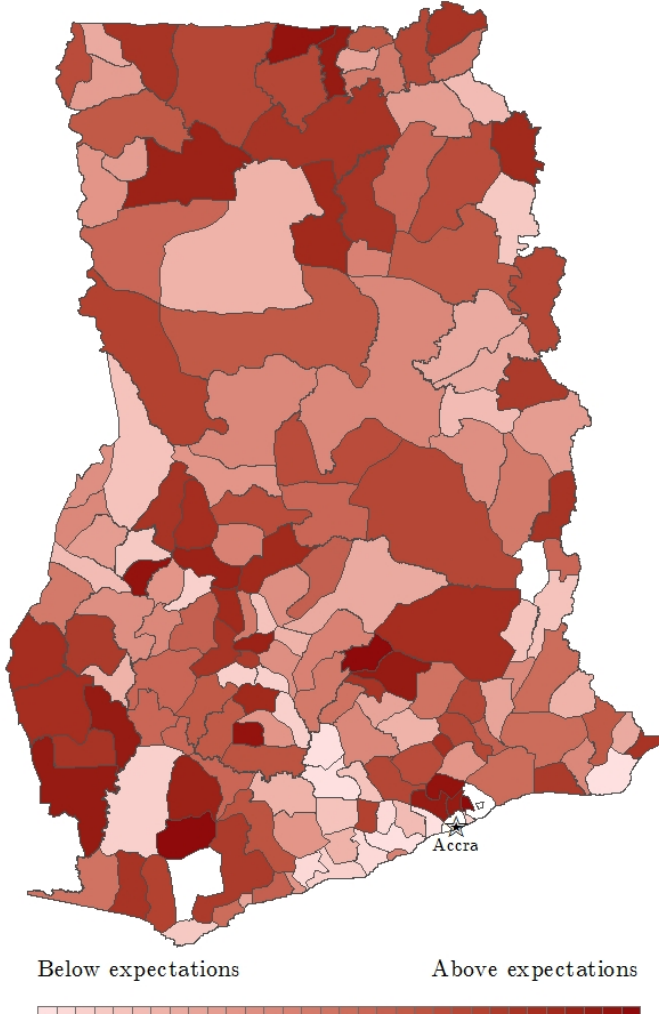
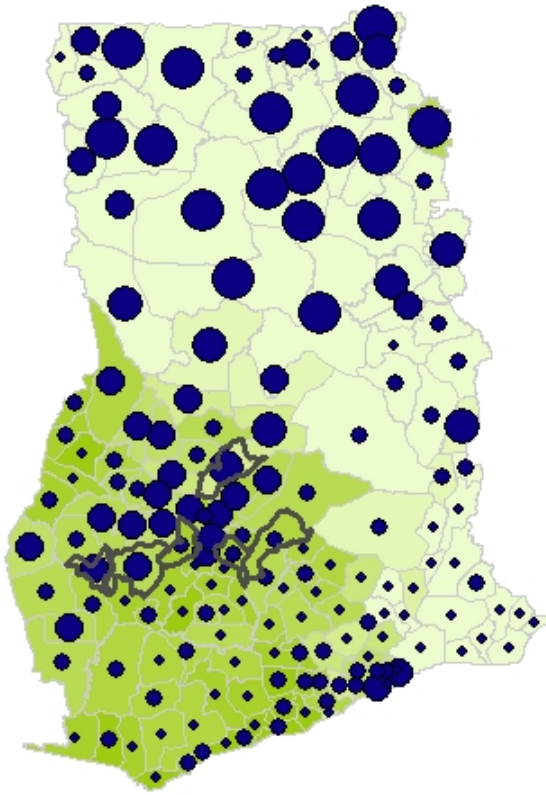
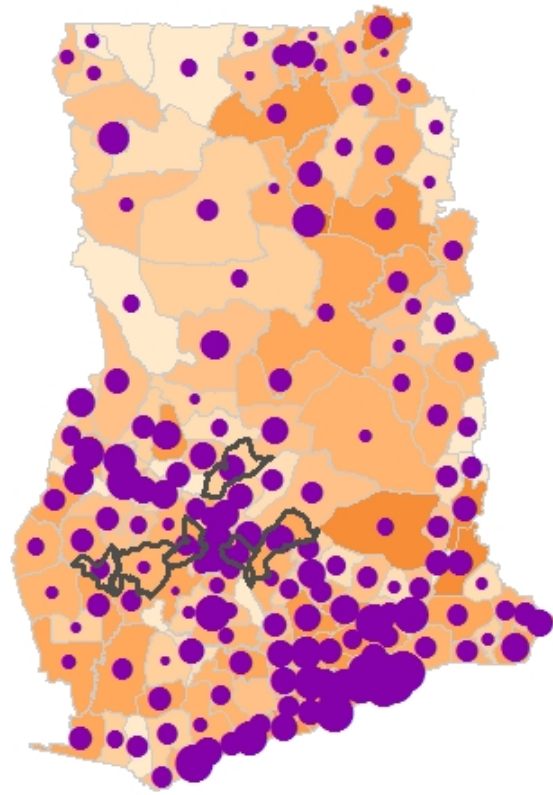


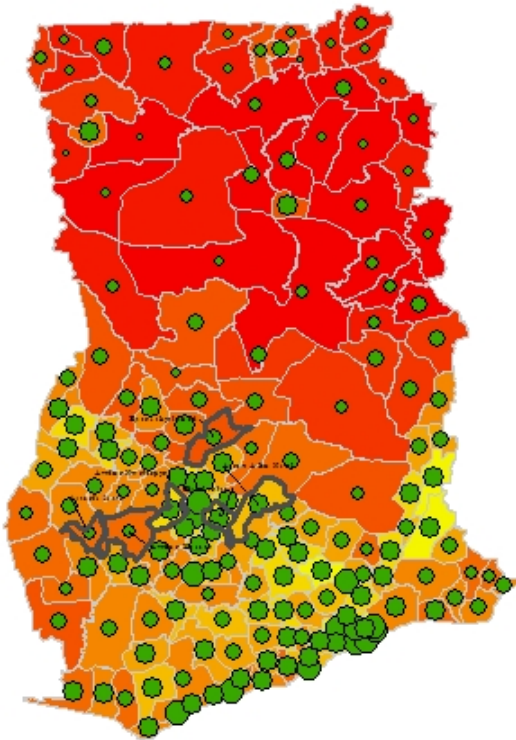
FIGURE 3.3: Map of case study districts



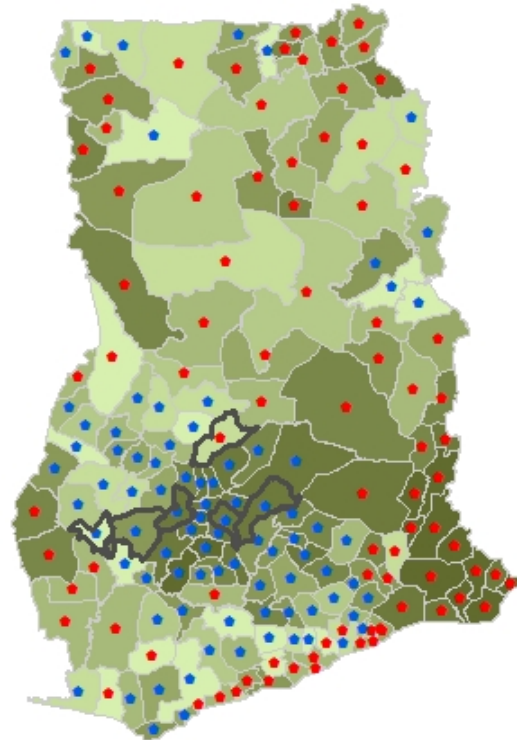
Darker shading: more Akans
Larger dots: more Muslims



Darker shading means: larger population.
Larger dots: larger urban population.



Darker shading: more illiteracy.
Larger dots: more houses with electricity.



Lighter shading: smaller margin in 2008 presidential election.
Dots for MP seat: Blue for NPP. red for NDC.

TABLE 3.1: Summary statistics for case studies

Competitive	District	Population	Ethnic Fract.	Illiterate	Urban	Area (km)	Age	Tax p/-cap	Residual	Vote NDC	Asante
Yes	Asunafo South	95,580	0.61	29	26	761	6	0.98	-0.61	49	52
Yes	Ejura Sekyedumase	85,446	0.76	39	50	1,420	22	1.69	0.68	53	8
No	Ejisu Juaben	143,762	0.32	15	28	677	22	1.17	-0.32	18	87
No	Asante Akim North	140,694	0.39	17	57	1,601	22	1.09	-0.21	24	81
No	Atwima Mponua	119,180	0.59	29	12	1,863	6	1.23	-0.08	35	68
No	Atwima Nwabiagya	149,025	0.35	14	32	839	6	1.98	0.44	21	68
	<i>Country Average</i>	<i>145,052</i>	<i>0.42</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>1,471</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>1.77</i>	<i>-1.21</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>15</i>

Note: *Ethnic Fract.* is an index of ethnic fractionalization where higher numbers indicate greater fractionalization.

Ethnic Fract., *Population*, *Illiterate* and *Urban* come from Census 2010.

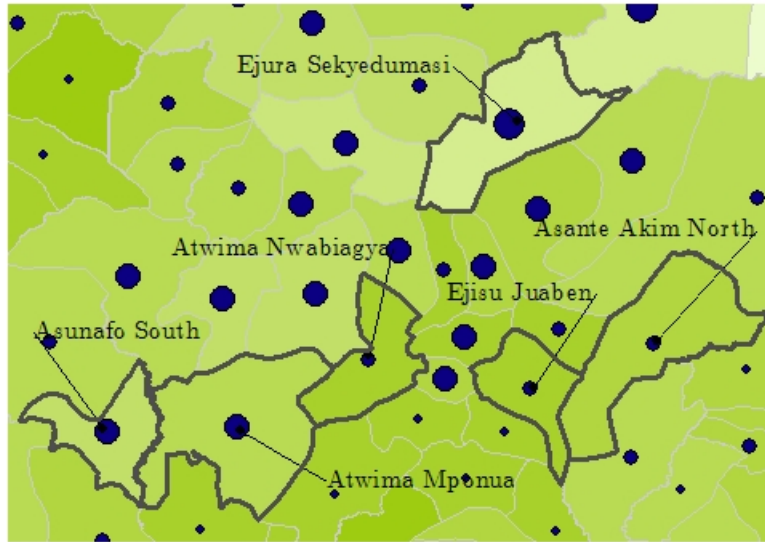
Tax p/cap. is total locally collected revenue in Ghana Cedis, per capita, averaged over all available years.

Residual is the estimated difference between what a district could theoretically collect and what they actually collect, based on OLS estimates. Negative residuals indicate tax collection below expectations.

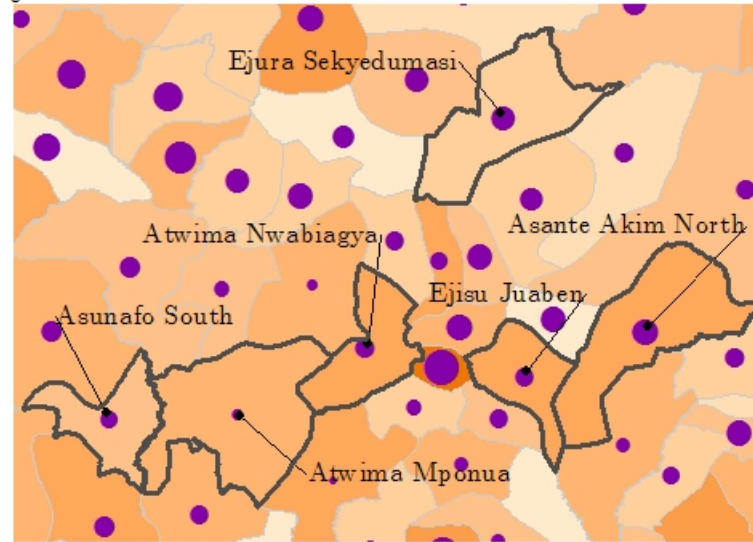
Vote NDC is the share of valid votes for the NDC candidate in 2008, which was the most recent national election at the time of my fieldwork. The NPP vote share, and the competitiveness of the election, can be inferred from the NDC vote.

Asante is the district share identifying as ethnic Asante. Data come from GLSS 5 (2005).

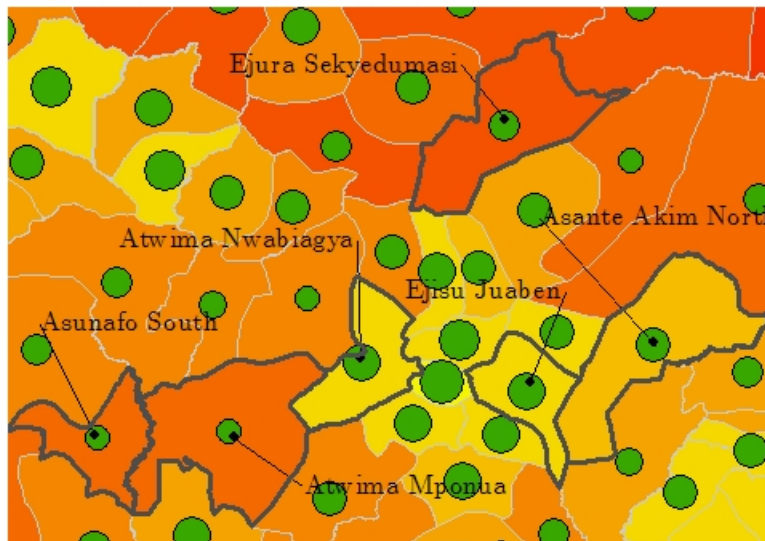
FIGURE 3.4: Zoomed map of case study districts



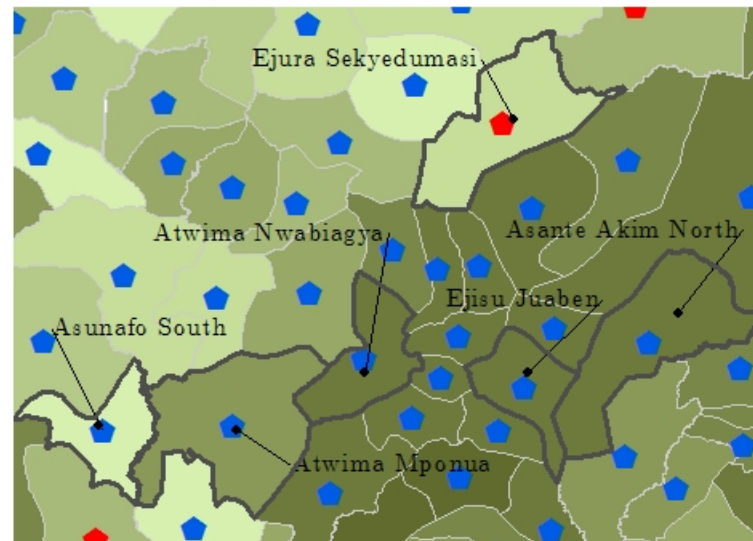
Darker shading means larger share of ethnic Akans
Larger dots means larger share of Muslims



Darker shading means larger population.
Larger dots mean larger urban population.



Darker shading means larger illiterate population.
Larger dots mean larger percentage of houses with electricity.



Lighter shading means smaller margin in '08 presidential election
Blue dots indicate MP seat held by NPP, and NDC in red.

Figure 3.3 highlights the location of my six case studies. The top left map shows the share of district population that is ethnic Akan using the 2010 Census. Darker shading means more Akans. Recall that Akans are the largest ethnic group in Ghana, and the Asante are the largest Akan sub-group. The size of the blue dots indicates the share of the district population that is Muslim. Muslim-majority districts tend to be in the north, but there are several districts toward the southwest with sizable Muslim populations. These population settlements were driven in large part by the cocoa industry over the past century, and this had important consequences for why some districts have high-levels of inter-party competition today. The map on the bottom right illustrates electoral phenomena. Darker shading means larger margins between NPP and NDC presidential candidates in 2008. The darkest shading shows strongholds are concentrated in Volta Region in the southeast for the NDC, and around Ashanti Region for the NPP. Blue dots indicate a parliamentary seat held by the NPP, and red for the NDC.

Maps in Figure 3.4 show the same but zoomed in on my six case studies. Note the distribution of political competition in the bottom right. Electoral margins are smallest in Ejura Sekyedumase (northeast) and in Asunafo South (southwest). Ejura has a smaller Akan population as shown by the light green shading, and a larger Muslim (northerner) population as shown by the larger blue dot. Asante Akim North, by contrast, has deeper green shading, meaning a larger Akan population, and a smaller Muslim population (small blue dot). This illustrates a basic political reality: Akan districts that had little immigration from northern, non-Akan groups over decades are today NPP strongholds, but this changes for districts with larger northern immigration.

3.1.3 Grouping cases

Because six case studies is a large number for a comparative study, I group my highly competitive cases ($N=2$) in opposition to my less competitive cases ($N=4$), effectively pooling my data. Grouping my cases also allows me to more easily anonymize my informants and respondents. Table 3.1 shows summary statistics. My two highly competitive cases are Asunafo South and Ejura Sekyedumase. Asunafo South is not only the most competitive in the sample, but it is also the worst tax performer.

Ejura Sekyedumase is also notable because it is competitive yet it has a very high residual, meaning it over-performs given its characteristics. The implication of Ejura's competitiveness alongside apparently strong tax performance is that it is a useful influential case, "a case that appears at first glance to invalidate a theory, or at least to cast doubt upon a theory. Possibly, upon closer inspection it does not. Indeed, it may end up confirming that theory—perhaps in some slightly altered form. In this guise, the influential case is the 'case that proves the rule'" (Gerring, 2007, 108). My first visit to the town of Ejura explained why. The district capital has an enormous wholesale market to which producers travel even from outside Ghana to sell grains and tubers, and from which Ghanaian traders purchase wholesale goods to sell in markets throughout the country. The market is the size of the average Walmart Store.³

Four of my case studies were relatively less competitive. What drives vote shares in these districts is first and foremost the size of their Asante population. Each district interested me for different reasons. Ejisu-Juaben was interesting because the chief executive had switched parties in previous years (a rare occurrence) and was alleged to be a dictatorial and corrupt figure. The district also serves as a commuter town for Kumasi's educated workers, and this contrasted with the socio-economic profiles of the other, largely rural districts I was studying. Asante Akim North was gridlocked for years and had neither a chief executive nor a presiding member. It was also in the process of splitting in two, due to in part to the long-term secessionist efforts of elites in Agogo, one of its major settlements and a town with perhaps the finest road infrastructure I had ever seen in Ghana.

My two other less competitive cases were Atwima Mponua and Atwima Nwabiagya, which jointly comprised the Atwima district from 1988 to 2003. The split of the districts seems to have favored Nwabiagya, which is a peri-urban settlement to the west of Kumasi with significant urban areas, in contrast to Mponua which is the larger and poorer of the two. Moreover, Nwabiagya had a prominent son in John Kufour, who served as President from 2001 to 2009. For a district, a native of such prominence is akin to a natural endowment: the asset increases in value largely due to forces

³Using Google Earth, I calculated the area of the Ejura market to be 154,000 sq. ft. The average Walmart Store is 162,351 sq. ft. Data from Walmart (2010).

outside of the district's control, but once appreciated the asset opens up new and potentially deep channels along which resources flow from the capital to the district. In addition, chief executives in both places were embattled figures: one was embroiled in a struggle with local chiefs, the other with his own party activists. Because these were NPP strongholds, these NDC chief executives were governing opposition territory, which was a dynamic I was interested to study closely.

3.2 Daily research activities

The majority of my fieldwork was spent conducting formal semi-structured interviews or ethnographic research with informants and respondents. My ethnographic method hued closest to the notion of ethnography as defined by Schatz (2013): “ethnography is a sensibility that goes beyond face-to-face. It is an approach that cares—with the possible emotional engagement that implies—to glean the meanings that the people under study attribute to their social and political reality” (5). Over months of repeated interactions I built trusting relations with people who eventually helped me develop an image of district life. As Stevenson (2005) notes, this mode of inquiry “is only valuable if it is accompanied by the kind of methodological care and transparency that gives other scholars confidence in the descriptions” (15). I aim to be clear in my methodology and precise in my descriptions. My ethnographic data come from a journal I used everyday, which was separate from my interview notes. From this point forward, I use pseudonyms for all individuals and districts.

On a typical day I would call ahead to arrange two or three interviews, usually with politicians or bureaucrats but also with local elites and non-elites, to whom I had already introduced myself. Between meetings I would drift from office to office in the district building. As weeks went by and people saw that I was not simply another foreigner in for a swooping visit, I developed friendly relations with staff such that I could drop in to chat about politics or sport or whatever was happening in Accra or in the area. US and Ghanaian election campaigns were underway, and both offered multiple angles for discussing politics with informants without prying into the respondent's own political behavior. My image of district life is thus constructed through my interviews but also

through the accumulation of local insights into how power works as offered by people in conversations lasting minutes but repeated over months.

I spent most of my time with three groups of people: bureaucrats, politicians, and market traders. Time spent with bureaucrats initially involved talking to them about the basics of their job. Over time I was able to ask them to help me interpret the experiences of officials I knew in other districts. Most officials also had experience at other districts, including my other case studies, and could provide historical context to what I was observing. The second group I spent time with was politicians, including district chief executive, assembly members, as well as party officials such as the constituency chairman and local party activists. With these actors I typically discussed the process of tax collection narrowly but also how the district 'really' works in a more general sense. The third group I engaged with was traders in the district marketplaces. Central government constantly prods districts to use markets as a source of revenue. But markets are also a site of local demands for services which are hard to ignore (Clark, 1994; Lyon, 2003). Asking market traders what they receive for taxes paid allowed me to engage with questions of the 'state in society': how the district and societal forces were mutually shaping one another (Migdal et al., 1994).

The districts I studied are not isolated, independent polities. District actors were frequently reacting to national events, trying to make the district assembly work for them while reading the head winds of national events which would be out of their control but would be determinative of their futures. The most important contextual event during my fieldwork was the lead up to the November 2012 general election. At the time, the NDC held the presidency and had a slim majority in the legislature. National elections would significantly impact districts. When a new president enters office, the tenure of every district chief executive will be reviewed in the months thereafter. This contributed considerable existential uncertainty to the lives of chief executives. In addition to incumbent insecurity was the national level jockeying and campaigning of party and government elites. For most of 2012 it looked as though the NDC was doing everything within its power to destroy its own chances of retaining the presidency, as major corruption scandals and intra-party struggles took their toll (Africa Confidential, 2011, 2012c,a,b). This was the significant background event that infused daily political life where I conducted research. People I knew did not perceive

themselves as being able to influence events in Accra. Whether or not they were part of the governing apparatus, they overwhelmingly saw themselves as subject to the whims of forces above them. A canny district-level operator is not one who manages to influence central government, but simply one who can understand which way the wind is blowing, and be the first to react.

3.3 Brief overview of district assembly system

To situate my analysis in forthcoming chapters, I first provide a brief overview of key structures, institutions and actors in the district assembly system. First I describe the layers of the state at central, regional and local levels. Then I describe how a district operates, in particular the roles played by the legislative, executive and administrative branches. I then discuss the powers and responsibilities of district assemblies as well as fiscal behavior. Last, I discuss the balance of power between central and local government.

3.3.1 Structures of the state

Central government sits atop ten regional coordinating councils (RCC). The regional level was designed to be weak in order to frustrate Asante collective power.⁴ RCCs sit atop 170 district assemblies, which are the key local governance authority.⁵ Within each district sit smaller urban or town councils, which in most cases perform little service. The bottom layer of the state is comprised of unit committees. Legislation from 1994 envisioned the operation of up to 16,000 of these 15-member unit committees to represent 500-1,000 people, but today those involved admit “the structures are at best dysfunctional and at worst non-functional” (Ahwoi, 2009, 6). Unit committees have practically no resources or authority and only voluntary membership, so it is not surprising that in many districts they either do not function or simply do not exist. To speak of key levels of the state, therefore, is to speak of central government and the 170 district assemblies.

⁴Author interview (2009)

⁵124 are ordinary district assemblies. 40 are municipal assemblies. Six are metropolitan assemblies.

Districts come in three types depending on size. 73 percent are ordinary district assemblies, with the remainder mostly municipal and in a few cases metropolitan. The Local Government Act (1993) set a minimum population of 250,000 for a metropolitan assembly, 95,000 for a municipality and 75,000 for an ordinary district. Per the Act, the number of municipal and metropolitan assemblies should actually be much lower than it is, but the prize of upgraded status has been doled out regularly on the eve of the past three general elections. Based on the 2010 Census, about one-in-six districts are in violation of the law for being too small.

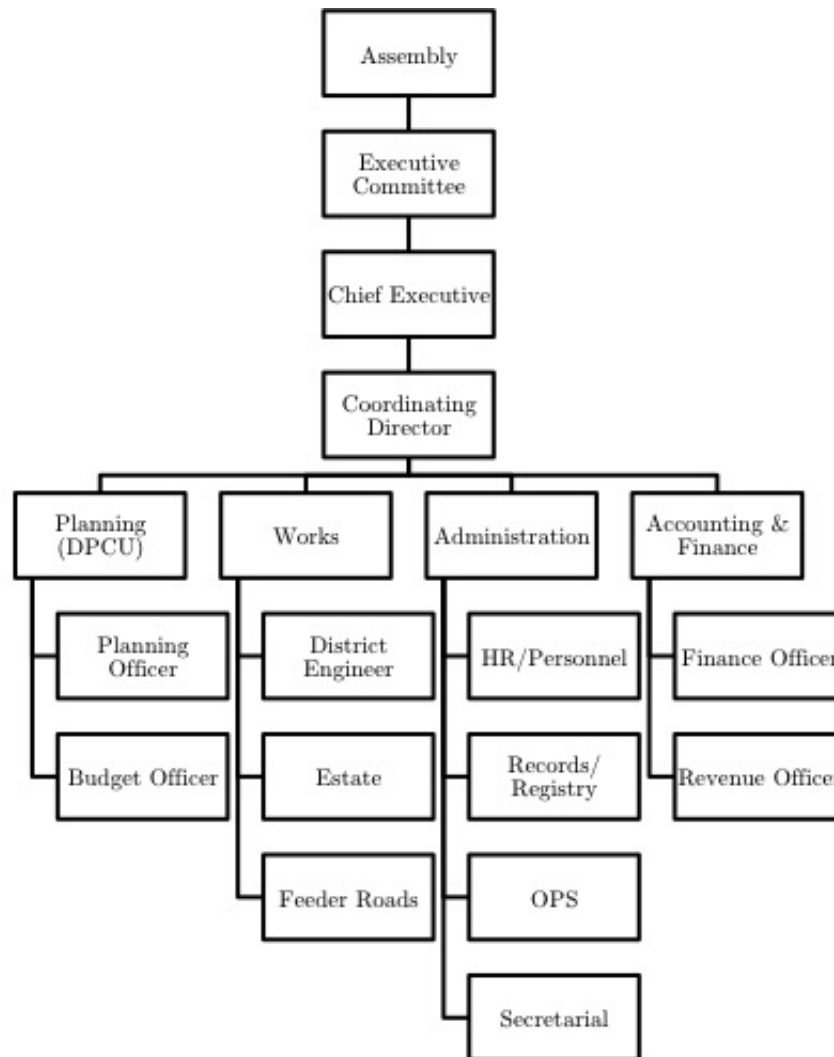
In terms of the internal organization of a district, no official organizational chart exists so the organogram shown in Figure 3.5 is my own. Beneath the chief executive we see the head civil servant (coordinating director), beneath whom bureaucrats work in their various departments. It is important to note what is not included in this organizational chart: agencies and departments of central government. Figure 3.5 shows *de facto* organization, not *de jure*, since most government departments continue to be centralized.

3.3.2 Structure of a district

The assembly is a legislative body that can pass bye-laws and has a formal role in overseeing the executive. The executive is the office of the chief executive, who is nominated by the president and must be confirmed in a secret ballot vote by two-thirds of assembly members. Executive functions rest with the executive committee, comprised of the chief executive, one-third of assembly members, and the heads of departments of the assembly (without a vote). The executive committee works through five sub-committees and the governing party ensures their numerical dominance in these sub-committees.⁶ The assembly is the legislative body, but in reality the executive and the governing party controls the legislative process. Most assemblies have a general meeting three or four times a year, but most assembly members I knew had little or no involvement in legislative activities like introducing or debating changes to bye-laws or tax rates.

⁶The five sub-committees are: Development Planning, Social Services, Works, Finance and Administration, Justice and Security.

FIGURE 3.5: Organogram of a district



70 percent of the assembly is elected in formally non-partisan elections, meaning candidates are not to campaign on a party platform. In reality, the party of a candidate is always known within a community. In 2002 President Kufour admitted “the non-party elections constitute a huge exercise in self-deception, as it appears the political parties sponsored candidates unofficially” (GNA, 2002). District assembly elections have become more competitive over time, with an increase since 1998 in the number of district assembly seats that have been contested. Despite this trend, electoral areas appear to still be the *least* competitive electoral units in the political system as measured by the size of winning margins. Using Ichino and Nunn (2013) 2008 electoral data from the Brong Ahafo Region, the mean NDC-NPP margin was 18% at the constituency level but 27% percent at the polling station level. This means the largest winning margins were at the lowest electoral levels.

The reason for the lack of competitiveness at the electoral area level is the spatial clustering of ethno-regional groups in neighborhoods. When I asked assembly members to draw a map of their electoral area I also asked them to describe ‘who lives there.’ I avoided asking ‘which ethnic groups live there’ because I did not want to prime the response. Without fail, respondents drew the general shape of the area and identified each community and neighborhood by its major ethno-regional group. The identification of an assembly member with a party and an ethno-regional group is thus likely stronger than that of any other politician in the country. Their constituencies are the most ‘pure’ of any political figure, and electoral threats are largely intra-party.

The remaining 30 percent of seats are filled by presidential appointment. Appointed members are usually local professionals and, since the public sector is dominant, they are frequently civil servants in the local state health, education, or agriculture bodies. I found them to be a relatively unimportant actor. Contacts would never voluntarily bring them up as a subject or matter of interest. Appointees are party sympathizers and government can reliably count on their vote. This informal rule is laid plain when it is violated, as happened when 14 appointed members of the Assin North Municipal Assembly were sacked for failing to support the president’s nominee for chief executive (Daily Graphic, 2013a).

Government appointees were not always seen as lackeys, however. Across party lines, and to a degree that was surprisingly consistent, informants recalled the non-partisan nature of government appointees in the 1990s. Recognizing that poorer districts have weak human capital, the intent was to allow districts to leverage the human capital in their communities. So it was that in the 1990s government appointees were local lawyers, accountants, engineers, doctors, and so on, and elder assembly members today recall them playing a useful role in shaping local development plans.⁷ Older assembly members also recalled how assembly life in general was much more bi-partisan than today. In the 1990s the NPP were in opposition and many expected that Rawlings would never give up power. Bi-partisanship is a thing of the past, however. It appears to have changed significantly in the late 1990s as the NPP professionalized its party apparatus and spread party offices nationwide.⁸

⁷Author interview (2012b).

⁸Author interview (2012).

It changed irreversibly in 2000 when the NPP won the general election and, to many people's surprise, Rawlings left office. With the NPP's victory in 2000, both parties realized that their tenure would now be insecure since winning and losing power was possible for both. This represents a critical juncture in the political history of Ghana's district system. The effect was felt immediately in district assemblies across the country, with chief executives telling assembly members "if you don't join NPP you won't get any projects" (Author Interview, 2012n). Recounting a similar story, a presiding member recalled how the assembly "was not being used as a party office" when he got involved in the 1990s but today "both parties do it," his own included (Author interview, 2012c).

Like chief executives, elected assembly members experienced themselves as individuals under siege, with unending claims on their time and attention: "People will call you all hours with every type of concern. People will go to the chief with traditional matters. But for everything else they come to me, whether it is to arbitrate domestic disputes or land disputes. Everything" (Author Interview, 2012l). Unlike chief executives, however, assembly members have few resources with which to answer these claims, and opposition assembly members have no resources at all. Between the few assembly meetings held each year, an assembly member spends their time receiving complaints from constituents and traveling to the district capital to lobby the chief executive, head civil servant, or presiding member for the speedy release of light bulbs or metal sheeting. Members receive allowances for attending assembly meetings, but do not receive salaries, so they keep their occupations upon taking their seat.⁹ In my case studies, about 30% of members listed themselves as teachers and about 40% as farmers. Others listed occupations in commercial sectors, such as trader, cocoa purchasing clerk, and chemical seller, or in service sectors, such as contractor, engineer, mechanic, hotelier, accountant, and unorthodox doctor.

Elected assembly members were not coterminous with what one might call the district elite; individuals with disproportionate power due to their occupation, assets or lineage. Certainly most were elites in their electoral area, and prominent assembly members were indeed also prominent party figures. Some were fortunate to receive motorbikes to travel their area. Some benefited when

⁹The average allowance for an assembly member attending a general assembly meeting is 26 Ghana Cedis, about \$12 USD.

a district supplied building materials to the community through the assembly member, who is then put in a useful distributive position. But I never felt that assembly members 'got rich' from their positions, and for many district elites, life as an elected assembly member was barely worth the investment. The biggest landowners or commercial farmers, or the owners of large hotels and petrol stations were not assembly members. Although an assembly seat might not make one rich, it often allowed a person the chance to elevate their social standing or to access a job with better pay. One assembly member told me of his ability to 'beat gong gong,' a traditional drum used to call for communal labor. Another assembly member was the district manager for a private sanitation company, a position earned after years working as an assembly man and as a known youth organizer. Opposition assembly members occupied themselves in different ways. One of my contacts was a small-scale miner and logger with about 25 concessions around the country. Another led a campaign for his town to become its own district. Status as a stand-alone district, and not a sub-unit of another district, would not only guarantee the area a slice of the national cake, it would also confer immeasurable prestige on the assemblyman.

An assembly must confirm the president's nominee for chief executive. Once elected, however, most assembly business requires only a majority vote, so the nomination and confirmation processes are where the major battles between the assembly and the executive take place. Being able to block the president's nominee opens up a significant bargaining space for the opposition in a local government system that generally excludes them. Deadlocks are usually resolved in one of three ways. First, the opposition is given the office of the presiding member, or a lesser office such as a chairman of an executive sub-committee. Second, a shrewd nominee buys-off the opposition and split their vote with the promise of development projects for their constituency. Third, the opposition may mount such a successful united front that the president's nominee is withdrawn. Repeatedly blocking a president's appointee is not useful for the opposition, however, because a district with no chief executive cannot access funds from central government and capital expenditure grinds to a halt.

Turning now to the executive branch, the district chief executive is a sort of weak mayor. All of the district's administrative power is concentrated in their office, but central government retains

direct control over district staff and over many sectors, like policing or health services. Within a district, however, the chief executive wields considerable distributive power. As ‘the President’s man’ in the district, a chief executive is expected to carry out development projects, which mostly entails building or maintaining infrastructure projects like local roads or school buildings. This means that chief executives face pressure from above (the president) and below (district residents and co-partisans). The tensions and contradictions of a system that purports to allow for local control while serving the central government is revealed when President Mahama told a group of chief executives that, as “frontline performers,” they were expected to “do a lot in driving the development agenda of the government” (PeaceFM, 2014). Like a mayor, they also serve as a sort of fixer of the sundry problems of residents, which can include responding to weather calamities, intervening in local disputes, or acting on complaints about misbehaving government workers. The chief executive is the most important political actor on a day-by-day basis, but over him hangs the Sword of Damocles since removal at any time by the assembly or (more likely) the president is a distinct possibility. My data show that three years into the 2009 NDC administration, over one-fifth of district assemblies had replaced their chief executive.¹⁰

Last, the coordinating director is the head civil servant in a district. He is the most powerful figure in the daily life of an assembly after the chief executive, and is the route through which all visitors and staff must travel to get to the chief executive.¹¹ The median size of a district staff is 118 with a median population-to-staff ratio of 943, meaning there are 943 residents for every district employee. This includes all workers considered as working beneath a chief executive, whether paid by central government or not. It does not include the staff of state bodies not beneath the chief executive, such as local health, education or security personnel.

¹⁰Specifically, the presiding member was asked “How many chief executives (including the current chief executive) has the district had under the current government?” 78% said 1, 19% said 2, 1% said 1, and 2% said 4 (N = 120).

¹¹A partial exception may be the finance officer, who is often a figure of similar stature within the district administration.

3.3.3 The powers and responsibilities of district assemblies

Under the Civil Service Law (PNDC Law 327) of 1993, the duty of central government is to develop policy and monitor, coordinate and evaluate district assemblies. The duty of a district is to implement the government's development plans. District assemblies have highly specific planning goals laid out in their Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP), which is a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper writ-small. The district develops their multi-year development plans in accordance with goals established in National Development Plans and with local needs. A MTDP lays out a detailed four-year development program, including targets for things like vaccinations or school attendance. It is up to the district to implement projects requiring infrastructure. If the project requires mostly manpower, such as a vaccination program, it may instead be implemented by deconcentrated staff of the Ministry of Health. The bulk of a district's budget is spent on the construction of things like boreholes, schools, public toilets, or district staff lodgings. Districts are the sole budgeting and taxing authority beneath central government.

The line between decentralized and non-decentralized government departments is unclear. To quote an expert on Ghana's laws relating to decentralization: "the country is suffocating from a plethora and an over-abundance of laws on local government and decentralization" (Ahwoi, 2009, 11). Plans have existed to decentralize most government departments since the beginning of the district system in the late 1980s. But over time even the list of departments to be decentralized has changed. Both the NDC in the 1990s and the NPP in the 2000s passed legislation to clear a way for decentralization. Both planned for 11 decentralized departments or agencies, but they differed on the number of pre-existing departments that would be amalgamated in order to do this and neither intended for education to be decentralized (Ahwoi, 2010, 147).

So the past two decades have seen not only failure to implement legislated decentralization, but even changes in the list of departments to be decentralized. At the time of writing departments that are deconcentrated (not decentralized) include the Ghana Education Service (GES), Ghana Health Service (GHS), Forestry Department, Game and Wildlife, and the National Fire Service (NFS). Their day-to-day operational decisions are taken by locally-placed staff who are accountable

to central government rather than to their district. A visitor to a district premises, therefore, should not think of everything before them as one cohesive local government unit. The reality is more like the partial shade from window blinds that are half-drawn: this office is decentralized, that is deconcentrated, and so on.

In this confused picture of agencies that are decentralized and those that are not, what does a district actually do? First and foremost it is infrastructure projects, not regulatory schemes, that are under the control of districts. In broad terms central government controls the hiring, firing, and pay of staff, but local government determines who gets what with infrastructure projects.¹² In the education sector, for example, all policy and control of staff is centralized. The control over manpower (teachers) and policy (curricula) rests with central government. But when a school is to be built it is up to the assembly to choose the location and select a contractor. When it comes to the construction of markets or the maintenance of minor roads the matter is entirely local. What districts control is the raw meat of distributive politics in developing countries: infrastructure projects.

3.3.4 Revenue and expenditure

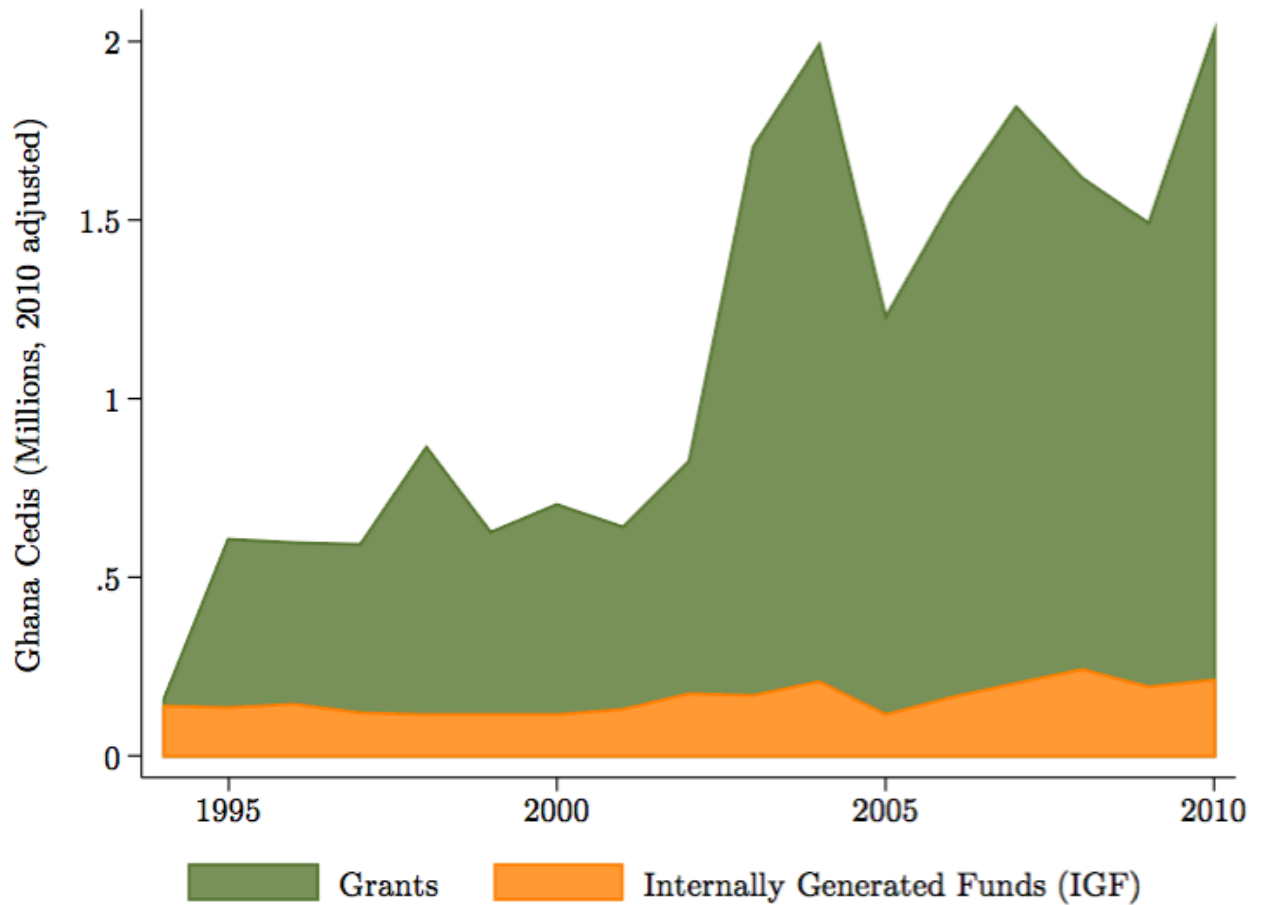
District revenue is dominated by transfers from central government. Figure 3.6 shows median revenue for each district from 1994 to 2010, adjusted for inflation. Total revenue has increased dramatically over time and so has revenue from local sources, known as Internally Generated Funds (IGF), though it remains small compared to revenue from central government.

Districts are heavily reliant on funding from central government and studies suggest this has depressed incentives for improved IGF collection (Mogues and Benin, 2012). The bulk of district revenue comes from transfers. In 2010, for example, the median share of district revenue that came from IGF was 13%.¹³ The main vehicle for central government transfers is the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) which is provided for in the 1992 Constitution (Article 252). Through

¹²The majority of district staff are paid by central government. Across all districts the median percentage of staff that are paid centrally versus locally is 78.

¹³Districts may raise loans but the amount allowed (approximately USD\$1,000) without higher approval is minimal, meaning there is no effective power to raise loans, which limits capital expenditure (Farvacque-Vitkovic, 2008, 25).

FIGURE 3.6: Median district revenue over time



the DACF, a minimum of 7.5 percent of total government expenditure is transferred to district assemblies according to a specific formula approved annually by parliament.¹⁴ Before this money is allocated, however, central government retains ten percent in the name of a Reserve Fund that does not reach districts.¹⁵ In 2007 guidelines released by the Ministry for Local Government as much as 41 percent of a district's portion is tied to expenditures specified by the central government. Taken together, all of these deductions and earmarks help explain why there is so much local frustration with transfers from the center. The other important source of revenue over which districts have no real control is land royalties. These are typically paid electronically by large mining firms directly to central government. Land royalties are a significant contributor for a small number of districts. Per

¹⁴An increase from five percent.

¹⁵Six percent goes to an MP Fund, two percent to the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 1.5 percent to regional coordinating councils, and 0.5 percent to DACF administration.

the Constitution, royalties are not nationally distributed but are remitted back to the originating communities, which are mostly concentrated in the south west of the country.¹⁶

Internally Generated Funds (IGF) are sources of revenue that are collected within a district and are at the discretion of the district. They are neither remitted nor subject to central government control. Most IGF comes in a category called *fees & fines*, which includes daily fees on economic activities like operating a taxi or a market stall. Districts with significant urban areas rely on *rates*, which includes property rates paid by businesses and large houses. The setting of tax rates is largely up to a district. The Ministry of Local Government establishes ceilings for specific rates, which appear not to have been updated since 1991. The only exception is royalties on things like gold, the rates for which are set by the central government. It is important to note that district assemblies are forbidden from taxing cocoa, which is a significant contributor to central government revenue. This has the curious effect of ensuring that cocoa-rich districts cannot directly benefit from their assets. Use of tax collectors on commission (that is, not on salary) is widespread, and on average over half of all tax collectors are known as commissioned collectors. They usually receive about 20 percent of what they collect, the rest of which is remitted back to the revenue office at the assembly.

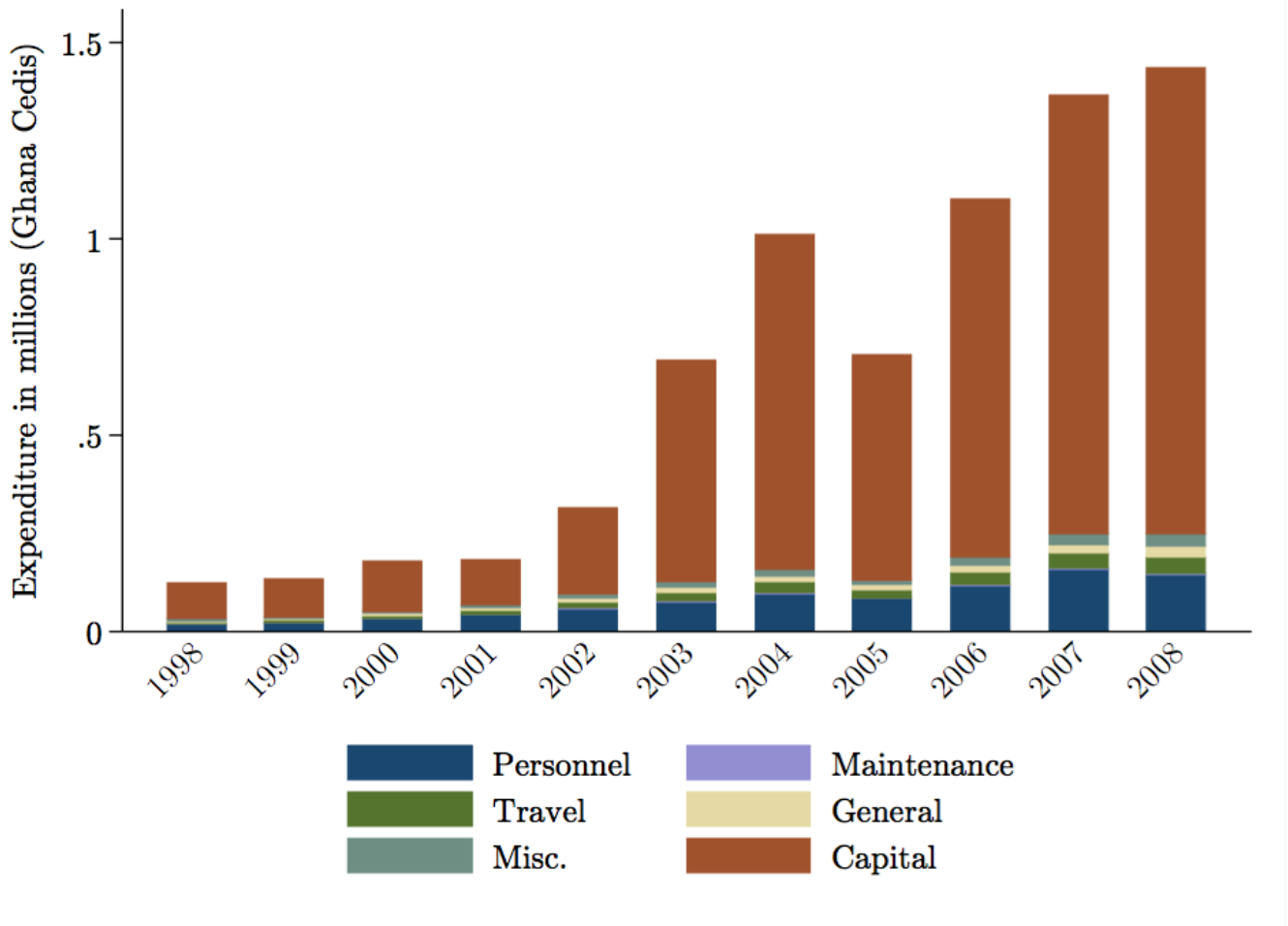
Finally, the image of a district as a development project spigot is revealed in Figure 3.7. It not only shows strong growth in inflation-adjusted expenditure over time, especially from 2003 as transfers from central government and international donors increased, but also how spending on infrastructure projects (capital) dominates.

3.3.5 Sources of central power

Although nominally decentralized, central government retains instruments of control over local governments. First, the president may by executive order dismiss a chief executive. The president is also the sole authority empowered to nominate a chief executive, and he appoints 30 percent of the assembly members. Confirming the president's nominee for chief executive requires a two-thirds vote

¹⁶10 percent of stool land revenue is retained for administrative expenses of the OASL. Of the remaining 90 percent, 55 percent is transferred to the relevant district and 45 percent to its Traditional Authority.

FIGURE 3.7: Median district expenditure over time



which means that the governing party need only win about half of the *elected* assembly seats in order to confirm the president's nominee.

The second source of the center's control comes through control of staffing. The 1992 Constitution says "persons in the service of local government shall be subject to the effective control of local authorities."¹⁷ But the Local Government Service Act 2003 (Act 656) allows the Local Government Service to appoint staff. Central government thus hires, fires, pays, and rotates most public workers in a district, including staff of both centralized/deconcentrated and decentralized bodies. The only staff that are locally controlled are those that are hired by a district and paid with local taxes.

¹⁷Article 240 (2) (d).

These are low-paid workers only, such as cleaners, security or drivers. These are the only forms of employment patronage over which a chief executive has explicit control.

Third, transfers from central government dominate local revenue, such that capital projects ebb and flow with the stop-and-start release of central funds, and transfers are substantially reduced by the time they reach the district's bank account. With capital scarcity and credit constraints, contractors often cease public works and move to private projects until significant funds have been released to them. This is often the explanation one hears for why a district is littered with unfinished buildings.

3.3.6 Sources of local autonomy

Yet, the impotence of districts should not be over-stated. The image of districts as pawns of central government ignores principle-agent dynamics in which the center is actually reliant on local actors to implement policy and maintain order. The first source of local autonomy is distributional control over projects and jobs. District projects may be paid for using local or central funds, or a combination of both. In most cases projects are paid for by the center. Once the money arrives, however, it is up to the district to choose the location and contractor for the project. This includes projects falling under both decentralized and non-decentralized departments. Whether the project is to build a school or a market, the twin distributional prizes of site location and contractor are the prerogative of the district. The location of a project becomes a site of political struggle as assembly members, party notables, building contractors, and even traditional authorities, organize and lobby to 'bring development' to their neighborhood. Atop this mass of small-town elites struggling for access to the distributional spigot sits the chief executive, for whom the power to award contracts presents a major opportunity to extract rents. In one district the presiding member told me the chief executive is "running the place like it is his personal business," collecting a percentage of every contract (Author interview, 2012b).

The other distributional power enjoyed by the chief executive concerns jobs. This has two important variants. One is low-level staff directly employed by the district, who can be hired, paid,

and fired by the district. Data I collected show that on average 20-25 percent of total district staff are locally paid, which also means locally hired and fired. Typical jobs include driving or servicing district vehicles, cleaning the assembly building, or protecting the assembly building at night.¹⁸ The second category of jobs over which districts have some control is menial staff employed through the World Bank-funded National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP) described earlier. The NYEP provides what are intended to be paid internships and professional training to about 200,000 people per year (World Bank, 2012). Although the NYEP is centrally controlled, district NYEP offices hand out low-skill jobs to party activists.

The second way in which a district exerts autonomy from central government is through the center's reliance on local actors for information. All types of local information—policy preferences, internal disputes, factional organizing—are passed upward through the channels of the governing party. Through a dense network of organized party activists armed with mobile phones, central and regional actors construct an image of the interests, intentions and ideas of the towns and villages beneath them. Party networks connect streets, neighborhoods, village, and towns to the world outside of their clustered geographic space, linking disparate human settlements to regional and national institutions of rule. Information is moved vertically and horizontally through dense party networks through phone calls, radio shows, funerals and weddings. Party networks, therefore, make legible the terrain of governance. This theme is further developed in Chapter 3.

The third form of local autonomy is punitive power over bureaucrats. Although district civil servants are controlled by central government, a chief executive with a modicum of political clout will communicate their preferences for this technocrat over that through the levels of state or party hierarchy. At my first general assembly meeting, the chief executive publicly warned his technocrats, “I don't have the power to sack heads of department, but I do have one power: I can seek your removal.”¹⁹ I found chief executives mostly tried to control bureaucrats with constant threats of rotation to another district. It turned out that carrying out these threats was much less common. This theme is developed in Chapter 4.

¹⁸This category does not include staff of non-decentralized departments even if they share the assembly building. ‘District staff,’ therefore, does not include teachers, police, or nurses.

¹⁹4/30/12.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined my methodology for selecting cases, my daily research activities, and provided an overview of the key actors and institutions in the district assembly system. I justified my use of taxation as a means of engaging informants and respondents in conversation, and of using the relative tax performance of districts as a way to establish variation in the quality of district governance. From my case selection process emerged six districts, which I pooled into highly competitive and relatively less competitive.

I concluded with a brief account of the tension between central control and local autonomy. Through control over menial jobs and projects, the district is the key state institution that allows for the contract of clientelism to be fulfilled. Jobs and contracts can be passed around amongst those connected to the right party network, while the opposition have the oxygen of public resources cut off. Parties also provide channels that connect local to supra-local actors and thus make governance possible. Despite strong strains of central control over local affairs, districts enjoy significant autonomy through their control of patronage jobs, the distribution of contracts, and through the center's reliance on local actors for information. This chapter has focused on the institutions of district assemblies. The next chapter focuses on the people that work in these institutions.

Part II

Causal Mechanisms

Chapter 4

How a district really works: Political actors

“Politics has become the shortest route to riches and people will do whatever is necessary to get there. Ritual murders, burying of cows alive and various nefarious activities, I am told, have become part of the repertoire. It is to win and lord over the people but not to change the destiny of the people. Our understanding and practice of politics really threatens to destroy the fabric of our society”

Asantehene (Asante King), Otumfuo Osei Tutu II (Daily Guide, 2010)

Introduction

In this chapter I describe the social and professional backgrounds as well as the daily activities of the political actors I found to exert the greatest influence on district life. These actors are the district chief executive and those involved in the local party network. I use qualitative data from conversations and semi-structured interviews. The chapter is comparative in structure because I organize it around a comparison of competitive and less competitive districts, but it is heavily descriptive in content. The purpose of carefully describing the actors is to understand how they think a district ‘really’ works,

and thereby gain a deep appreciation for the causal mechanisms shaping behavior in competitive and less competitive districts, respectively.

The main finding is how enmeshed political parties are with the daily operation of district assemblies, and how variation in incumbents' paths to power corresponds to variation in their responsiveness to supporters. In highly competitive districts, chief executives tend to come from within the local party apparatus and are beholden to local activists. By contrast, in less competitive districts incumbents did not always come from within the local party apparatus, and were able to ignore their supporters without fear of losing their jobs. This relationship between incumbents and their supporters, and the way it was mediated by varied paths to power, is the core mechanism linking levels of competitiveness with district behavior.

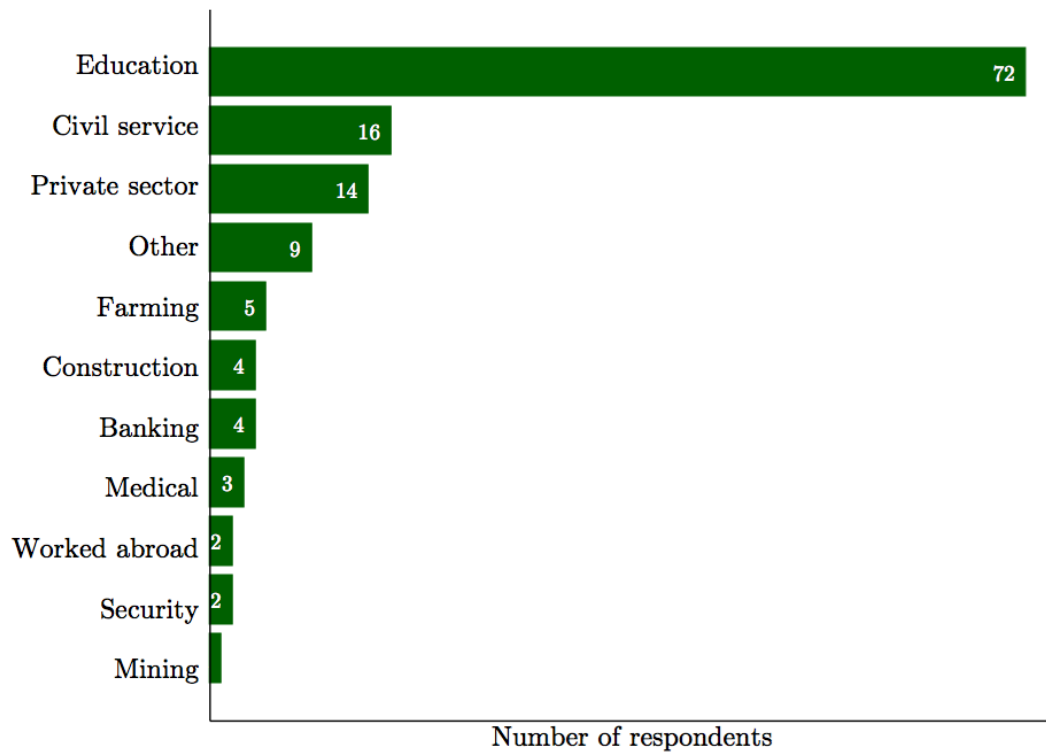
4.1 Chief executives

“On paper the chief executive is an administrator, not a czar, but in practice he has his hands in everything”

Assembly member (5/8/12)

This section describes varied paths to power, and experiences in power, of chief executives in competitive and less competitive districts. To frame the discussion, I begin with some general characteristics of all chief executives using my survey data. The typical chief executive is a 50 year old man who is a son of the soil: 92 percent are from the district in which they serve. Most come from the education sector (Figure 4.1), and about one-third have a master's degree or equivalent. The dominance of the public sector in elite life is made even clearer when I combine those with backgrounds in education, civil service, security and medicine, which account for 71% percent of all backgrounds. While half of respondent chief executives once served as an assembly member, almost none had served as MP. This is no surprise as it is commonly understood that one goes from chief executive to MP and not the other way around.

FIGURE 4.1: Professional background of district chief executives



Although the office of chief executive can be lucrative, winning the nomination and confirmation leaves many in debt. Informants explained that a candidate for chief executive should ‘host people well’ by giving a little to a lot of people as a sign of his intentions, while parliamentary candidates were generally expected to pay party officials as well as chiefs (2/10/12). An aspiring chief executive should be active in the party and be able to articulate the concerns of the district to national and regional officials, and also be able to lobby government as well as non-government agencies, including international donors. Thus, a candidate for chief executive should be able to ‘speak well.’ Nevertheless, for chief executives without much wealth, small amounts of money are necessary to ease the process of nomination and confirmation. I was told by one head civil servant that the chief executive had taken out a bank loan to cover his debts, and that ‘people who love him’ continue to help him financially while in office (3/7/12). In my survey, 95% of respondent chief executives reported borrowing money or using personal savings for ‘small favors’ for constituents, such as school fees.

Indeed, people frequently saw a chief executive using public money to pay off campaign-related debts. One opposition politician complained to me about the chief executive's inflation of contracts to build speed bumps. Rather than describe the chief executive as a pure thief, however, he described how the money was being used to repay the chief executive's financiers. This speaks to how actors often understood power in institutional rather than personal terms. I develop this theme later in the chapter. First, I describe the worlds of chief executives in my case studies. I examine what they did to stay in office, but I also consider their paths to power to reveal just as much about how a political system works. I divide the material into highly- and less-competitive districts to draw out the different political environments in which actors find themselves.

4.1.1 Chief executives in competitive districts

When the time comes for the president to nominate a chief executive, it is the local party apparatus of the president's party that brings forth a nomination. In the first of my two competitive cases, the Aman District chief executive had a farming background and was formerly the treasurer of the NDC's constituency branch. Because of her background and seniority within the local party, her path to power was conventional. Because she was attentive to the demands of local partisans, her time in power was smooth. In my second competitive case, however, Koko District Chief Executive Kofi Adu came to power in a way that was interesting for being unconventional.

Kofi Adu had worked in the district education office and, though he was a regular party member, he was "not a senior party man" (7/23/12). His path to power owed less to his own influence within the party and more to his value to the Deputy Regional Minister, who endorsed the would-be chief executive in return for helping the Deputy Minister win the local parliamentary seat in 2012. The Deputy Minister funneled resources to the chief executive who, in turn, directed projects to the right people on the Deputy Minister's behalf (3/22/12). For this reason, the chief executive was often described as a rubber stamp for his patron.

He was not the district's first chief executive under the NDC. That person had been removed in early 2011 against a backdrop of complaints by NDC partisans that he was not doing enough to hurt the NPP (3/23/12). His comments upon his dismissal are telling:

“If I deserve to have been removed then I can say that I am not fit for the position. I was working alright and have devoted all my time, my energy and everything for the party. And I am working for the betterment of the party and the district as a whole so I don't see why this should happen to me” (CitiFM, 2011).

He added that he had learned of his dismissal while donating some items and money to an NDC party office. It is noteworthy that he, or the reporter, thought to include that information, and that he framed his time in public office in terms of service to the party.

Within a few months, Kofi Adu emerged as the nominee to fill the vacancy, but his path to power was to prove an especially rocky one. After a person has been nominated by the president for the office of chief executive, the assembly members vote to confirm or reject the nominee in a secret ballot. There is only one candidate, making it an ‘up or down’ vote, but the nominee can only be voted upon a maximum of three times before he must stand down. In the first two rounds of voting, Kofi Adu failed to secure the two-thirds needed for confirmation. Failure in the third round would compel him to withdraw. On the morning of the vote, rumors spread that NPP assembly members would try to deny the assembly a quorum. While it seemed obvious to me that the NDC chief executive—or some NDC chief executive—would eventually be confirmed, to my contacts it was entirely plausible that the NPP could lose the general election yet still thwart the NDC. The process became violent sometime around the second vote. NPP figures allege that the NDC brought in ‘macho men’ to intimidate the NPP assembly members. Some assembly members left the premises with hatchet marks. Such tension and political violence was not unfamiliar in the district, as violence occurred around the 2008 and 2004 general elections (BBC, 2008). At a graduation ceremony I attended on the assembly premises, a policeman told the university students gathered: “I've served under five chief executives and they've all said the past opposition treated us so badly so now is our turn. Then election violence begets election violence” (7/24/12).

Kofi Adu was eventually confirmed, though how the impasse was resolved is not clear. Some attributed it to a realization among the NPP that without a chief executive the district would receive no central government funds, a situation that would benefit no-one. Others attributed it to the intervention of the main chief, while some familiar with the negotiations told me small amounts of money were paid to a few NPP members to switch their vote. However it was resolved, the conflict is useful because the violence conveys the extraordinary anxiety experienced by elites and non-elites around transitions in and out of power. For Kofi Adu's supporters, the possibility that NPP assembly members would abstain and refuse the assembly a quorum was not just outrageous for reasons of procedural democracy, but more so because, after investing themselves in getting the NDC into office, the behavior of the NPP assembly members threatened their ultimate enjoyment of the fruits of power.

Kofi Adu's path to power had not been smooth. As the months passed after that tumultuous confirmation process, it became clear that his tenure would not be much easier. Although it was common for a chief executive to deal with party matters on a daily basis, Kofi Adu's experience in office seemed to be saturated in party affairs more than any other chief executive I knew. He complained to me about the intensive or even invasive nature of the job. To get a sense of how party life infused district government, I spent the entirety of July 24, 2012 in his presence. We had agreed that I could sit in every meeting and that I would not quote conversations between identified individuals. With the radio on in the background of his office, we sat as the chief executive went between his mobile phone and responding to conversations in front of him, each interaction lasting no more than two minutes. His secretary's adjacent office doubled as the waiting room, but she had no phone or files, only a desktop computer she said had viruses. All files appeared to be in the chief executive's immediate possession.

His mobile phone hopped as visitors streamed in and out. A cocoa farmer complained of being ejected from his land because the owner found out he was NDC. An elderly trader arrived to complain about getting access to lockable stores in the market. An old lady came for help with school fees. By 1:33pm, three separate meetings were unfolding at the same time, as the chief executive, clearly over-burdened, rubbed his temples and closed his eyes as he tried to trouble-shoot problems big

and small. A young man with a university rejection letter arrived. A man from a nearby Zongo complained about his toilet. A middle aged man and teenage boy asked for help with school fees. The presiding member arrived to discuss on-going building projects. By 2:15pm, there were six separate visiting parties sitting on couches either side of the chief executive. Around 3pm a large group of disabled children came to apply for social welfare assistance which would give them schools fees and pocket money. The chief executive took a fistful of beaten two Cedi notes (about \$USD1) from his pocket and passed them out for the children to buy chicken. At 4:16pm, the chief executive had no one in the room but me for the first time that day. He felt today was a quieter day for visitors.

At this point, a typical day which the chief executive thought was actually a quiet one, was about to take a dramatic turn. From my perspective, my choice of this day to be with the chief executive was essentially random, but the day was about to become very *atypical*. At 4:30pm we walked a short distance to an empty classroom for a meeting of the local party branch. The purpose of the meeting was to organize for the general election months later. As participants slowly filed in, word began to spread through texts and phone calls that something was happening in Accra. The meeting was off before it started. By 4:40pm news had spread that President Mills was dead. We made a slow walk back to the chief executive's office. I sat with the chief executive, senior staff and local party members and listened to national radio. More than any Ghanaian President in living memory, Mills was respected as a mostly decent and incorruptible figure. He was also the NDC's hope for in the upcoming general election. Should NDC lose the presidency, all NDC chief executives would be removed, and many civil servants would be rotated. Senior civil servants began filing into the room to join the mourning and share a drink. On Adom FM callers wailed. The chief executive was on the phone throughout. Moans of 'Oh Prof!' and '68 years old in three days' rang around the room. By 6pm the radio was turned up and NDC figures from the earlier party meeting arrived, in greater numbers this time and in tears.

By 7pm we had moved to his personal residence, a house of about 1,500 square feet set on grassy grounds about six times that size, and surrounded by a high cement wall. We sat in the living room watching national TV coverage, as the government in Accra prepared for Vice-President Mahama to be immediately sworn in. At 8:13pm, less than four hours after news had filtered through,

Vice-President John Dramani Mahama was sworn in. As the TV coverage drew to a close so did the evening, though the chief executive's phone never stopped.

A day that promised to be unremarkable for the chief executive turned out to be hugely memorable. I was struck by the personal nature of his power: how the institution of local governance was so concentrated in the body of one man. He took calls and visitors constantly because he is the crucial bottleneck in local governance. But it was also clear that he answered to many people, and was acutely aware of this. Party life was inseparable from district governance, and the chief executive had to carefully attend to even the smallest concern from a fellow partisan.

4.1.2 Chief executives in less competitive districts

In highly competitive Koko District, Chief Executive Kofi Adu was hounded by the appeals of activists. By contrast, in less competitive districts chief executives owed much less to the activists, and were better able to withstand their claims. In my four less competitive cases, NDC chief executives governed NPP strongholds. NDC apparatuses were small, and thus the pool of potential chief executives from which the NDC could choose was not large. Chief executives in less competitive places often emerged from *outside* the local party apparatus, in contrast to highly competitive districts. The different kinds of chief executives had different effects on the leverage party activists had to extract rewards from their party in power.

In the first of my less competitive cases, the Oran District chief executive had an unconventional and controversial background because he had switched from the NPP to the NDC only a few years earlier. When such figures become chief executive without emerging through the party's local apparatus, we often observe significant distrust and animosity between the chief executive and party activists, on whom the chief executive had not relied for his position. This was the case with the Oran District Chief Executive, who even had the NDC constituency chairman—the main local party official—arrested for operating his sand and stone business without a license. Party officials publicly chastised the chief executive for having “no respect for party members,” to whom he owed little. A primary candidate explained such behavior this way: “90 percent of chief executives tow the

government line, but some are more liberal minded and will look out for themselves. Some are not true party loyalists and manage to somehow get into the party” (Author Interview, 2012b). These chief executives who do not “tow the government line” are seen as fraudsters who have broken into a club. They have used personal connections to gain the nomination from the president, and then used personal wealth to influence the nomination process, but national and local party actors cannot rely on them to put party first. Such an inability to count on a chief executive doing the ‘right thing’ was a cause of concern for government and for activists.

In my second less competitive case, the Guba District had no chief executive. Thomas Osei-Bonsu had once occupied the office, but he did not last long. The story of his rise and fall is interesting. The school teacher was only one of seven candidates and he was not the favorite. The regional party chairman, now an ambassador, had personally intervened on behalf of Osei-Bonsu whom he knew through his church. His losing power interested me because it did not fit with the pattern I was discerning in which chief executives in less competitive districts are better able to withstand their followers’ complaints. Closer inspection proved useful, however, because it revealed the importance of supra-local elites in district politics. Osei-Bonsu became involved in a dispute over land and a claim on an important local stool, which is a seat of traditional authority among the Akan. The chief with whom he struggled was also an NDC figure, and was able to use his influence in Accra to have the chief executive removed. In other words, rather than a chief executive face pressure and dissent from his followers ‘below,’ here the sword appears to have fallen from ‘above.’

But not all chief executives who come under pressure lose office. During my fieldwork two chief executives in particular managed to weather storms. In the first, the Lamda District chief executive had to weather storms emanating from within his own party. He described himself to me as an NDC activist of about twenty years, though local activists claimed otherwise. This was his first time in public office, and he was keen to show me all of the initiatives he had undertaken, which he had memorialized in the district’s official color calendar, with each month adorned with images of new school buildings, refurbished public toilets, and upgraded local roads. Like many NDC supporters in this part of the country, he was born locally but had roots in the north, where his father was born.

Even though his mother was of the region, his mixed lineage set him apart as a non-Asante in this community.

The NDC put forward Yaw Adofo's name in late 2010, early 2011. Since he was not known in the area, even NDC figures were alleged to have been suspicious of him. What were his motives? To whom did he owe his career? Could he be trusted to govern for the party? Some NDC activists alleged to me that he was formerly an NPP man, that he had connections at 'the castle' (the seat of government in Accra), and that he had an uncle in the upper echelons of the party. Both NPP and NDC supporters claimed that, upon his uncle's death, Yaw Adofo took his name and became a low-level chief, and ultimately used this royal name to lobby central government for the chief executive nomination. Many claimed that at the time of his nomination he was actually living in Accra, another blow to his character, however true. Although this NPP-majority district expected to personally gain little from an NDC chief executive, by late 2010 the district's development machine had slowed in the absence of a chief executive. As for the NDC activists who were uneasy about the nomination of this allegedly unknown figure, the Ashanti Regional Minister is said to have personally telephoned the government's appointed assembly members to ensure they supported Yaw Adofo.

His path to power was shrouded in distrust and suspicion amongst even his co-partisans, and his time in power was little different. Stories circulated that he had been 'building houses for himself,' implying that he filled his own stomach without thinking of those who put him in power. He fought against motions of no confidence launched by his own party, which is the only local way to remove a chief executive. In July, disgruntled NDC activists told me that Yaw Adofo's passport had been seized because he was 'planning to run away.' What was notable about his time in office was not only the constant intra-party struggles, but his ability to withstand such pressures. NDC party figures in the district appeared frustrated with what little leverage they appeared to have over him. This contrasted with other districts in which the chief executive appeared very sensitive to the demands of party supporters. To beat the vote of no confidence, Yaw Adofo is said to have successfully lobbied the Regional Minister to withdraw some of the NDC's own appointed assembly members, including both the former and current NDC party secretaries.

Yaw Adofo is an example of a chief executive whose bi-partisanship earns them a reputation as an essentially disloyal figure. The idea that bi-partisanship contravened the basic point of controlling government approached an informal rule across my cases. So widely understood was this informal rule that some of my contacts thought I was naïve to even ask about it. As a senior civil servant explained to me, the idea that the opposition would make life hard for a government was to miss the point entirely: governance is zero sum, and those out of power can do little to stop you. The only question is what your own people can do to you (7/24/12).

In another less competitive district, Braka District, the chief executive managed to get into power because this NPP stronghold had few NDC notables and, as a retired teacher, she faced little opposition. Like the Lamda District chief executive, however, the Braka District chief executive was also portrayed as non-indigenous, and thus as someone with questionable allegiances (6/31/12). Although she made it through the confirmation process, her time in office was marked by a public dispute with the main local chief. At a press conference the chief called on the president to fire the chief executive. The chief executive, he complained, “treats the chief and elders with contempt. She boastfully tells people around him that she owes her position to the President and the Regional Minister and not the chief.” The letter continued with specific complaints:

“During the last district assembly elections, the chief executive was seen moving from house to house distributing gifts and campaigning on tribal lines. . . An old lady even came to my house one early morning to inform me that the chief executive came to her house to campaign against one of the candidates that he was a northerner and therefore should not be voted for. We also had reports that she threatened to deny some villages of projects if they voted for particular candidates. . . Scholarships from the [education] GetFund are awarded to only the favourites of the chief executive. The traditional council is not consulted nor asked to nominate beneficiaries.”

Relations soured further when the chief executive is said to have snubbed the chief’s attempts at dialogue:

“Early this year, the traditional council invited the chief executive and her officers to the palace for a discussion on issues affecting the development of the area but she failed to come without any excuse.” After the chiefs expressed their outrage by boycotting her inauguration, local religious leaders attempted to mediate and “it was agreed that she pacify Nananom [elders] with two sheep,” but the chiefs allege that the sheep never materialized.

The root of the animus between the chief and the chief executive was not clear to me or even to people I knew. I wondered how long she could last in office having landed on the wrong side of the key local chief. By the end of my fieldwork, however, I was surprised to find that it was the chief that appeared to have lost the struggle. It was said in the district that other Akan chiefs in the region had begun to disassociate themselves from the behavior of the chief, and that after a copy of this letter had reached the Asante King (Asantehene), the chief became less vocal in his complaints. Speculation about the real cause of his retreat will not be of much use here, but it is significant that a chief executive could so aggravate the main local notable without dire consequences. I understood the chief executive’s victory, such as it was, as owing to the little leverage the chief had over her. She was outside the locally dominant NPP network, which meant it could not be used to punish her.

4.2 Party activists

“They will work during the campaign and help you to get into power but once the party gets into power they must be served first; no sense of sacrifice. This is a canker that plagues all political parties.”

Vice-President John Mahama (MyJoyOnline, 2010).

After the chief executive, the major force in daily district governance are the party workers and activists. This group includes the party’s constituency leadership, and in particular the constituency chairman, and the masse of politically active citizens, who are variously referred to as members,

sympathizers, activists, or footsoldiers. Before going into detail on activists, I will briefly lay out the key structures of the NPP and NDC at the local level.

The hierarchical organization of the NDC and NPP parallels official electoral and administrative divisions. 230 parliamentary constituencies are divided into about 5,000 electoral areas, which are divided into 21,000 polling stations. The polling station is thus the basic unit of organization for the state's electoral system and for both parties. Unlike the state's unit committees, however, neighborhood-level party structures are genuinely functioning entities. Parties have small executives at the level of the polling station. In the case of the NPP it is a five member polling station executive, and a nine member branch executive in the case of the NDC (NDC, 1992; NPP, 2009). In theory, any citizen can become a member if they pay their annual dues, and this earns them the right to vote to select the party's lowest level executives.¹ Polling station-level party officials then vote to select constituency executives, including the constituency chairman. A typical constituency covers about 80-100,000 people, so in a contest for constituency chairmen, the number of elected party officials who serve as voters is in the low hundreds.

While the selection of constituency executives is done locally, the selection of parliamentary and presidential candidates was traditionally dominated by regional and national party elites. While both parties, and the NDC in particular, were known for imposing parliamentary candidates on constituencies, over the past decade the use of primaries has become formalized in both parties (Daddieh and Bob-Milliar, 2012; Ichino and Nathan, 2012). The five-member NPP polling station executives now all vote in the presidential primaries. Since each of the 230 constituencies contains within it a large number of five-member polling station executives, the electorate in the NPP's presidential primary is over 100,000 people. Reforms to parliamentary primaries have weakened the hand of NPP constituency chairmen. They could influence the primary through contact with polling station chairmen, but under the new system all NPP agents at the polling station could vote in the parliamentary primary. This quin- or sextupled the number of people an aspirant would need to

¹Studies suggest that about two-thirds to three-quarters of voters identify with a party and about one-quarter are registered members (Fobih, 2010).

buy-off.²

The NDC moved toward primaries after losing the 2000 general election, because they thought the imposition of candidates had hurt their appeal with grassroots members on whom they depended for electioneering (Ichino and Nathan, 2012). Parliamentary primaries were formalized 2008. The presidential candidate is ultimately voted upon by over 2,000 party delegates. Of that number, constituency executives make up the largest share and this explains in large part why, despite the power of the president's office, the party in power remains sensitive to local party actors. At the time of writing, the NDC planned to go beyond merely expanding their electoral college – the step taken by the NPP – and planned to scrap it entirely. The NDC Secretary General was clear about the goal behind the reform: “We have heard of stories of candidates paying money, sharing mobile phones, wax prints and camping delegates at hotels, all in an attempt to win votes” (Daily Graphic, 2013b). In its place would be direct voting by any and all party members (as opposed party officials) to vote at their polling station for parliamentary and presidential candidates.

The constituency chairmen oversee party activity and have an important role in the selection of chief executive and parliamentary candidates (Daddieh and Bob-Milliar, 2012; Ichino and Nathan, 2012). Because the nomination for a chief executive comes from within the local party and is passed upward to the president, constituency chairmen understood their role as kingmakers in local administration, and it was common for them to use the term ‘king maker’ in conversation with me. For a constituency chairman of the governing party, the local offices of the state are open for use. I witnessed this most nakedly in my first meeting with the NDC constituency chairman in Aman District. I had been put in contact with the chairman by an NDC assemblyman, who had introduced me by phone as a white researcher friend. Knowing no more about me than that, the chairman arranged to meet me at the assembly. We met in the office of the district director of the National Youth Employment Program (NYEP), which was the government's main job creating entity for tens of thousands of mostly low skill young adults.

²Activists estimated for me that a recent primary had cost a candidate about 60,000 Cedis (about \$30,000 USD): 40 Cedis for each of the 430 electors, plus a 100 Cedi fertilizer sprayer for each (2/3/12). That figure is likely at the high end, because the candidate needs 51% of votes, not 100%, but nonetheless it is clearly expensive.

Although the NYEP director is a civil servant and the constituency chairman is a political figure, the two men clearly had a comfortable relationship. Over the next hour they referred to one another as ‘my chairman’ and ‘my director.’ There was no attempt on the part of either man to pretend to this stranger that the NYEP was anything other than a source of jobs for party activists, and that the chairman had complete access to the spigot. The chairman took several calls during our conversation, and the phone passed between him and the director. In most cases the caller was being talked through the steps of accessing the NYEP: ‘bring a letter to my director,’ ‘go to the regional office,’ ‘tell that man you have seen me.’ The walls between the party and the state were not just permeable, they were meshed.

What I found most valuable in talking to constituency chairmen was how they thought of politics as not personal. NPP chairmen were quick to point out that NDC chief executives, people about whom they struggled to muster a compliment, were not to blame for cutting NPP supporters out of district patronage. Rather, NPP chairmen knew that NDC chief executives *must* do this in order to stay in power. Politics was not personal. In one competitive district, the NPP Constituency Chairman saw district governance as zero sum, and understood himself as firmly on the losing side. Yet, his understanding of the inner workings of power are informative: “In [this district] we are very peaceful. Leaders mostly like to work with the opposition, but we have people who are your backers who fight against that. I don’t blame the government in power. It is their core supporters who punish them for cooperation. But we did the same when we were in power” (Author Interview, 2012c). In another highly competitive district, the NPP Constituency Chairman was not short of complaints about the chief executive: “no due diligence is being done in the tender process; everything is going to party men; contractors are just using boards to build footbridges and the Assembly is paying them huge amounts.” But he did not think of politics as personal. He explained the chief executive’s ‘abuses’ in institutional terms: “if chief executive fails to help party boys, it will be the NDC who makes life hard for him” (Author interview, 2012a). This chief executive was said to have even been physically accosted by his own activists.

4.2.1 What is a party activist?

National elites require local partners with the capacity to deliver votes and social order (Boone, 2003; Ziblatt, 2006; Remick, 2004). In Ghana, this is the role played by political party activists. An activist is a partisan who is active on behalf of their party even outside of elections. In contrast to activists, party *workers* are the small voluntary administrative force with formal, titled positions. While a good party worker should be highly activist, not all activists are party workers. An activist can be depended on to attend rallies and to help with their organization; to visit the site of a district's construction project to monitor its progress; to collect names and phone numbers of drivers, traders, farmers, and hairdressers for mobilization; and to harass opposition office-holders during speeches and radio phone-ins. On election day they perform the essential tasks of transporting voters, monitoring Electoral Commission staff, and even coordinating constituency-wide efforts to stuff ballots or otherwise help their party to over-vote (Asunka et al., 2013; Bob-Milliar, 2012).

Activists are similar to brokers in the literature on distributive politics, who Stokes et al. (2013) define as “ground-level intermediaries between the party and voters” (24). What “makes brokers valuable to parties,” according to Stokes et al., “is the social embeddedness of brokers with constituents, and the information that this embeddedness provides” (100). Activists differ from brokers in important ways that lead me to prefer the term activist over broker. In the definition of Stokes et al., the “social embeddedness” of brokers allows them to offer parties a service. A broker can typically count the number of clients he can bring with him to the polling booth, but party activists in Ghana market themselves by their party allegiance rather than by their ability to control voters. They advertize their willingness to toil and suffer for the party, rather than their position within an asymmetrical network of clients. Unlike classical brokers, there is little evidence that party activists could, or even claim to, take voters away from a party. The biographical profile of brokers and activists is suggestive of this. In the survey research in Stokes et al., brokers are typically in their 40s, but Ghanaian activists are typically much younger, such that people often refer to them as ‘party boys.’ They also have low- or medium-skill professional backgrounds, such as welders,

barbers, or laborers. What they offer to the party is their manpower first and foremost, rather than any power over groups of voters.

While social embeddedness and informational power are not central to what activists offer parties, their ‘situational’ resources within communities are important. Activists offer parties a person who lives among co-ethno-regionals who are also likely co-partisans. An Ewe activist, for example, can loudly march through her neighborhood to bring fellow Ewes out to vote for the NDC. But this power does not translate to opposition neighborhoods, where she has little status among non-Ewes. An Ewe marching through an Asante street, knocking on doors and beseeching people in the Asante Twi language to come out to vote would be of little use. This is a crucial point: elections that are won primarily through mobilization of likely supporters uniquely benefit those with a foothold within likely-supporter neighborhoods. Persuasion strategies, on the other hand, require political operators with knowledge of *non-co-ethnic* neighborhoods, a situation which confers on party activists no special advantage.

An activist can actually refer to one of three types of actors. The first type is what Bob-Milliar (2012) labels platform activists, which are typically young and educated outspoken voices who emerge through the Tertiary Institution Network or the Tertiary Education and Students Confederacy, the student wings of the NDC and NPP, respectively. As their own careers develop, they will form an important core of their party’s regional and national professional management class. The second type are wealthy patrons, also known as sympathizers, who typically are low visibility donors who leverage their political relationship to further their enterprise in state licensed activities or as public contractors. In my case studies, people referred to as sympathizers included a large cocoa farmer, the owner of a sawmill, a pharmacist, a soap factory owner, and a chief. A party sympathizer is someone who is a known supporter of a party, but may not hold a position in the party structure, and is even less likely to run for any office.

The final type of activists are people who devote much of their free time to campaigning for their party. Known as ‘foot soldiers,’ they have a reputation for collective public displays of their allegiance, such as converging *en masse* to stage protests at the district building. It was common

for my interviews with district officials to be interrupted by an impromptu protest by local activists. They engage in more nefarious activities such as intimidating opposition activists through the use of verbal threats and physical confrontation or the destruction of opposition property. Indeed, although Ghana is noted for the relative absence of political violence, often ignored are these forms of low-level violence in the form of beatings, threats, intimidation, and hostile confrontation, which dominate local news but rarely national.³ For the residents I knew, these episodes shaped their experience of the politics as a base and violent thing. People regularly viewed activists with contempt, often referring to them dismissively as ‘party boys,’ with a prominent national think-tank describing them as the “soft under-belly of democratic politics in Ghana that must be reined in”:

“While the victorious party’s foot soldiers are usually promised and often offered rewards, including jobs, supporters of the opposition parties are excluded. In this regard, the party foot-soldier phenomenon deepens the neo-patrimonialism and clientelism—the “politics of Big Man patronage”—that have bedeviled and retarded Ghana’s postcolonial development” (Ghana CDD, 2007).

This view of foot soldiers appear to be shared by those outside of elite, educated circles. In a representative survey of 2,400 voters by Afrobarometer, respondents were asked which of the following statements was closest to their view:

- A: *Political party foot soldiers in Ghana toil for their parties because they believe in their programs.*
- B: *Political party foot soldiers in Ghana toil for their parties because they expect material rewards after winning political power.*

60% said foot soldiers toil for material rewards, while only 31% said they do it for programmatic or ideological reasons.⁴ Respondents were also well aware of the political dynamic linking office

³Deaths are not unheard of—Yakubu Yahuza, an NPP youth activist, was hanged for the 2009 murder of Rashid Alhassan, an NDC youth activists—but they are rare (Joy News, 2013a).

⁴Data from Afrobarometer Round 5 (2010-2012).

holders to activists in ways that put activists above the law. 81% agreed that “political interference has made efforts of the Police to arrest and prosecute party foot soldiers who indulge in criminal acts an impossible task.” Perhaps most interesting was the respondents who thought the demands of activists were generally merited. 58% agreed that the “demands of political party foot soldiers who toiled to get their parties elected are legitimate and should be satisfied by government.” In another nationally-representative survey of 3,000 households conducted in 2014, 78% of respondents agreed with this statement: “When a party is in power, only its party activists receive benefits. It is not enough just to have voted for the party.” And when asked “If a person works hard for their party and their party comes to power, do you think they will be rewarded with a job?,” 85% of respondents said probably or definitely yes.⁵

Party activists simultaneously seek out, and are sought out by, local and supra-local party elites in need of labor to engage in the mundane chores of party life. Those who need the activists make clear they understand the relationship. The Nadowli District Chief Executive told an audience “that no one in the NDC is bigger than the foot soldiers who had won the party power in 2008” (Ghana News Agency, 2010a). In their own statements, activists reveal an overtly contractual understanding of their relationship with politicians. NDC activists in the Lower West Akyem Constituency complained:

The party elite “told us that when NDC lost, we being the polling agents will be held responsible because we did not perform well enough. . . After we won the elections, we the polling agents have been neglected and they are fighting on the job. If we hadn’t done our work well, the NDC party will not have won and they would not have gotten the opportunity that they are enjoying now” (CitiFM, 2013).

Party activists are not altruists and they are not without agency. They engage in partisan activity because their own welfare is typically precariously balanced: they are welders, barbers, farmers or unemployed who have thrown their lot in with their party and outed themselves as party activists. Theirs is less an economy of affection, and more an economy of protection: politicians

⁵Survey data from 2014 USAID Household Survey.

are their path to modestly elevating their living standards, and they are fully aware of how both actors—politician and activist—are using one another instrumentally.

4.2.2 What do party activists want?

What activists want is laid bare in two ways. First, when central government does not nominate activists' preferred candidates for parliament or chief executive. Second, when central or local government 'neglects' party faithful. I provide examples of each.

If the governing party has retained power after a general election, a significant minority of chief executives will be replaced. In the months after the new administration takes office, names of nominees bubble up from district-level party activity to central government in Accra, which then announces nominees. In most cases the nominees are those selected by each district's party apparatus. But when a different name emerges, the fury of activists sheds light on how they understood politics. In the first example, NDC activists in Kumasi were angered when they suspected their preferred nominee was being overlooked. It is important to note that all actors in the example were members of the NDC:

“The timely intervention of the new Ashanti Regional Minister, Mr Eric Opoku, prevented a group of heavily built foot soldiers of the NDC in Kumasi from carrying out their threat to use violence to stop Mr Kojo Osei-Bonsu from becoming the Kumasi Metropolitan Chief Executive. About 50 men on motorbikes stormed the NDC's Ashanti Regional Office at Asafo about 11 a.m. Tuesday and forced the regional executive members who were in a meeting to flee for their dear lives. The foot soldiers accused the regional executive of influencing the nomination of Mr Osei-Bonsu, claiming that since *the nominee was not known* in the party in the region, they would not allow him to take up the position” (Daily Graphic 2013, emphasis added).

“The nominee was not known” is the key phrase. Not being a ‘son of the soil’ reflects activists' anxiety that the office holder will not fulfill the implicit contract by *failing* to discriminate in favor

of his group. A candidate that is ‘not known’ cannot be trusted to deliver, since he did not emerge through the local party apparatus, and thus does not owe his political career to local activists. This was the situation described earlier in which Lamda District Chief Executive Yaw Adofo was seen as an outsider and distrusted by local activists.⁶

Such protests have precedence in Kumasi, which despite being an NPP stronghold, has a large NDC base given the sheer size of the city. In 2009 an NDC vetting committee tasked with reviewing applicants for public positions was interrupted by angry NDC supporters. The protest took place at the residence of the Ashanti Regional Minister, where participants included the General Secretary of the NDC and the Minister for Local Government.

Protesters “contended that some of them toiled during times of adversities to ensure the victory of the party but the party hierarchy has sidelined them during consideration for positions. Some of them also claimed their names had been penciled for persecution if the NPP had won power because of their open support for the NDC. . . According to them, there were a number of defeated parliamentary candidates in the region who should be considered for the position rather than going for somebody they claimed had not been involved in the cause of the party. . . [In response, the NDC said] all the names that have come up before the vetting committee were people who are known to be staunch members of the NDC” (Modern Ghana, 2009).

The example is useful for several reasons. First, note the willingness of low-level activists to physically confront not just their party, but national-level cabinet and party figures, and at the residence of the regional minister. Second, note the equivalence drawn between toiling for the party and then being considered for positions. Third, note that the objectionable candidate was accused of “not being involved in the cause of the party.” Last, note in the response of the NDC leadership the assurance that the candidates being considered for appointment to public office were “staunch members of the NDC.” There was little pretense that such public offices existed for any other reason than to serve partisans. Such incidents are not unique to Kumasi:

⁶It is also a problem of credible commitments known in the clientelism literature. See Piattoni, 2001.

“Irate NDC Youth in Salaga in the East Gonja District of the Northern Region last night destroyed properties and bill boards bearing the name of [NDC] President John Dramani Mahama. . . The Youth marched through the streets causing mayhem and threatening to set ablaze the NDC party vehicles and constituency office. . . The youth maintained that their protest was to send signal to President John Mahama that his decision to nominate Mohammed Amin Lukman ahead of three shortlisted candidates was not welcomed. A member of the irate Youth Seidu Aziz Jawula told Joy News that the president *nominee is not known* to them in the district and warned the nominee not to set his foot in Salaga” (Joy News, 2013c, emphasis added).

In the Asawase Constituency, the ‘Concerned Youth of Asawase NDC’ called on the President to rescind his nomination for chief executive. “Alhaji Nuru Hamidan is *not somebody who has suffered* for the party in the constituency and he is not the people’s favorite. *We have not seen him* in any of our party activities in the constituency” (Daily Guide, 2013, emphasis added).

The second major way in which the interests of activists are laid bare is when they complain publicly about neglect by their party in government. A press statement from activists of the Ablekuma Central Constituency is typical:

“After the party has stayed in power for almost seven years, the foot soldiers have been forgotten and none of the foot soldiers have seen a change in their lifestyles and right now there are troubles in our marriage homes where some of us cannot pay our children’s school fees and even most of us are thrown out of our homes because we cannot face our responsibilities” (cited in Bob-Milliar, 2012, 677).

These are the activists who consider themselves to be neglected by their party. The kinds of rewards being sought can be seen in the next example:

“Footsoldiers of the ruling NDC in the Akwapim South District Assembly are on the heels of the District Chief Executive, Afari Djan, for what they described as neglect,

after winning the general elections. The footsoldiers are accusing the chief executive of refusing to recruit them into government employment programmes, such the Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency (GYEEDA) among others” (The Chronicle, 2013).

In the next example, foot soldiers attempted to gain control of a public toilet. For a low-skilled party activist, job of toilet toll collector can provide a steady income, at least for as long as the party is in power:

“A timely intervention by the Police in Hohoe in the Volta Region prevented a bloodbath between some irate National Democratic Congress youth and residents of the area over the ownership of a public toilet. The confusion according to reports ensued after the youth with the *support of the Municipal Chief Executive* tried to take over the management of a public toilet in the area” (CitiFM, 2014, emphasis added).

Note the activists were trying to take over the public toilet with the support of the chief executive. Public seizures of this kind are not uncommon. Even before I began my fieldwork, NDC supporters had locked the assembly building in 2010 and demanded the chief executive release from prison several NDC supporters (Ghana News Agency, 2010b).

Complaints of neglect are often framed in opposition to the behavior of the party’s Big Men, who are seen as eating too well at the trough of state. Branch and ward executives in Tamale Central complained that regional and national executives had failed “to recognize their sacrifices to the party... Those who could not hitherto buy even bicycles are building mansions [and they] come to tell us that there is nothing” to share (Joy News, 2013b).

Rewards go beyond jobs to include things like roads, bridges, or street lights. While a road is often thought of as a public good, it may be a *de facto* club good since non-members can be excluded from its use because of the spatial clustering of communities. Thus activists clamor for jobs for themselves, but also rewards for the communities in which they live:

“The youth of the party at Agogo Zongo in the Asante-Akim North District said their community deserved to be rewarded with developmental projects for their political loyalty. They said they were not comfortable with the “total neglect,” and warned that if the situation did not change, it could affect the party’s fortunes in 2016... They bitterly complained about the poor and dusty nature of roads running through their area, and asked that this must be tackled without delay. [The chief executive] said he is determined to go every length to improve the socio-economic conditions in the Zongos... Baba Adul-Rahman, Chief of the Zongo Community, said they were going to hold the chief executive to his word” (Ghana News Agency, 2014).

These examples show activists want material improvements in their lives and in their communities, and they understand their relationship to their party in a contractual manner. They are not pawns to be endlessly shifted about in a political game, and they are keen to let their party leaders and the voting public know that they expect their just deserts.

Indeed, a striking finding in my case studies is just how *little* control party Big Men had over their activists in many districts. One way this can be understood is by analyzing the discourse surrounding activists, especially use of the terms ‘party boys’ or ‘big men.’ Like many societies in sub-Saharan Africa, most Ghanaian societies are run in an essentially gerontocratic fashion, in which a person may claim power and respect simply by virtue of age. One hears constant references to the problem of ‘young men,’ who are seen as restless in the face of an informal social institution that prevents them from enjoying significant social mobility until at least their mid-thirties at which point a man is no longer considered to be a ‘young man.’ These young men are often adult males trying to ignite their careers, whether in the public or private sector. Their experience is reflected in youth unemployment rates, which for 15-24 year olds is three times the rate for the 45-64 age group (African Economic Outlook, 2014). The power dynamic between boys and men, and the place of the ‘young man’ within it, is acted out and can be observed through subtle interactions between grown men of different ages. A ‘young man’ can reasonably be asked to procure his ‘father’ or ‘uncle’ breakfast or a newspaper, and to decline the request would betray a lack of ‘culture’ in the young

man.⁷ The contravening of such basic social institutions would suggest to the ‘father’ that his ‘son’ may not be trustworthy. The behavior of these ‘young men’ foot soldiers must be seen in this context: there is a widespread perception that Ghanaian society is structured to hold back young adults, and as a result foot soldiers are wary that their political fathers might eat too much and forget to feed them. As Iliffe wrote, conflict between male generations has been “one of the most dynamic and enduring forces in African history” (Iliffe, 2007, 97). Thus ‘young men’ permit themselves to be used instrumentally but they do it fearing that the father figures for whom they toil might not have their interests at heart.

4.2.3 Theorizing the leverage of activists

Activists represent a transaction cost for parties: the administrative cost of distributive linkages to voters. They are not a dead weight loss, however, since they provide a service. The price parties pay for this service varies according to uncertainty about electoral victory. Parties pay a lower fee when the outcome is more certain: when they are in a stronghold or an opposition area. Parties pay a higher fee to activists, however, when the outcome is less certain: when inter-party politics is very competitive and elections are closely fought. In competitive places both parties are paying premiums for the services of activists.

If an activist threatens to stay at home in a stronghold, the party does not expect electoral damage. Threats to defect in a stronghold will not be credible, since the incumbent’s party is dominant, and it would make little sense for the activist to join the meager local opposition. In the opposition stronghold, threats to defect to the dominant party will not be credible since the activist usually lives in the neighborhood of the dominated party, and the dominant party is unlikely to direct development projects to his area unless the community defected *en masse*. Thus only where neither party is dominant does the activist have significant leverage. As one moves from less to more politically competitive districts, the ability of party activists to credibly threaten to withdraw their service increases, and with it their leverage over office holders. Although party elites may consider

⁷In Akan culture, any man old enough to be one’s father/mother can be called father/mother. This is true for people of one’s siblings’ age, or grandparents age.

whether or not activists are bluffing—an activist has little to gain by opting out of the patronage network in competitive places—I found that calling activists’ bluff was seen as too costly a choice for party elites. Whether credible or not, threats by activists in competitive districts to abstain were seen as potentially costly.

Yet, it is not obvious that the leverage of activists should be greatest where the two parties are roughly equal in strength. One could expect their leverage to be higher in strongholds, for example, since in presidential elections every additional vote matters, and additional votes are theoretically easier to get where a party is strong. But recall that parties fight for control of three major offices: the presidency, in which the entire country is one constituency, and thus an additional vote matters even in a stronghold; parliamentary seats, in which additional votes in strongholds or opposition areas do not matter as much as additional votes in competitive constituencies; and district assembly seats, in which majority control of the assembly provides a party with a bargaining chip even if the chief executive is from the other party. It is these latter two seats—in parliament and in a district—that explain why politics is so fierce in highly competitive places, even when the presidency can be won without winning competitive districts.

I observed this logic in competitive and less competitive districts. In the less competitive NPP stronghold of Lamda District, the NDC chief executive did not emerge from local party structures. His strategy for negotiating activist agency was to seek bi-partisan deals and worry less about NDC activists. He was constantly assailed by NDC activists, but with little effect. Over the months of my visits, the recurring thorn in the chief executive’s side was complaints that he wasn’t sufficiently putting the boot to the necks of the NPP. NDC youth repeatedly threatened to defect when the chief executive publicly described his party as a party for all residents in the district (3/2/12). Even an NPP coordinator in the area said this NDC chief executive would help the opposition (6/22/12). When I asked if life in the district would be any different if the chief executive was NPP, to my amazement this NPP official said ‘no.’ The attempt by the chief executive to not appear overly partisan was corroborated by one technocrat:

“How does the chief executive balance the need to work for the party and raise its profile in an election year, with the need to cooperate in order to get things done?”

“He definitely plays both sides, and the NDC party people are often frustrated. I can tell you about the beautiful manner in which we strategically pick key vocal NPP people. He calls them into his office before an assembly meeting to get their agreement. Then in the assembly meeting the presiding member will call on them and they will speak in your favor.” As for the appointed assembly members, “they are very easy to get on your side; they are from the Zongos. They are not smart people and they will readily vote for the chief executive” (Author Interview, 2012).

The chief executive’s reluctance to put party first was a subject of real bitterness among NDC supporters:

“Irate NDC supporters in the area, who feel let-down by President Mahama’s administration, allegedly stormed the place to vent their spleen on the District Chief Executive, Yaw Adofo. According to them, numerous promises made to them by the party, including providing them with jobs, had not been fulfilled after the party had been in power for six years. They complained that they were starving to death. The angry-looking NDC supporters, who were clad in red attire and singing war songs, decided to rush to the chief executive’s office to teach him “bitter lessons”... The NDC supporters said they were hungry and without work to do so they would not allow the party’s leadership in the area including the chief executive, to have any peace of mind until the government had fulfilled its promises to them” (Daily Guide, 2014).

Despite their efforts, the activists did not manage to unseat the chief executive. The case of Lamda District is not only useful for what it suggests about the weak leverage of activists in less competitive districts, but also for what it suggests about collective action among activists. When people spoke to me about the challenges the chief executive faced in running the district, they often referred specifically to the ‘Zongo boys.’ Zongos are slum-like parts of town that have been settled by

non-indigenes, typically northern Ghanaians, many of whom are Muslim. In Lamda District, NDC activists in the main Zongo told me that many of them had defected to the NPP. They formed the Nasara Club (Hausa word for victory or success) and claimed to have met with the NPP and begun to pay dues. When I asked if they were defecting because of upset with what the NDC was doing in the country as a whole, or if their upset was more about what the chief executive was failing to do, it was strongly the latter. I was told that ‘the youth were upset with chief executive,’ who had told them they would get jobs and loans but they had not received any (7/27/12).

Although the chief executive was accused of being insufficiently partisan, his bi-partisanship should not be exaggerated. The meaningful comparison is not between a chief executive who governs purely in the public interest and one who governs purely for himself or his club, but between a chief executive who governs for himself or his party and a chief executive who does the same but with slightly less exclusionary zeal. So it was that the Lamda District chief executive was not immune to accusations of zero-sum governance: some complained that NPP contractors were hurting and NDC contractors were thriving; others complained of being turned away from his office for being of the ‘wrong’ party.

We can contrast his ability to withstand pressure from his supporters with the fortunes of chief executives in highly competitive districts. In the first example, Aman District Chief Executive Adwoa Nti paid the ultimate price for shunning partisanship. She had spent her career as a midwife but in the early 2000s served as chief executive under the NPP. The 72 year old was perhaps the least partisan political figure I met. She was a pragmatist who viewed party politics with contempt. In conversation she spoke critically of political figures on both sides, and several NDC people in the area spoke well of her in private with me. She became politically involved in the 1980s as a recruiter of women in the area, a job she was well positioned to do as a midwife. She had waited until the end of her professional life to get into politics, because she felt that becoming political too early can cause a young professional to burn many bridges. When I asked her about the experience of governing NDC communities as an NPP chief executive, she was clear where her obstacles lay.

“Only my own people will give me trouble. When I ran for chief executive in fact it

was NPP people who tried to frustrate me. But I am experienced. As a nurse I came across difficult people all my life. One time they asked me to get rid of the district driver, because he is NDC, and to give the job to a party boy. I said to them ‘unless they are sabotaging my work, I won’t get rid of them.’ Truly I believe mostly good people get into politics but it is your own people who corrupt you” (Author Interview, 2012a).

She remembered her official car being stoned by her own supporters when a rumor circulated that NDC people were benefiting from a government program. She had received advance warning that protests were likely at a project launch she was going to attend, but stressed again that the problem was all ‘my own people.’ The current chief executive spoke kindly of Adwoa Nti despite coming from opposite parties. Abenaa Boafo told me the same story of the car stoning with a laugh, though as a current chief executive she understood what Adwoa Nti had gone through and she felt for her (7/31/12). Adwoa Nti proved to be insufficiently partisan for local activists, and when NPP’s Kufour won a second term in office, she was not re-nominated. Abenaa Boafo was formerly the party treasurer and was well aware of the problems activists could cause, especially in a closely fought district. Her strategy was to build their interests into her work: “Controlling your people is not hard so long as you listen to them. In some other places these activists think they are not getting enough from their party in power” (7/31/12). So as long as she remained responsive to them, she encountered no problems.

In the other highly competitive district, the agency of activists could not be ignored by office holders. Activist agency announced itself in daily remonstrations at the district offices. A civil servant recounted to me a meeting held in his small office between him, the police chief, and the party’s constituency executive, to discuss the upcoming vote to confirm the president’s nominee for chief executive: “The chief executive has no control of party boys here. At the chief executive vote they stormed my office and hit the door with an axe and broke my desk even with the party Big Men here” (Author Interview, 2012j). As luck would have it, our conversation was interrupted by shouting outside. NDC activists had started a fight with a district assembly driver. Activists had taken the vehicle during Mills’ funeral celebration, but the official driver was unable to start it the following day. After a screaming match lasting a few minutes, the civil servant continued the story.

NDC activists were concerned that NPP assembly members would not attend the confirmation vote and thereby deny their man a quorum:

“NDC boys wanted to bring in their own people and pretend they were assemblymen to cast votes [Laughs]. But the police chief and I refused and we insisted they would be brought to court if they tried that. So while we were in the office the NDC boys kicked in my door and smashed my desk. The chief executive doesn’t have power over them” (Author Interview, 2012j).

He had made a point of not repairing the desk, and was able to show me an axe mark in the wall behind my seat. In this highly competitive district, activists were ever-present in the halls and offices of the district building. The chief executive could not ignore them.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that chief executives sit atop the distributional spigots of local governance, but that many are genuinely constrained in their behavior, and that these constraints co-vary with a district’s electoral competitiveness. A basic distinction between chief executives in competitive and non-competitive districts is their connection to the district party apparatus, which generates two types of candidates. In my two highly competitive cases with well established NDC organizations, chief executives came from within the local party and were beholden to activists. In the non-competitive districts—which in my case were NPP areas—the outcomes were much more idiosyncratic: the Oran District chief executive was a former NPP man who seemed beholden to no-one; the Braika District chief executive was alleged to have been non-local but the traditional authority could not unseat her; the Lamda District chief executive was also accused of being non-local and angered NDC activists by being insufficiently partisan.

Second, I described the different types of actors that are referred to as activists, and I focused especially on those identifying as foot soldiers. Party activists have real agency and, when they can

overcome their collective action problem, they jointly pressure their co-partisans in office. When the probability of activists' defection or denial of service is high, party elites must evaluate the likely damage to their ability to win national offices. The potential damage is greatest in highly competitive districts, where victory for either party is most uncertain. This is why party activists enjoy the greatest leverage in highly competitive districts, and why they are successful at claiming public rewards. Their behavior must be understood in light of the existential uncertainties of living in a very poor country. Paths to material and social well-being are chartered most clearly through the public sector. Activists see the material gains accruing to small groups of Ghanaians, and they embrace the vulnerability that comes with being a vocal community member because—for elites and non-elites alike—the point of politics is to control the state.

Chapter 5

How a district really works: Bureaucrats

Introduction

In the previous chapter I drew on qualitative data to elaborate the causal mechanisms linking political competition to the behavior of political actors. This is only part of the story, however, since the literature on the political economy of development also emphasizes the importance of bureaucracies (Levy and Kpundeh, 2004; Amsden, 1989; Kohli, 2004). The literature has placed considerable weight on the penetration of states by a rentier class of civil servants who use their official positions to predate upon productive sectors. Hence, the weak capacity of states is often attributed to these dens of inefficiency and corruption (Sandbrook, 1993; O'Dwyer, 2006; Hyden, 1983).

While our image of civil servants in developing countries is of a professional class that lacks merit or a culture of service, I find in the Ghanaian context that this image does not hold. Data from ethnographic and interview research show that elite district civil servants are more meritocratic and politically neutral than we might expect. The challenge districts face is not a principal-agent problem in which bureaucrats do not do what politicians want. The problem is better understood as a collective action problem in which political elites cannot cooperate to realize mutual gains because voters punish bi-partisan cooperation (Booth and Cammack, 2013). To the extent that districts have

weak administrative capacity, therefore, it is because administrative agents are unable for political reasons to go about their work.

As with the previous chapter, this chapter is heavily descriptive, and the goal is to illuminate causal mechanisms. First, I support my assertion that district civil servants are generally skilled and politically neutral. Second, I show how political competition matters for administrative quality by hindering the ability of bureaucrats to do their work. I return to the use of taxation as a lens through which we can understand the relationship between politics and administrative quality. I show how political incentives, rather than bureaucratic incapacity, retard improvements in district tax collection.

5.1 The quality of the civil service

I studied the quality of the civil servants by distinguishing between their skill and their neutrality. I did this by comparing their professional profiles to other district actors, and by talking about them with district politicians. The civil servants I discuss in this chapter are often referred to in district life as the ‘core technocrats,’ meaning the small number of senior bureaucrats who work closely with a chief executive, such as a district budget officer, finance officer, coordinating director, or engineer. These civil servants generally enter the civil service by first taking a competitive entrance exam with the Public Services Commission (PSC), which oversees the standardization and uniformity of recruitment, appointment and discipline for the whole public service. Exam results are publicized, and successful candidates proceed to an interview, and are then recruited into the service. Data on applications are not available, but through personal communication I was told that the failure rate at the first round (which involves an English proficiency test) and the second round (usually an interview) is very high, perhaps as high as 70-80%.¹ This corresponds with what university graduates told me about the civil service, which they saw as a good job, but thought it difficult to enter once their National Service had run its two-year course. District civil servants are then managed by the

¹Personal communication with Erin McDonnell on 6/3/14. On the civil service see Nti, 1980; Ayee, 2001; McDonnell, 2012; Antwi et al., 2008.

centrally-controlled Local Government Service (LGS). The civil servants I discuss in this chapter are these high-level actors in district administration. I begin by looking at their skill, and thereafter discuss their neutrality.

5.1.1 The skill of district civil servants

In my case studies and survey research, I found that core civil servants were seen as generally competent and skilled professionals. In my survey I asked politicians and bureaucrats what they thought of the ‘skill and expertise of the core civil servants,’ where ‘core’ is understood to mean the small group of elite technocrats like the finance and budget officers, but not low-level workers like typists or drivers. Respondents were consistently positive about the competence of the core civil servants. Table 5.1 reports summary statistics that show significant satisfaction. Overall, 85% of chief executives reported satisfaction with the skill of core civil servants, as did 91% of coordinating directors (head civil servants).

TABLE 5.1: ‘What do you think of the skill and expertise of the core civil servants?’

Respondent	Very bad	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	<i>N</i>
Chief executive	1%	0%	15%	64%	21%	131
Presiding member	1%	0%	18%	62%	19%	119
Coordinating director	0%	0%	9%	79%	12%	142

The quality of the elite civil servants can also be seen in some basic summary statistics shown in Table 5.2. Note the very high percentage of respondents with masters degrees, or their professional equivalent. The 51% of coordinating directors and 94% of finance officers with masters degrees compares to 34% for chief executives and to less than 1% in the general population. In addition, one-third of coordinating directors and more than half of all finance officers are currently studying for a further degree, often through online long-distance learning programs.

In addition to these dry summary statistics, the skill and competence of civil servants can be seen in their professional profiles as gleaned through my case studies. A smart civil servant will bide her time in the knowledge that steady progress up the professional ladder will provide gradual growth in income. If they are smart enough, it would also offer occasional opportunities for non-government

TABLE 5.2: Summary statistics for the skill and expertise of civil servants

Variable	Coordinating director	Revenue officer	Finance officer
Age	48	48	45
Masters degree	51%	31%	94%
Studying for further degree	36%	N/A	60%
No. districts worked	4	2.1	2.5
Years in system	14	22	12
<i>N</i>	<i>143</i>	<i>136</i>	<i>137</i>

revenue generation. One finance officer described to me his well diversified portfolio. He told me that in his first week he asked landlords for access to land. His plan was not to farm but to speculate by storing maize until the off-season. He planned to use a garage he had built for his car dealership in Accra to do just that. His car dealership was another business. He owned a garage in Kumasi and his brother in USA shipped cars to him. He said his garage in Kumasi had 70 cars, and that he also lectured part-time at the Institute of Chartered Accountants. Such entrepreneurship was not limited to top civil servants. In the same district, a young civil servant used his meager National Service allowance to set up a cinema in his neighborhood where locals could pay to watch football matches. He spent 700 Cedis on the wood and labor for the walls, benches and roof, 1,000 Cedis on several televisions, and about 150 Cedis a month for cable access (about \$700 USD in total).²

Unlike professionals in industrialized societies, top Ghanaian civil servants retire to work, not to rest. Most elderly technocrats I knew planned to retire to a farm or a business. A senior inspector from the Ministry of Local Government retired in his sixties and started a private revenue collection company. The retirement plans of one district inspector included purchasing refrigeration equipment to supply the region's growing ice cream industry. In another district, the coordinating director had lobbied to be stationed close to his 200 acre farm of mango, cocoa, citrus and teak.

For many younger civil servants, however, the job was a stepping stone to something else. Online degrees from Europe and America were very popular, and many officers I knew aspired to undertake either a masters or a doctorate in things like administration, economics, or political science. Just a few years in the local government system was all it took for many officers to become

²Depending on demand, locals paid anywhere from 20 peswas to one Cedi to watch European football matches.

jaded with their supporting roles in political dramas. So it was with one budget officer I knew who had just been enstooled as a low-level chief in his home village. He was formerly a teacher and had a masters in statistics, which he felt was not being put to use in his current position. He wanted to do a PhD, possibly in the United States, and to get back into teaching. The basis of our friendship was PhD programs and GRE test-taking techniques. He was very unhappy with his job and with its location in a small cocoa town, which he referred to dismissively as ‘the village,’ and he longed to join his wife in Accra. During one conversation in which he talked about his feelings towards ‘these people in the village,’ shouting erupted in the courtyard between some civil servants and some locals. “You see this is what we deal with,” he said, drawing closed the paper-thin curtains in a futile attempt to drown-out the noise (Author Interview, 2012p).

For some well educated civil servants such as him, the goal was to move to a nicer town at a time when Ghana was undergoing a construction boom, with shopping malls, mega-churches, and modern homes popping up in major cities. Indeed, the flip-side of these elite civil servants being well educated was their elitism. Many had done further studies in subjects relating to public affairs or governance and expressed interest in my research. Many were conversant in the ‘politics of exclusion’ in Africa, and were in tune with policy debates surrounding good governance and the political economy of developmental states. Many longed for a time when knowing civil servants could fashion society in more rational ways. Ghana’s failings were often explained to me in terms of the cultural failings of ‘the African’ and his willingness to engage in the ‘tribalism’ of poor countries rather than the scientific legal-rationalism of ‘white countries.’ Civil servants saw the public as resistant to the modernizing influences of local government because of their poor education. For example, civil servants tended to think that residents’ willingness to pay taxes was influenced by their levels of ‘education’ on the role of taxes in development. One finance officer told me:

“Property rate alone should be able to finance an assembly, but most people are not willing to pay because they don’t understand the benefits of taxation. Even my own grandmother. She was tearing down an old home to build a new one. The assembly came by and spray painted that they needed to come [to the assembly] for a license. My

grandmother was furious! But I explained to her that all they want from you is to register so they can provide you with service” (Author Interview, 2012f).

One coordinating director thought the problem with Ghana was the ‘ways of thinking’ of the country’s leaders and those who keep them in power:

“Ghana has made no progress since the introduction of the local government system in the 1980s. I have served under plenty of politicians in my time, including teachers, soldiers, and professors and more, and they’ve mostly all been bad. Men like [former Minister of Local Government] Kwamena Ahwoi had great ideas but there just aren’t many like him. Look at [Accra Metropolitan Assembly Chief Executive] Vanderpuij. He has great vision. He understands public private partnerships from his time in the US. But look at this man (pointing to the office of his chief executive). I tried to get royalties for environmental degradation from this neighboring district that produces diamonds. I brought it up with the chief executive here to see if he could lobby for some change but nothing happened. He is not well educated” (Author Interview, 2012j).

He made constant reference to the educational achievements of the chief executive, as did so many of the technocrats I knew. The fact that coordinating directors were indeed a better educated class than chief executives or assembly members partly explains why politicians feared being out-maneuvered—they would say ‘sabotaged’—by the cunning of civil servants. Senior or well educated coordinating directors often carried an air of paternalism in their attitude towards their chief executive, and many resented having to get their hands dirty while helping the chief executive deliver patronage. Many appeared to resent the grip politicians had over the instruments of government.

“In fact cooperation is often punished by your own party supporters! We have had violent clashes here around every election. What we should do is have competitive selection of chief executives. They should advertise the position in the newspaper and not restrict it

to indigenes. Because familiarity breeds contempt and if you are a local this being Africa you will never be able to do a good job because of the pressures. You see, here we have the mentality of the black man and tribalism. Sometimes when a [government] service gets a new regional director, his tribesmen will try to get postings under him in the belief that they will get preferential treatment with offices and jobs. This is why President Mahama will be good for the Gonjas and the Northerners” (Author Interview, 2012j).

The elitism of technocrats could also be seen in their reluctance to engage with individual members of the public. One technocrat explained to me the difference between his present district, which was large and rural, with his previous district, which had a large town: “In that place they have a big town so people were always coming for things!” He swiped the air dismissively to underline his exhaustion. “But here the people stay in their farms and they don’t want to get involved in the day to day administration!” (Author Interview, 2012h). This was not to lament the absence of participatory governance, but to celebrate the freedom to write reports and plan projects in peace.

The elitism of technocrats could also be seen in their reactions to physical characteristics of district assembly premises. In three of my case studies, the district building was located at the heart of the town’s activity, which is typically understood to be the site of the main marketplace (see Figure 5.1). In the other three, the building was on the outskirts of town. The other physical feature that mattered was architectural. In two of my cases, the district building was a one-storey building, which meant technocrats could be reached from the front steps of the building (see Figure 5.2). And because only the chief executive, and perhaps the coordinating director, have air conditioning, open windows carry in dust, heat and voices of the public. In Figure 5.3, three storeys and a front wall provides officials with plenty of ‘protection’ from outside noise.

Taken together, findings from my survey and case studies help to construct an image of elite district civil servants as not only well educated professionals, but as figures that see themselves apart from and above the politicians and the public for whom they nominally work. The competence of civil servants, however, is only one side of the coin. A civil servant may be competent, but may

put that competence to any number of ends. In the next section I turn to questions of civil servant neutrality and independence in order to answer the question, for whom did civil servants work?

FIGURE 5.1: Location of district buildings in district capitals



(A) Ejura Sekyedumase Municipal Assembly



(B) Ejisu Juaben Municipal Assembly



(C) Atwima Nwabiagya District Assembly



(D) Asante Akim Municipal Assembly

FIGURE 5.2: The open plan of the Asunafo South District Assembly



5.1.2 The neutrality and independence of civil servants

“As a civil servant you only have problems if you are openly political”

District budget officer (3/13/12)

This section discusses the neutrality and independence of civil servants. I begin with summary statistics for select civil servants, shown in Table 5.3. First, note the low percentage of respondents that come from the districts or regions in which they serve. The numbers are especially low for the coordinating director and finance officer, the figures commonly seen as the two most important civil servants. These summary statistics are significant because they offer an initial answer to the

FIGURE 5.3: The walled-off exterior of the Kwahu South District Assembly



question, for whom do civil servants work? One concern with the quality of any civil service is that offices are used to reward clientelistic networks, for example by awarding positions to co-religious, co-partisans or co-ethnics. In this sample of districts, however, we see that almost no coordinating directors come from the district in which they serve, and only one-third come from the region in which they serve. The significance of their region of origin is that it proxies for the ethnicity and partisan affiliation of the respondent, since the survey could not ask about ethnicity directly.

TABLE 5.3: Summary statistics for civil servants

Variable	Coordinating director	Revenue officer	Finance officer
Native of district	4%	25%	4%
Native of region	38%	78%	56%
<i>N</i>	<i>143</i>	<i>136</i>	<i>137</i>

I also asked survey respondents directly about the political neutrality of ‘core civil servants,’ which is understood to mean the officer level. I asked the same question of the coordinating director (head civil servant) and the presiding member. The cells in Table 5.4 show percentages. Chief executives reported high levels of satisfaction with the political neutrality of their core civil servants, with 70% rating it good or excellent. These survey data were supported by interviews with politicians.

In one of my most unexpected findings, politicians *rarely* had bad things to say about civil servants. This was true of politicians who were in power and in opposition. Asking an opposition politician what they thought of the chief executive was a double-edged sword: it would get the interviewee talking, but it would be impossible to unpack accurate facts from outlandish allegations. But when the topic turned to the civil service the tone completely changed, as though I had switched from asking about war to asking about the weather. More often than not, the neutrality and competence of core civil servants was a non-issue. Interviewees usually wanted to me to return to the topic of how awful the incumbent was.

TABLE 5.4: ‘What do you think of the political neutrality of the core civil servants?’

Respondent	Very bad	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	N
Chief executive	0%	4%	27%	59%	11%	132
Presiding member	1%	2%	21%	58%	19%	119
Coordinating director	0%	1%	18 %	67%	14%	142

In one NPP stronghold, an assembly member spent most of our meetings railing against the NDC. Without much prompting, he could expound on the assorted ‘crimes’ of the chief executive and the district. When I asked about the civil servants, however, he became disinterested:

“That core staff is very good and trustworthy.”

“Have they always been like that?”

“Yes, they have been like this for years, and this is how it is in other districts. You have some men like the director of the National Youth Employment Programme who have revealed their party colors and are behaving in a certain partisan way. He has been advising the chief executive how to behave.”

His answer was short. The director he referred to was a political appointee, and is not considered a technocrat anyway. His tone when discussing civil servants was so different that I asked for several clarifications.

“What about the finance officer? Is he neutral?”

“Yes, he is fine. He may have partisan allegiances, but he just does his job.”

“And what about a few years ago under the NPP? What was that finance officer like?”

“It was the same back then” (Author Interview, 2012k).

My notes recorded short answers, and a loss of interest in the conversation. It was a vote of confidence in the core civil servants from a politician who was not only in the opposition, and thus enjoyed little benefit from the district, but also one of the most delightfully partisan and incendiary politicians I knew. In another district, I spoke to an opposition assemblyman whom the chief executive once referred to in public as Lucifer. When I asked how he felt about the civil servants, he said “some are okay but some are partisan.” Having spent weeks hearing little complaint about civil servants, I thought I had found something! I asked for examples. His clarification only reinforced the emerging finding: the civil servants he did not trust were not dishonest, “they fear the chief executive so they do whatever she says” (Author Interview, 2012g). The basis of his complaint was that bureaucrats do what they are told.

In one highly competitive district, the NPP constituency chairman detailed for me all of the sins of the NDC chief executive: the politics of exclusion, the persecution of NPP-aligned businesses, and the undoing of the NPP’s projects. But on the subject of the political neutrality and competence of the technocrats he had no problem at all. In my interview notes, I have several pages of his thoughts on things like party discipline, governing strategies, incumbent abuses, and ethnic politics, but two lines on the question of civil servant neutrality and competence. There was simply little to discuss. It was not *the* issue for him. He answered my question directly and waited for me to bring the conversation round to more interesting matters (7/3/12). In the same district an NDC assembly member said “Sometimes you will go to the assembly and find this civil servant has been rotated and you don’t know if it is for some political purpose, but that does not happen often” (Author Interview, 2012b). And a former chief executive of the district said technocrats “did not show their colors” during her tenure, and she was generally happy with their quality. “Some had weaknesses, with women and things, but mostly they were fine” (Author Interview, 2012a).

In my other highly competitive district the pattern was the same: conflictual political relations and occasional electoral violence, but when it came to the civil servants assembly members said “they are non-partisan, and you don’t know what party they belong to” (Author Interview, 2012o). Even the NPP constituency chairman had confidence in the technocrats which were serving the NDC chief executive. Referring to one of the main towns with significant NDC support, he said “These people are not giving the technocrats any peace of mind” (Author interview, 2012a). This was a reference to NDC activists driving the 20-30 minutes from the town to the district building to stage impromptu protests and demand meetings with the chief executive.

Although political figures had few complaints about core civil servants, it is also important to understand the atmosphere of fear that governs civil servants’ lives. Fear of rotation is especially prominent. It was widely known, for example, that the engineer of a prominent district in the Ashanti region was rotated for frustrating the chief executive’s plans to extract commissions on every capital project. In a different district, an internal auditor complained that “it is an open secret that auditors get moved around when they irritate chief executives and coordinating directors. They will use coercive power. Some coordinating directors and chief executives who are identified by auditors as misbehaving will target them” (Author Interview, 2012i). A chief executive with a modicum of political clout and connections will communicate their preferences for this technocrat over that one through the levels of state or party hierarchy, first to the regional level and if necessary to the central level itself. As the chief executive at my first general assembly meeting publicly warned his technocrats, “I don’t have the power to sack heads of department, but I do have one power: I can seek your removal.”

The way in which this fear pervades the lives of civil servants was explained to me by a coordinating director nearing retirement, who said “One of the things we have in our favor is the recruitment to the civil service is meritocratic. But even there is a lot of fear running through all levels of the civil service about political punishment and rotation” (Author Interview, 2012j). He paused and asked me if I was recording. I promised him that I was not. I showed him my possessions and offered to leave them in another room. He declined the offer, and smiled nervously in a failed attempt to hide his initial anxiety. We continued talking about his experiences with rotation. In

the late 1990s, President Rawlings (NDC) had him moved from a district in the Eastern Region because NDC people had reported seeing him at the home of a member of a royal family that was led by a well known NPP supporter. But the man he had actually been visiting was the district's presiding member, whom he regarded as an elder figure and with whom he played draughts/checkers. The NDC activists passed the message up to the President's office and a transfer was immediately ordered. He continued, "Now a technocrat like me must be careful when he buys his food or petrol in case he is seen to favor a party business person. Even if the [NPP] MP visited my office right now, a call would be made to the [NDC] deputy Regional Minister about it" (7/26/12). This story of politically-motivated rotation was representative of so many I had heard, in which the political bias is not against the civil servant for their voting behavior or the allegiance, but rather for the appearance of partisan behavior *while in office*. Civil servants worry about politically-based rotation, therefore, not because they must support the party of their chief executive, but because in tense political environments they are quickly accused of being partisan in their official duties.

Although chief executives are open about their willingness to rotate non-compliant staff, in practice such punitive action is mostly done in the pursuit of an administrative body that serves the purposes of the executive. Most civil servants I knew lived under the fear of rotation but very few were ever actually rotated. This is because a civil servant knows that all they have to do to avoid punishment is to avoid being partisan in their work and to avoid frustrating the executive. This is how one finance officer explained the control of staff to me:

"Chief executive does not have a lot of say when it comes to who is the finance officer, budget officer, or coordinating director, because that is with central government. But he has indirect control! He can use his party network and of course the ministry is controlled by the president."

"Does that mean it is a partisan thing?"

"No. It involves politics, but it is not partisan! (smiling) The decision about which senior technocrats are posted to which districts is not partisan. The chief executives does not care about having party faithful work for him. What he really cares about is

having competent professionals that will not lead him astray or embarrass him” (Author Interview, 2012f).

Several sources told me about a politically-motivated staff rotation in one of my cases. The episode is relevant because, on further inspection, the truth was the opposite of the rumor. The rumor I had heard was that the chief executive (NDC) had learned that her deputy coordinating director was socializing with a known NPP activist, and that she had promptly orchestrated his move to another district. The story was repeated to me by several people across several districts. It was typically relayed with tones of disapproval, but not incredulity, which speaks to how such behavior is an accepted part of the game of state, even if it is frowned upon. It was months before I discovered the civil servant’s name, however, and it turned out to be a deputy coordinating director in one of my other case studies. When I followed-up on the matter with him, he laughed it off as mischief-making by “these hyper-partisan people”:

“It really was no story. What happened was that woman [the chief executive] accused me of being an active NPP member against her, but it was only a brief thing and that is not why I moved. In late 2009 I received a transfer letter from regional government. At that time my coordinating director was frail and the other deputy was new, so the director insisted I should stay to help. The chief executive herself took the issue to RCC and I stayed. Then in 2010 RCC sent another transfer letter, this time to work at RCC. I went there for one month, but they never sent anybody to replace me in the district! So chief executive called RCC to complain and they should send me back. I got another transfer letter in 2011 for another district, and chief executive told me if I wanted to stay she would plead with RCC. So that was it” (Author Interview, 2012e).

Apart from referring to her as ‘this old woman,’ he had nothing bad to say about this politician who was rumored to have punished him for political activities.

One coordinating director said that the real issue with the rotation of bureaucrats is with coordinating directors “who are partisan or lazy. So it is really not so political.” He continued:

“It is not the chief executives getting rid of you because you are an Ewe or because you are not their party. If a chief executive has a coordinating director that they cannot work with, they can go through the channels to get rid of them, through their political colleagues in the Local Government Service” (Author Interview, 2012).

“So a coordinating director will be safe so long as he is not lazy or partisan?”

“Yes. Of course, it happens that there might be a coordinating director who is good and is getting in the way of a mischievous chief executive, and that chief executive will try to get rid of that goody two-shoes coordinating director. But mostly it is the coordinating directors who are corrupt. It is not so important that a chief executive and a coordinating director come from the same party and be aligned like that. It is more a question of personalities or personal interests clashing, even within the same party. When I was getting posted here, NDC people counseled the chief executive not to accept me because they said ‘oh, that man is NPP.’ But the chief executive spoke to the other candidate and he wasn’t impressed, and now we have a good relationship.”

Civil servants knew that as long as they stayed out of politics, they would have little to fear. They did have to deal with politicians, of course, but their interactions spoke to mutual understanding of this norm. When I asked a budget officer if assembly members trusted the technocrats, he said “technocrats have to spend their time explaining and justifying the decisions made by the chief executive, but they don’t see the technocrats as the [chief executive’s] lackeys. The political decisions about which community gets road are made at the sub-committee level, so the technocrats are not the ones deciding who gets what” (Author Interview, 2012c).

At the beginning of my fieldwork my conversations with district politicians and bureaucrats centered around political interference in the process of tax collecting. Several weeks in I had to admit that ideas of bureaucratic interference and insulation were not helpful. The only bureaucrats who experienced persecution in the form of rotation were those found to have openly campaigned for a political party or those who stood in the way of the chief executive, usually because they

thwarted his attempt to extract rents. While that behavior may not be consistent with norms of bureaucratic insulation and independence, it is consistent with a system in which the bureaucracy exists to carry out executive orders, irrespective of their nefarious content. Recall the oft-cited episode in the history of governance systems from late 7th century China when Empress Wu opened up the imperial entrance exams to commoners and gentry, who were previously blocked by virtue of their class (Hucker, 1975; Chua, 2007). This meritocratic system of entrance examinations lasted until the 20th century. Her reasons for this innovation were not rooted in benevolence. She was often in conflict with aristocratic families because of her own lower-class beginnings, and so breaking the aristocracy's hold on the civil service made political sense. Indeed, although scholars note that her "murderous and illicit methods of maintaining power" gave her "a bad repute among male bureaucrats," her reign was nonetheless generally marked by stability and prosperity (Fairbank and Goldman, 2006, 82). A more meritocratic state strengthened her hand, in other words, even if it was an iron one.

The main points of this section can be summarized as follows. District technocrats are generally well educated and did what their political masters asked of them. Politicians held senior civil servants in high regard for their neutrality and their skill. People considered the threat to a technocrat's career to come from their own ill-advised political activities rather than their group identity. What constrains the effectiveness of districts owes less to the quality of its administrators, therefore, and more to the political context in which they work, which is the subject of the next section.

5.2 The roots of administrative weakness

The experience of civil servants in tax collection is a lens through which relations between the state and non-state forces can be understood. The setting of tax rates and the schemes through which taxes can be collected require two distinct forms of governing capacity. First, administrative quality in the form of fiscally literate staff to be able to generate revenue projections or to coordinate the operations of tax collection staff to meet revenue targets. Second, the ability of staff to actually 'see' revenue pools and to have the means to efficiently extract them. In the previous section I

provided evidence that district civil servants are on balance competent and trusted. The major finding in this section is that districts tend to lack this second dimension of capacity. They have a poor understanding of revenue potential and limited means of extracting wealth. I argue that this situation persists because of the political context.

5.2.1 Politics and taxes: Looking for the ‘Devil’s Deal’

I asked civil servants if politicians ever got involved in the setting of rates, or if they ever intervened to stop collecting from certain groups. What had sparked my interest was Tendler’s (2002) notion of the ‘devil’s deal’: protection from taxes and regulatory nuisances in return for promises of political support. But I found little evidence of either political involvement in taxation setting or in the selective targeting of groups for protection. I was struck by how *rarely* chief executives appeared to get involved. I was told by senior civil servants that passing budgets and settings fees are usually done in a non-partisan way. Politics comes in later with distributive questions, like which community would get street lights. The identification of revenue items, and the amount of tax to extracted from it, was largely a bureaucratic prerogative.

To inquire about the ‘Devil’s Deal,’ I asked one budget officer if people made electoral threats when faced with rising taxes. He said he had not seen much of that where he has worked. Generally they avoid large increases in an election year, “but really the increases are small and don’t cause much protest anyway” (Author Interview, 2012c). I heard something similar in Lamda District, where the budget officer told me “when it comes to interacting with the rate payers we only reach out to them if the increases are large, and most years we don’t raise rates at all. We prefer to have one year with large increases” (Author Interview, 2012a). “Would the people not prefer if the increases were gradual?” “If people see their rates going up every year they won’t be happy.” “And how long do your negotiations with the rate payers last?” “We do it in August but it is only about two days, so it is not much.” The Koko District budget officer told me that people did not come in to discuss fee fixing, and that the assembly does not notify rate payers about changes, “but expects assemblymen to relate them once in effect” (Author Interview, 2012p).

I rarely witnessed a meeting with stakeholders on the subject of tax increases. In one of the few that I did encounter, Koko District officials met with traders from the biggest market to discuss next year's rates. Revenue staff said they had wanted to start charging 20 Cedis per month for a lockable market stall, but the traders had negotiated this down to 15. Significantly, the assembly did not engage with the market association that represented all traders, but just those who rented lockable stalls (7/26/12). Even when districts engaged stakeholders on plans to change taxes, it was not obvious to me that district elites could easily influence the outcome. In the files of the Guba District I found a letter from the main local Traditional Council complaining that funeral fees had jumped from 50 Cedis in 2009 to 200 Cedis in 2010. They said they would accept a return to the previous level, with only gradual increases over time. It was striking that a powerful traditional authority had an opportunity to complain only *after* the change, and that their request was so meek. Their appeal was rejected and the fee remained.

The extent of politicization of taxation generally comes in an avoidance of raising taxes in an election year, and to a lesser extent when local notables or groups petition the chief executive for the right to avoid taxes. An NDC assembly appointee in Guba District said their chief executive had tried to rein in the tax collectors in 2007 because elections were approaching. The collectors obeyed, but at the next assembly meeting there were inquiries and complaints about declining revenue, and the collectors began work again (2/10/12). Senior officers in Aman District could not think of any examples, either at their present district or any previous, of a chief executive intervening in the process of tax collection in an election year. The finance officer said the chief executive "can not and will not make any attempt to interfere" with their work, but that "we take into consideration political circumstances for fee raising" (Author Interview, 2012f). In Koko District, I asked the NPP Constituency Chairman if the NDC chief executive interferes with tax collection: "No, they are happy to collect taxes and there is no interference on that." "But why doesn't he interfere? Doesn't he have constituents that want to pay less tax or none at all?" "Because the IGF is their only chop money, so they need it" (Author interview, 2012a). 'Chop money' was used here to mean small discretionary money, or a slush fund, where 'chop' is a colloquialism for eating or consumption. This was the only money that a district could use free of central government monitoring. If a district

wanted to raise their own allowances for attending meetings or hire more menial staff, they would need more IGF.

But I still did not understand the general absence of a ‘devil’s deal,’ which I thought would exist given the low expectation of services rendered for taxes paid and the sensitivity of politicians to electoral threats. The key to figuring it out was to consider on a more general level how rare it was for political conversations to involve matters of taxation. Everyday political conversation, whether with politicians, civil servants, or residents, usually involved distributive questions of who in town was getting what, but rarely about major changes in taxation or discriminatory targeting of groups in the process of tax collection. The reason for this was the ethno-regional nature of political cleavages. Since the two main parties are primarily divided along lines other than socio-economics, both parties count among their supporters occupants of highly similar economic sectors. In other words, it makes little sense for the NPP to raise taxes on market traders, since such a tax would punish NDC-supporting traders, but also NPP-supporting traders. The logic holds true for barbers, tro-tro drivers, welders, and newspaper sellers. These actors are found in the ranks of *both* parties, giving neither party an electoral advantage in placing on them disproportionate tax burdens. Taxation, therefore, is not an attractive electoral tool for district politicians.

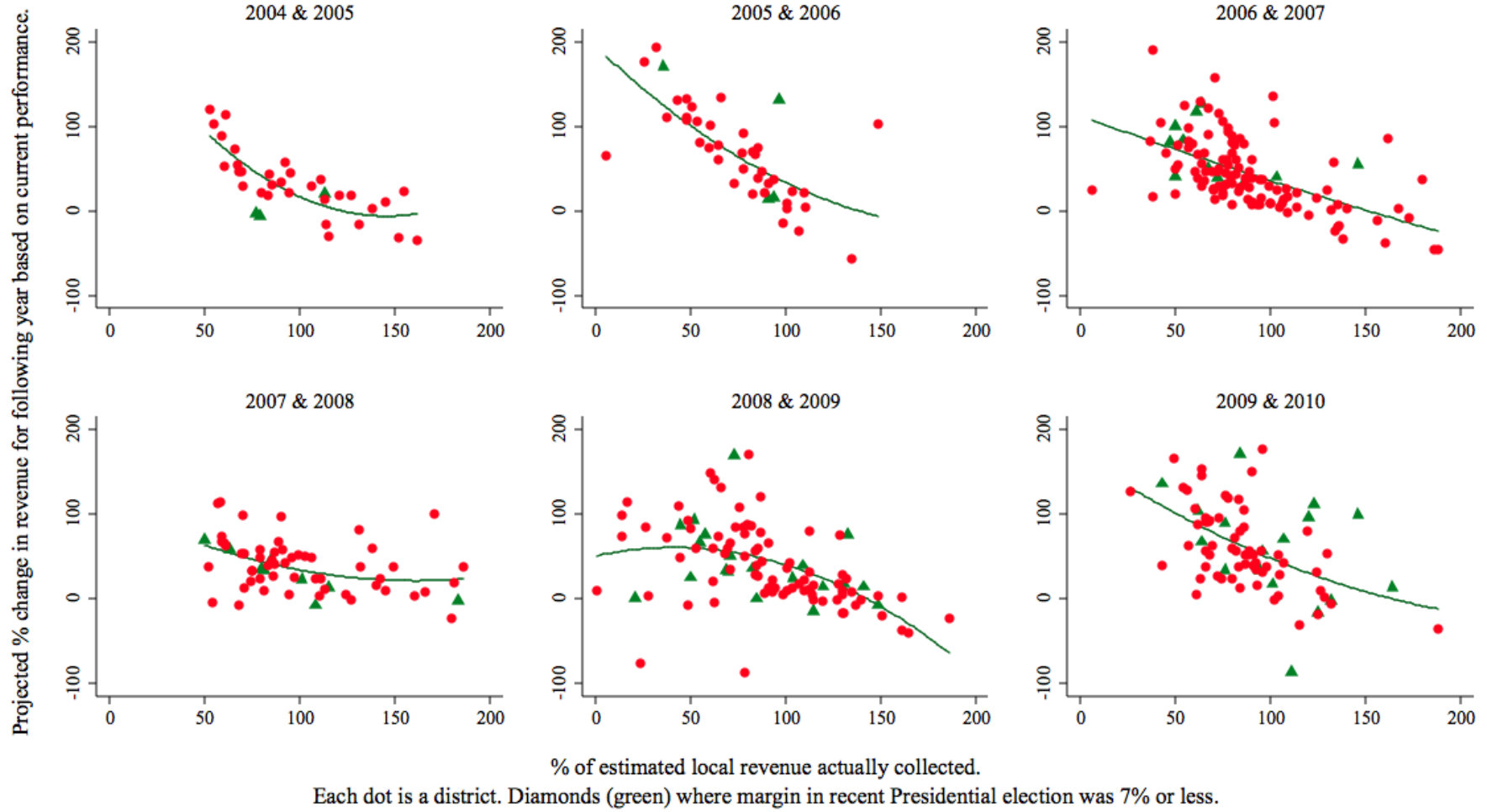
5.2.2 Setting targets

The job of projecting a district’s tax collection falls to the budget officer. A good budget officer is able to identify a district’s tax handles, estimate their value, and propose a means of extraction. In my case studies, budget officers were generally well educated, with degrees in economics, finance, or business. One budget officer in his late-20s Asante explained his process for budget projections. Every August, a sub-committee of the assembly compares the cumulative revenue up to August with the figure from the previous August, and they use that percentage to estimate next year’s IGF (3/7/12). This same process was explained to me by budget officers in other districts, but it does not appear to have a strong bearing on actual practice. It implies that if a district had collected a lower amount this year than in the previous year, they would project a decrease or at least no

increase in the following year. But I do not recall a district projecting a decrease in its IGF. For example, in 2008 Bawku Municipal Assembly only collected 91,000 Cedis of the 174,000 Cedis it had initially estimated, a 53% success rate. But when they estimated for 2009 using 2008 performance, they projected collecting 146,000 Ghana Cedis, a 63% increase. The problem with this is shown in Figure 5.4, which compares districts estimated-to-actually collected IGF (horizontal axis) to its projected increase in IGF for the following year (vertical axis).

We might expect that districts which under-perform would revise downward their projections for the following year. Were that the case, the line in the graph would slope upwards: more success in year one should mean higher projections for year two, and vice versa. But the more successful districts—those collecting over 100% of their initial projection—actually made *lower* projections for the following year. The least successful, however, made the largest projections for the following year. To show that technocrats in highly competitive districts are no less competent than those in less competitive districts, the graph shows in green diamonds those districts where the margin in the most recent presidential election was 7% or less.

FIGURE 5.4: Actual and estimated district revenue collection



A compensation mechanism is likely at work, in which poor-performing districts make ambitious plans for the following year. This has less to do with subversion and more to do with self-deception. When I asked budget officers the basis of their projected revenue increases, they often said that with better auditing and data they could simultaneously expand the scope of taxable items while also reducing revenue losses due to ‘leakage,’ or inefficiencies in the system. These technical fixes were entirely rational given the officials’ episteme, which is scientific even if it is not science.³ It made sense to budget officers who had studied administration, accounting, economics, or business, that theirs was essentially an engineering problem: ‘out there’ in the district sat revenue waiting to be enumerated and collected. With the right system, with the right rules and hierarchies, with detailed spreadsheets in which society’s assets were measured and ordered, it was possible that more revenue could be brought in next year.

5.2.3 Seeing revenue

The difficulty in projecting revenue is that projections are endogenous not only to a district’s past performance but also to its knowledge of its revenue potential. This is especially problematic since districts rely on street-level tax collectors to update official knowledge of revenue potential. Absent information from tax collectors, a district has no data on the traffic in and out of daily markets, and thus cannot know how successful they really are in their tax collection efforts. Budget officers know this is a problem. The budget officer in Guba District said they sometimes send out national service personnel “to count things,” but that they had to be careful because “in some places if you try to do anything about corruption, they will target you,” where ‘they’ was an opaque reference to the Big Men who run the economy and the government (Author Interview, 2012m).

Districts employ a variety of technologies to improve their knowledge of their revenue potential. One technology is revenue databases. Almost three quarters of senior revenue officials are over 50 years of age, and those I knew were not technologically savvy. The job of improving data collection fell on the younger revenue collectors. In Aman District, Elizabeth Atta stayed on after her national

³An episteme is “the ‘apparatus’ which makes possible the separation, not of the true from the false, but of what may from what may not be characterised as scientific” (Foucault, 1980, 197).

service to work in the revenue office. She was smart and organized. She created Excel spreadsheets to document the ownership of market stalls, and to begin to record collector performance. All of the yam sellers, for example, were listed by name, with a record of past payments including the receipt number. This used to be information stored on paper, which only turned into stacks and stacks of dust-battered, bug-bitten rags of paper in the corner of the office. Thanks to Elizabeth, the database would not weather, and would be easily searchable. It did not last, however, because months later Elizabeth left the district for a more exciting life in Accra.

A frequent complaint of budget officers was the completeness of their revenue list of the sort Elizabeth was trying to produce. When asked about the district's knowledge of its revenue potential, over half of revenue officers reported having a list or database that was either incomplete or out of date.⁴ 60% of districts reported having a visit from the state Land Valuations Board in the past few years. The Board helps districts assess the value of their assets, including private property, and many informants considered it an important tool in building revenue capacity. Districts reporting a visit were likely to be urban and densely populated.

Budget officers I knew tried to improve their revenue lists, but politicians rarely wanted to invest resources in the exercise. The Lamda District budget officer spent a lot of his time thinking about how to boost the district's revenue. He was a methodical planner, and on his laptop he had ambitious spreadsheets waiting to be filled with data on district revenue items. One idea involved making a census of all revenue items in the district. This would include counting every taxable item in the district, which included items as diverse as pigs, burial plots, dogs, market stalls, bicycles, and houses. Even for the most able of states it would have been a considerable task. It was how the budget officer made the district legible for revenue extraction. He had even developed a budget for the exercise: 140 people would take three weeks at a cost of 120,000 Cedis (about \$50,000), which was over 10% of the district's annual IGF.

⁴The question asked 'How would you rate the assemblies knowledge of its revenue potential? In other words, do you think you have a good database, or good knowledge, about all of the properties, artisans and so on, from which you can generate revenue?' 28% said their list was 'very good,' 15% said 'better than most,' 47% said 'not complete,' 9% said 'outdated or often incorrect,' and 2% said 'very bad or none at all.'

Watching him at work, it was hard not to think of Scott's (1999) *Seeing Like A State*, which laid out the logic of centrally-planned attempts at social engineering. Budget officers bore striking resemblance to Scott's image of the central planner with all the maps, but none of the knowledge: "Just as it saves a prison trouble and money if all prisoners wear uniforms of the same material, color, and size, every concession to diversity is likely to entail a corresponding increase in administrative time and budgetary cost. If the planning authority does not *need* to make concessions to popular desires, the one-size-fits-all solution is likely to prevail" (141-2, emphasis added). The uniformity at the heart of Scott's notion of bureaucratic rule could be seen in how budget officers thought of their work. But it mattered little, since by the end of my research, the budget officer's initiative fell flat due to a lack of interest from the chief executive and the coordinating director, who, according to the budget officer, "were okay with the amount of money coming in," and hesitant to invest such a sum at the expense of infrastructure projects.

Another technology is the use of machines for on-site recording of tax collection. While revenue databases are a technology to monitor economic activity, hand-held machines are a device to monitor collectors. Their use was not widespread, however, even though some informants said they had improved revenue collection where it was piloted. A third technology is the use of tax farming, either through the use of private revenue collection companies, or through self-collection by groups like taxi drivers and hairdressers. 18% of districts reported some type of tax farming, which was more likely in newer districts. Of the 13 districts that specified a particular organization that carries out the tax farming, eight mentioned the Ghana Private Road Transport Union, the country's main commercial drivers' union (Joshi and Ayee, 2002, 2009).

Ultimately, I found that budget, finance and revenue officers struggling to improve revenue collection knew that they were tinkering on the edges of the matter, since the district had no ability to tax personal incomes. The major source of income tax for the government is that of public sector workers, whose earnings are taxed at source. The other source of taxation on income comes from medium-sized privately held companies, whose accounting is electronic and can be audited through bank accounts. But for the vast majority of Ghanaians who neither work for the state nor major private companies, the state has no ability to monitor or extract their wealth. In this respect,

the Ghanaian state bears a striking parallel with pre-modern states described by Mann (1993, 60): “Agrarian states could not even know the worth of their subjects, let alone tax them accurately. They could not tax income at all, assessed only crude indicators of wealth (size of landholding or house, value of goods brought to market, etc.), and relied on autonomous local notables to extract it.” The ‘local notables’ that occupy Ghanaian local government are what retard district tax collection. Indeed, many tax collectors I knew experienced the obstacles to their work as explicitly political. I asked one experienced chief revenue superintendent if his current district was any different from other places he had worked over his long career. “This place has high political tension.” “And how does that affect you?” “It does not affect you personally, but maybe the assembly workers cannot easily do its job” (Author Interview, 2012q).

The relevance of this material can be summarized as follows: weaknesses in the tax collection activities of district assemblies could easily fit into a state weakness model, in which governing authority is hampered by meager resources and poorly trained staff. What this evidence suggests, however, is that the fundamental constraint on the growing quality of local government is not bureaucratic incompetence, but rather complex political constraints that gave incumbents little incentive to build a capacity to tax.

5.2.4 Taxation from below: The view of market traders

Officials told me they engaged with market traders to hear their concerns and to discuss future developments, but traders told a different story. I got to know traders in the main markets of each of my case studies and near the end of my fieldwork I organized focus groups to discuss relations with the district. The finding was striking and consistent: whether markets were in good condition or poor, traders *always* reported bad relations with the district. They resented the general lack of access they had to the district, and the lack of institutionalized representation. Because the politicians and senior civil servants with whom I spent time blamed their district’s failings on frontline workers, I was surprised to learn that traders did *not* accuse tax collectors of corruption nearly as often as I had expected. Some did say that tax collectors might not give them receipts for their payment, but

since individual traders are liable if they are found without a receipt, they took care to insist on one. Rather than pointing to tax collectors, the picture was of a group of economic actors who engage in passive and quiet *minimal* compliance with district attempts to extract their wealth. They felt powerless to affect the politics in which they found themselves. They were fully aware of how district politics really worked, and how unlikely it was that they would get anything from the payment of taxes.

I organized a focus group with 5-10 traders in the main market of each district. In each market, I invited market queens to join me if they were interested and felt they could spare the time.⁵ Market queens are the governing authorities in the market. They are non-hereditary offices that are chosen by traders, and their power varies according to the power of their associations. Typically, each commodity has its own market queen, who is a well respected and experienced trader, and usually there is an association for all traders in the market with its own queen. One of the important ways in which markets differ from one another across Ghana is in their collective action and self-organization. Some have strong market associations which unite the traders, while others are more fragmented (Lyon, 2003). In the huge Aman District market, for example, all yam sellers must be members of the Yam Sellers Association. Its constitution requires all problems be solved within the association. Taking a problem to the police without first going to the association can result in suspension from the market. By contrast, Nkongo's market has an association for each commodity as well as a general association, but membership is not compulsory. The main market in Lamda District has associations by commodity but a weak overall association to which people do not attend when called. It serves mostly as an association for social events like funerals, through which traders assist each other in times of need, but it is not a disciplinary device as it is in Aman District. I was interested to see if there were links between the strength or form of market self-governance and the relationship with the district.

Aman District has an enormous, Walmart-sized wholesale market every Monday which attracts buyers and sellers from neighboring countries. The market was formerly on the other side of the main road, and on its busiest day it would spill on to the road and cause severe traffic jams, and

⁵Focus groups were led by me in Akan/Twi with help from a research assistant.

in the congestion people complained of pickpockets. After the chief had provided a large space for the new market, traders took it upon themselves to buy the diesel for the district's caterpillar since the district complained it had no funds. Although traders were happy with the new market, they complained of the general lack of sheds, toilets and electricity. They felt the assembly provides little in the way of services, and just sees them as a revenue pool.⁶ The assembly provides cleaning and some lighting, they said, but it is limited. They did not feel as though they had any control over how much the district taxes them, and recently they had refused to pay taxes on market sheds that they themselves had bought about eight years ago.

In one of the main towns in highly competitive Koko District, the market is small and walled in on all sides by a dense residential area, and on the main market day the trading spills out throughout the town. The traders are ethnically mixed, and seating is segregated by traders' products rather than traders' identities. The core of the market is covered by a large shed, and lockable stores surround it. Traders complained about not having gates, electricity or toilets. The government commissioned the private contractor, Zoomlion, to clean the market, but the traders complained about their quality. When they have something that needs to be fixed, they say the assembly does not get involved. Sometimes the MP, a native of Nkongo, helped. They have made repeated requests to the assembly, but without luck. They felt the revenue collectors were honest, and they (the traders) said they always check for receipts for the 0.20 Cedis they pay everyday. When I asked if they could refuse to pay, or refuse to vote, they said taxation is a matter of government policy, and if they didn't pay the government would take their goods and bring them to court. Their strategy was to pay, but to otherwise avoid engaging with a governing apparatus that they expected to be generally extractive. As for making electoral threats, they had never heard of this happening anywhere in the region. I concluded by asking them if there was anything they would like to talk about that I had not asked. They explained their concern that the 'the assembly is very far from us,' which they meant in a literal, geographical but also a socio-political sense.

In Lamda District, traders in the main market worried that their sanitation problem was damaging their reputation in the region. It would be a 'disgrace,' they said, to have a reputation

⁶Meeting with ten members of the Aman Market Yam Sellers Association (3/20/12).

as a market that is dirty or, worse, a place where disease could spread. Traders were ethnically mixed, with Northerners, Fantes and Asantes all sitting amongst one another. Their market the size of two basketball courts had one lamp near the entrance, and even that one light was given by the assembly only this past year. The assembly gave them one night watchman, but the five entrances had no gates, which meant most traders had to take everything home at night. When I asked how they access the assembly, they said they do it through their assemblyman, but never to the assembly itself. The assemblyman is aware of their problems, they said, but when I asked why they couldn't also petition the chief executive, MP or chief, they said it would not be proper, and that they must go through their assemblyman. If they did not, the assemblyman would be insulted. And if the assemblyman could not help? They felt there was nothing else they could do. I asked if there was anything they would like to tell me that I had not raised, and they said the assembly does not give them 'soft loans' to expand their businesses, and that hard rain devastates their goods because there is no shelter.

Asafo has perhaps the most pitiful market of them all (see Figure 5.5). The assembly had built a large fenced-in market with large shelters, but they apparently did so with little communication with the traders, who knew the location would be too far from town for people to walk. Instead of using this distant but spacious market, traders used a tiny open plot on the side of the road as one enters town. When the new market was completed, the assembly moved the traders from their road-side spot and demolished their stalls. After several years of weak business in the new market, traders moved again, this time across the street from the site of the earlier demolition. I asked why the assembly had built the new market there in the first place, but they said they did not know. They recall being consulted and asking for the site to be moved, but they were ignored. The large market is used only on Tuesdays, the main market day, and on all other days about 30 or so traders work from this small plot which they rent from a local landlord. In addition to the district's daily tax of 0.20 Cedis, they collectively have to pay 50 Cedis per month to the landlord. When these traders told me the assembly gives them nothing, they meant it literally. I asked what kind of threats they could make, to either refuse to vote or pay taxes. Not voting would not work, they said, since they would rather vote for someone who might do something, while not paying tax would just see them

end up in court. When I asked if there is anything they would like to tell me, they said all they want is a small market space with facilities, and they would happily pay taxes for it if services would be rendered.

FIGURE 5.5: Asafo's two markets



Note: In the top picture, the official market is spacious and has permanent structures. But its location is not favored by traders or customers. In the bottom picture, traders use a make-shift space on private land for their daily market.

The main market in Oran District was better than most in the region, though Oran District is one of the region's wealthier settlements. The market is surrounded by two-storey buildings built by international donors just a few years earlier. Traders were insistent that they had no power with the assembly, and that it did not help them. After repeatedly pleading with the assembly for help with security, they grouped together and provided their own. They self-organize cleaning, and they explained how the market has electricity mostly from their own initiatives. I asked if this relationship

with the assembly was something new, maybe under this government, but they said it was always like this.

Traders were consistent in their stories of powerlessness across these focus groups. Surprisingly, neither the strength nor the form of their self-governance appeared to correlate with their relations with districts. They did not trust that taxes paid to the district would lead to services provided. Their distrust was understandable. Districts are littered with unfinished projects that stand as permanent and visible reminders to residents of the non-credibility of government promises. In mid-2010, I joined an inspector with the Ministry of Local Government on a visit he made to Kwahu East District Assembly. The district was performing badly in official assessments, and the inspector was going to find out why. He asked for a list of all projects begun in the last five years, and randomly chose some to visit in the company of senior officials. Figure 5.6 shows the little progress made in three years of construction of market stalls in the town's main market. The inspector told the civil servants to raise the market taxes and finish the job. The problem, he later explained to me, was that chief executives start a lot of projects all over a district in order to raise their visibility, and when funds don't materialize the contractors leave (7/20/10). When a new administration takes over, the project is abandoned altogether because the current chief executive does not want to give the honor of a completed project to his predecessor. This was the situation with the unfinished assembly building in one of the highly competitive districts, which had only a foundation five years after construction began (Figure 5.7).

These unfinished buildings that littered my case studies could easily be explained away with a reference to a lack of some generalized state capacity. But, when we pay attention to the story behind each unfinished project, state capacity is of little analytic value. It was the nature of Ghana's political institutions, rather than the quality of its administrative apparatus, that lay at the heart of these unfinished projects.⁷ This is where the concept of relational capacity as one dimension of state capacity is useful: market traders, like any residents, see these unfinished projects and broken promises everyday. It is no wonder, then, that many try to limit their exposure to the state given low expectations of services returned.

⁷See Robinson and Torvik, 2005 for a discussion of the related phenomenon of 'white elephant' projects.

FIGURE 5.6: Unfinished market stalls, three years after construction began



FIGURE 5.7: Unfinished assembly building, five years after construction began



Conclusion

This chapter has argued that districts' core civil servants are, on balance, meritocratic, non-partisan, and trusted in their work. So long as they are not openly partisan in their work, the allegiances and private interests of civil servants were of surprisingly little concern to chief executives. One coordinating director was even writing a masters thesis on incumbent abuses of power in the assembly system. This involved taking days off to conduct interviews in nearby districts. I was surprised that the head civil servant would write on such a sensitive topic. "Does the chief executive mind that you

are doing this research?” I asked. “Oh no. They know it is just an academic thing so they won’t worry” (Author Interview, 2012d). Although they fear being rotated, the fear does not center on their ethnicity, religion, or party affiliation, but rather on how they carry themselves while at work. Put simply, a technocrat who does exactly what the chief executive asks of her has little to fear. Because of this, I argue that the core civil service provides districts and their chief executives with competent instruments of authority.

Having established that the root of weak local government is not the quality of its bureaucrats nor the nature of their allegiances, I turned to the question of tax collection to understand how state agents engage with non-state actors. Bureaucrats set and collect taxes with a degree of non-interference from politicians that I found to be surprising. But they are ultimately constrained by what is made possible by the politically negotiated power of the state itself. Chief executives did not expend political capital on improving revenue collection.

I concluded by viewing the question of taxation from the perspective of a group that is often the target of revenue efforts. Market traders do not engage with the district because they have little expectation that more taxes would lead to better services. They are well informed actors, and they see in their communities what comes of the promises of politicians. They find it hard to avoid taxation, but they do not see in their district assembly an institution through which they can realize mutual gains. Just as politicians see little to be gained in dramatically improving taxation, market traders see little to be gained in allowing districts to develop its monitoring or regulation of their bodies or assets.

Part III

Quantitative Analysis

Chapter 6

The perverse effects of political competition: Statistical analysis

Introduction

This chapter submits my core hypothesis to systematic statistical testing. The goal is to establish correlations between political competition and the behavior of district assemblies. The specific aim is to show that intense political competition is robustly related to the provision of patronage over public goods. The chapter proceeds in three parts. First, I describe the measurement and operationalization of key variables, the core model to be estimated, and my estimation strategy, which exploits plausibly exogenous variation in political competition arising from historical migration of ethnic blocs with distinct political allegiances. Second, I present patronage models in which the dependent variables are district assembly jobs, official allowances, and selective protection in tax collection. Third, I present public goods models in which the dependent variables are public notices, marketplace services, and sanitation. The results show that relatively intense political competition is associated with the over-provision of patronage and the under-provision of public goods. The results are consistent across a range of specifications and are robust to the use of an instrumental variables estimation strategy.

6.1 Data, operationalization and empirical strategy

6.1.1 Overview of the dataset

I built an original dataset to test rigorously the relationship between political competition and the behavior of district assemblies. Data are cross-sectional, usually coded for 2010, and are time-series where possible and relevant. I explore cross-sectional rather than longitudinal relationships since the competitiveness of a district does not vary significantly from election-to-election. The dataset covers two major types of data: characteristics of the district assembly itself (i.e., staff size, revenue) and characteristics of the district more generally (i.e., population, literacy). The center-piece is an original survey of district politicians and bureaucrats which I believe to be the most representative survey of local government officials yet conducted in sub-Saharan Africa.

A district survey contained six separate questionnaires, one for each of six officials completed independently of one another. Of these six officials, two were the prominent political offices within the district assembly, and four were important civil servants. Since respondents were literate, the research challenge was not in completing the surveys but physically distributing and then collecting the documents. I built a team of over 200 researchers covering the entire country in order to administer the survey, as well as to collect other data of interest. This made it possible to carry out a census of districts despite poor roads and communication systems.¹ Full details of the survey methodology are provided in the Appendix.

The response rate was 88% (n=149), meaning 88% of districts submitted some completed part of the questionnaire.² Summary statistics for respondents shown in the appendix show no reason to believe that non-responses bias the data. Response rates for individual respondents are shown in Table B.1. Cells show responses as percentages of all districts (not percentages of respondents). The response rate is lowest for the presiding member because they do not work full time at the district building.

¹The survey can be called a census since the universe of cases was studied. Since I use inferential techniques common to survey sampling, however, I refer to the activity as a survey rather than a census.

²85% of respondents (not all districts) completed at least five of the six sections.

TABLE 6.1: Response rates for district assembly survey

Response rates by respondent	%
All districts	88
Chief executives	78
Presiding members	71
Coordinating directors	84
Personnel officers	78
Revenue officers	82
Finance officers	81

In addition to original survey data, my dataset has a wealth of electoral, demographic, geospatial, and welfare variables, all of which are explained in detail in the Appendix. The dataset also includes data collected by me and my research team on easily observable features of the district, such as the material quality of the district assembly building, the number of paramount chiefs in the district, or the strength of mobile phone signals. Significantly, we also made independent visits to the main marketplaces in every district in order to gather data on things like the extent of litter. Districts are required to provide public goods in the form of clean and safe marketplaces, so these data comprise an important dependent variable.

6.1.2 Dependent variables

The first set of dependent variables concern patronage. The second concern public goods. It is important when studying goods provision that one includes public as well as non-public goods, since it cannot be assumed that the presence of patronage necessarily means the absence of public goods, or vice versa. Another reason why it is important to study a range of goods is that, as Kramon and Posner (2013) have shown, the goods outcome one studies affects the conclusion one reaches. In Senegal, for example, co-ethnics of the president are favored in water provision but disfavored in educational services. Thus, I examine a range of goods rather than hang my hat on one outcome.

6.1.2.1 Patronage

My three measures of patronage are the size of district assembly staff, prosecutions for tax evasion, and allowances for officials. Summary statistics are shown in Table 6.2. The patronage rewards I analyze, such as government jobs, could be called private goods, but I use the broad term ‘patronage’ over the more specific ‘private goods.’ I do so because the line between club and private goods in Ghana’s districts is blurry and is not the salient division in district behavior. What really matters is whether goods are provided on an exclusionary basis. A patronage good is simply any reward given to a party worker, and it can be a club good or a private good. Both are exclusionary goods, since only partisans may receive them. What separates them is that club goods are not rivalrous, meaning consumption does not deplete the stock, while private goods can be depleted. But the question of depletion and rivalry of goods is of much less importance in district politics than whether the good is provided on an exclusionary basis, such as according to the recipient’s party. Moreover, in a social context of extended families and norms of reciprocity, a government job not only helps the job-holder, but also their nieces, neighbors, fellow church members, and even their distantly related kin. In other words, a government job is a private *and* a club good. The meaningful distinction in districts is between goods that can be provided in a discriminatory way.

Staff to population ratio is the number of district staff per capita, where higher numbers mean more staff per capita, and thus ‘bigger’ government. *Menial staff* is the sum of drivers, cleaners and security guards employed by the district. This is a more fine-grained measure of patronage than overall staff size, since a district may hire and fire these workers using locally collected taxes, and because these positions are sought after by party activists without much education. Data I collected on civil servant salaries at one district show a range of 3,400-27,600 Ghana Cedis (about \$1,650-\$13,400). Relative to Ghana’s Gross National Income per capita of \$1,550, it is clear that an assembly job is a good job.³⁴

Sometimes a reward for party activism is not what the state provides, but protection from the state itself. This can take the form of getting officials to look the other way on questions of dumping,

³Using World Bank data for 2012.

⁴Calculated using exchange rate of May 1, 2012.

licensing, or taxation. I gathered data on the number of people prosecuted in court by districts for non-payment of taxes from 2010 to 2012. 39% of respondents reported at least one such prosecution, with the mean number of prosecutions 13 (N=114). *Prosecutions* is a dummy variable coded 1 if the district has prosecuted any individuals for tax evasion from 2010-12.

Neighborhood and village-level notables are often assembly members as well as active partisans, so I collected data on the allowance paid to participants at assembly meetings. These are set locally, and paid with locally collected revenue. These revenue streams, which are not remitted to central government, are often referred to as a slush fund which incumbents can use with no central government scrutiny. For our purposes, they constitute public resources that are consumed privately by assembly officials. *Allowances* are the per diems or allowances received by the chief executive, presiding member, and ordinary assembly members for attending assembly meetings. Data come from information provided in my district survey by presiding members.

TABLE 6.2: Summary statistics for patronage dependent variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N	Note
Staff: Population Ratio	-1,007	449	-104	-2,588	132	Staff per capita
Menial staff	45	55	7	460	128	Sum of drivers, cleaners, security
Prosecutions	0.4	0.5	0	1	114	1 if district prosecuted any tax evasion in past two years
Chief Executive Allowance	3.2	0.6	1.6	4.6	100	Log allowance in Cedis
Presiding Member Allowance	3.3	0.6	1.6	4.6	116	Log allowance in Cedis
Assembly Member Allowance	3.1	0.6	1.1	4.4	117	Log allowance in Cedis

6.1.2.2 Public goods

Choosing the right public goods to study requires balancing the theoretical considerations mentioned already with the practical challenges of conducting field research on a finite budget. It was also important to select services that were under district control. Health and education, for example, are controlled centrally and do not make for good measures of district public goods performance. Common measures of public goods, such as toilets and schools, were not used for two reasons. First, I wanted to include only data whose accuracy I could be assured of. The only infrastructure data I include is facilities in the marketplace, which is original data I collected from visiting district

marketplaces. Although one can glean data on schools and clinics from a district's development plan, those data are not independently validated. I know from experience that projects often listed as complete are in fact half-complete or barely begun. Second, the spatial clustering of communities means that a bridge may actually benefit co-partisans if it is placed in their neighborhood, but before actually doing the research one has no way of knowing the distributional pattern of, say, a borehole. For these reasons I intentionally exclude capital projects, with the exception of data on marketplace infrastructure which I collected.

I used my time spent in district assemblies to identify variables that would be theoretically important, empirically variable across units, and measurable. The four public goods I use are the presence of income & expenditure signboards, the extent of litter in the marketplace, the quality of security in the marketplace, and the quality of district rubbish collection. Summary statistics are shown in Table 6.3. Data on the presence of *income & expenditure* signs come from visits by me and my research team to the district buildings in every district. The variable is coded 1 if the board was visible at the outside of the assembly building during our visit.

TABLE 6.3: Summary statistics for public goods dependent variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N	Note
Income & expend. sign	0.3	0.5	0	1	154	1 if signboard publicly posted at assembly
Litter	0.5	0.5	0	1	152	1 if little or no litter near entrance
Walls	0.2	0.4	0	1	101	1 if market protected by wall or fence
Bad garbage	75.6	16.6	6.6	96.8	170	% households burning, burying, dumping indiscriminately or in open

The second dependent variable concerns the quality of services provided to the district marketplace. A marketplace is theoretically and empirically important. Classical fiscal sociology holds that the revenue imperative shapes the logics and behaviors of government. Empirically, revenue from marketplaces represents an important source of locally generated revenue for districts. The responsibilities of district assemblies towards their marketplaces usually entails: building and maintaining fences, walls or gates for security; building and maintaining rentable lockable stalls from which market traders will sell and in which they can securely store goods overnight; cleaning the

marketplace shortly after the close of business and especially after a main market day; providing electricity so that trading does not have to stop as the natural light fades.

I used interviews and focus groups with market traders to identify things that mattered to traders and that could reasonably be measured. The main complaints were sanitation and security. The research team made independent trips to the main markets in every district in the country and collected data on the extent of litter and the presence of walls. The methodology is described in the Appendix. *Litter* is a dummy variable coded 1 if there was little or no litter near the entrance to the market. Traders also complained about their (in)ability to leave their goods safely overnight at the market, as many markets were not even wholly fenced in with walls and gates. *Market walls* is a dummy variable coded 1 if a person must enter the market through a fenced or gated opening. Because of within-district heterogeneity among markets, I estimate models for *Walls* using data that required no rounding up or averaging of market walls data within districts. These data, in other words, do not mask any market-level heterogeneity within districts. This explains the smaller sample size. Last, since markets vary considerably in size researchers calculated in footsteps and seconds the time taken to circumnavigate each market, and I include *market size* as a control variable.

The third and last public good is sanitation, for which I use Census 2010 data on household dumping of solid waste. Household collection of waste is rare in Ghana. 38% of all households dispose of their solid waste in an open space, but one quarter use a public container. 14% either burn or bury their solid waste and 9% dump indiscriminately. From these data I generate *Bad garbage*, which is the percentage of households that burn, bury, dump indiscriminately or dump in an open space in a district.

6.1.3 Explanatory variable

The explanatory variable is competition between the two main parties at the district level. Although vote shares in district assembly elections would be the most obvious way to measure competitiveness, district assembly elections are legally non-partisan. Nevertheless, this means district assembly election data do not reveal party support. My alternative is to use district voting in presidential elections,

since district vote shares in presidential elections accurately predict the number of assembly seats held by each party. *Margin in Presidential Elections* is the district margin between the presidential candidates of the two main parties averaged over multiple elections, and it proxies for inter-party competitiveness at the district level. For robustness I vary the specification of the explanatory variable, averaging over various time periods and using dummy variables for competitiveness at various levels. I use presidential rather than parliamentary elections since independent parliamentary candidates are typically members of one of the parties who has lost a primary. Independents may split some of their party's vote, but we have no way of knowing ex-post if an independent was 'truly' NDC or NPP.

TABLE 6.4: Summary statistics for explanatory variable

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N	Note
Margin in Presidential Elections	29.2	21.7	1.2	92	170	Avg. margin between NPP and NDC candidates from 2000-12
Competitive (7%, 2008)	.18	.38	0	1	170	Dummy. 1 if 2008 margin was 7% or less

Figure 6.1 shows the distribution of the explanatory variable. Note that competitive districts are not empirically rare, and that there is variation along the line, with significant numbers of districts where the average margin is 20 to 40 percentage points, and with plenty of districts that are strongholds in any definition (where the average margin is very large).

6.1.4 Control variables

I estimate models including controls for demographic, geospatial, and developmental variables. The rationale for the controls arises from a concern that the quality of local government may covary with: characteristics of the local population, such as their wealth (*Crop value*), literacy (*Illiterate*), size *Area*, or diversity (*Ethnic fractionalization*); the nature of economic production, such as the share of land that is urban (*Urban*) or the dependence on cocoa (*Cocoa dummy*); or the spatial nature of center-local relations, such as distance from to the capital city (*Distance to Accra*); or institutional characteristics of the district assembly itself such as district *Age*. Summary statistics are shown in

FIGURE 6.1: Distribution of explanatory variable

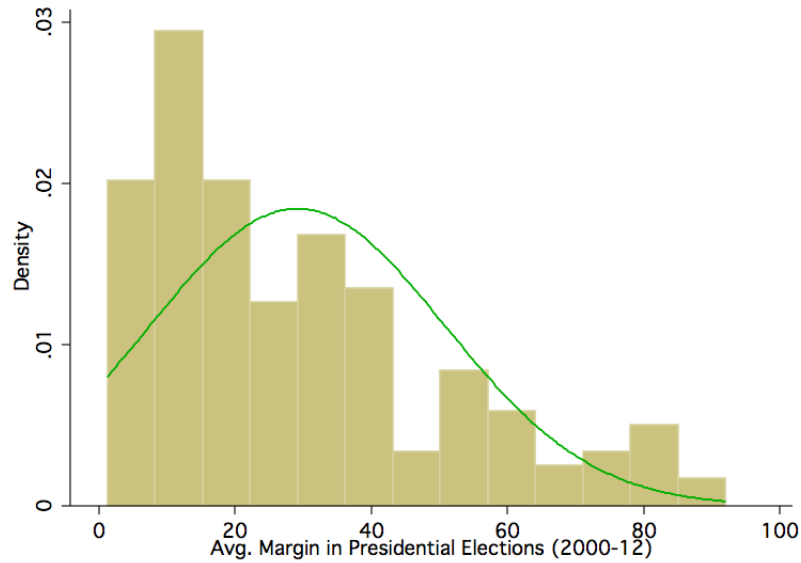


Table 6.5 and full descriptions are provided in the Appendix. Data for demographic and welfare variables come from the 2010 census. Data for spatial variables are my own using Google Earth and ArcMap. Cocoa data were extrapolated from the 2005 Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS5). Crop data were gathered from the Ministry of Agriculture.

TABLE 6.5: Summary statistics for control variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N
<i>Geospatial controls</i>					
Distance to Kumasi (log)	5.	0.9	0	6.3	170
Distance to Mine (log)	4.7	1.1	0	6.3	170
Distance to Accra (log)	5.3	0.9	0	6.5	170
District Age	8.234	8.159	2	22	170
Area (Km. Sq., Land)	6.9	0.9	3.1	9.2	170
<i>Development controls</i>					
Illiterate (2010)	32.2	18.4	7.12	79.67	170
No Toilet (2010)	30.732	29.567	2.84	93.27	170
Electricity (2010)	51.4	21.2	8.28	94.35	170
Cocoa Dummy	0.28	0.45	0	1	170
Crop value	6	1.3	0.69	7.98	168
Market size	14,910	23,410	407	171,333	119
<i>Demographic controls</i>					
Population (2010, log)	11.7	0.5	10.8	14.5	170
Urban (2010)	35.9	24.1	0	100	170
Ethnic Fractionalization (2010)	0.41	0.21	0.02	0.82	170

6.1.5 Basic model

To test the core hypothesis that, all else equal, districts with higher political competition will provide more patronage and fewer public goods, I estimate variations on the following basic model:

$$\begin{aligned} DistrictOutcome_i = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 PoliticalCompetition_i + \beta_2 GeospatialControls_i \\ & + \beta_3 DevelopmentControls_i + \beta_4 DemographicControls_i + \varepsilon_i \end{aligned}$$

The dependent variable is generically given as *DistrictOutcome*, and represents the multiple behaviors and characteristics of district *i* in which I am interested. Models are Ordinary Least Squares (OLS), probit or ordinal probit depending on the construction of the dependent variable. Cells show marginal effects where relevant.

6.1.6 Identification strategy

Since the explanatory variable is potentially endogenous, whether due to omitted variables bias or simultaneity/reverse causality, my identification strategy exploits plausibly exogenous variation in political competition arising from historical migration of ethnic blocs with distinct political allegiances. In Chapter 2, I showed how pockets of competitiveness had historic roots in the long-term interplay of migration for cocoa and the development of party traditions. I also showed that the presence of significant immigrant populations in 1970 was strongly associated with electoral competitiveness 20-30 years later. My identification strategy builds on this by arguing that migrant populations shaped the size of ethnic blocs, which then affected district competitiveness. Since voting in Ghana is quasi-ethnic, the share of *some* ethnic groups in a district is highly correlated with party strength. Ethnic groups can be grouped into those reliably voting NPP, those reliably voting NDC, and those fitting into neither group, either because their small size does not allow me to confidently infer their voting behavior or simply because they are not aligned with a party. The instrument takes advantage of the fact that four prominent Akan groups are reliably strong NPP supporters, and that *some* Akan sub-groups, *some* Guan sub-groups, *some* Gurma sub-groups, *some* Mole-Dagbon sub-groups, Dangme and Ewe are reliably strong NDC supporters.

The instrument is constructed by taking the sum of the core NDC bloc population in a district, the sum of the core NPP bloc and subtracting the difference to obtain *ethnic bloc difference* for each district. For example, in a hypothetical district in which the voting age population is 45% Asante, 20% Bimoba and 35% Nankani, we can reasonably assume that the NPP bloc will be approximately 45%, since Asantes are known NPP supporters. We can also assume the NDC bloc will be the sum of the Bimoba and Nankani populations (55%). The instrumental variable, *ethnic bloc difference*, is thus the difference in the size of the two major politically aligned ethnic blocs, which in this example is 10% (55% - 45%). Summary statistics are shown in Table 6.6.

To satisfy the exclusion restriction, there should be no reason to believe that the mere size of ethnic blocs affects district behavior in any way other than *through* its effect on political competition. The intuition behind the instrument comes from the literature on ethnic politics and public goods which focuses on heterogeneity. Ethnic diversity is said to have negative effects because, unlike homogeneous communities, heterogeneous communities do not possess the norms and networks that facilitate sanctioning of group members. It is through diversity and heterogeneity, therefore, that ethnicity is said to affect goods provision. While some scholars argue that co-ethnics find it easier to cooperate than non-co-ethnics, results are explicitly *not* interpreted in terms of group tastes (Habyarimana et al., 2007; Miguel and Gugerty, 2005; Lyall et al., 2013).

TABLE 6.6: Summary statistics for instrumental variable

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N	Note
Ethnic bloc difference	53.5	33.1	0	100	170	Difference between NDC- and NPP-aligned ethnic blocs

In addition to being conceptually different from ethnic heterogeneity, *ethnic bloc difference* is empirically different. Ethnic heterogeneity differs from the instrument which measures only the size of ethnic blocs rather than heterogeneity, *per se*. The scatterplot in Figure 6.2 shows that the instrument is not measuring ethnic diversity.⁵ Where the value for *ethnic bloc difference* is 0 there is no difference between the size of the major ethnic voting blocs in the district. This is a situation

⁵The variables are negatively correlated at -.39, significant at the .05 level.

of near perfect competition since the groups that vote NPP or NDC are in rough parity.⁶ Data clustered in the top-left are districts where *ethnic bloc difference* values are very high and where there is low diversity. These are party strongholds, dominated by one party and one ethnic group.⁷ Outside of these strongholds, the instrument is measuring something entirely different from ethnic diversity. Nonetheless, I include ethnic fractionalization as a control variable in my models. The test of the first stage shows that the instrument is highly correlated with the endogenous regressor with DWH F-statistics above 10. Results are shown in the Appendix.

FIGURE 6.2: Voting blocs and ethnic diversity



6.2 Patronage

In this section I analyze the relationship between political competition and three measures of patronage. The measures concern the extent to which districts selectively provide menial district assembly jobs, allowances for assembly officials, and protection from taxation.

⁶Models were also estimated using measures of ethnic polarization rather than fractionalization, using the methodology shown in Montalvo and Reynal-Querol, 2005, but the same pattern between the instrument and ethnic polarization obtained.

⁷For the NPP these are districts where Asantes dominate, such as in Ashanti Region. For the NDC these are districts where Ewes dominate, such as in Volta Region.

Before I begin, I should highlight the rationale behind reporting models in which my explanatory variable varies in its statistical significance. The virtue of including a range of models is to assure the reader that I am not selectively presenting results. In some models, my preferred specification is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level, while other times it is closer to 90%. Coefficients also vary in size depending on the dependent variable. I suggest the merit in this approach is that the effect of political competition as I have hypothesized it can be seen in the *totality of results*, rather than hanging on just one or two models which have been (non-randomly) selected for presentation. Seen as a whole, the estimated models I present provide a clear picture: highly competitive districts over-provide patronage and under-provide public goods.

6.2.1 Jobs

Table 6.7 presents results from OLS and Two-Stage Least Squares (2SLS) regression analyses of the size of district assembly staff. In models 1 and 2 the dependent variable is the population to staff ratio. The average ratio is 1,007:1, meaning one district worker for every 1,007 residents. I convert this to a negative number to make interpreting coefficients more intuitive, such that larger coefficients mean a larger staff. Heteroskedastic-robust standard errors are reported in parentheses beneath the coefficients. We see that districts with higher political competition employ more workers: as the electoral margin increases, the staff-to-population ratio decreases, meaning fewer district staff per capita. In model 1, a unit increase in the explanatory variable is associated with a 3.9 unit decrease in the ratio. The coefficient is statistically significant at the 90% confidence level. Substantively, a one standard deviation shift in the explanatory variable is associated with a shift in the dependent variable of approximately one-fifth of one standard deviation, holding all other variables at their means. The fitted versus predicted values are shown in Figure 6.3. The estimated coefficient is twice as large for districts affected by the instrument, shown in model 2. Note that these models do not control for population size since population is factored into the dependent variable.

Models 3 and 4 report estimated coefficients from OLS and 2SLS models for the size of *menial staff*, which is the sum of cleaners, drivers and security guards working for the district. *Menial staff*

TABLE 6.7: Regression models for the size of district staff

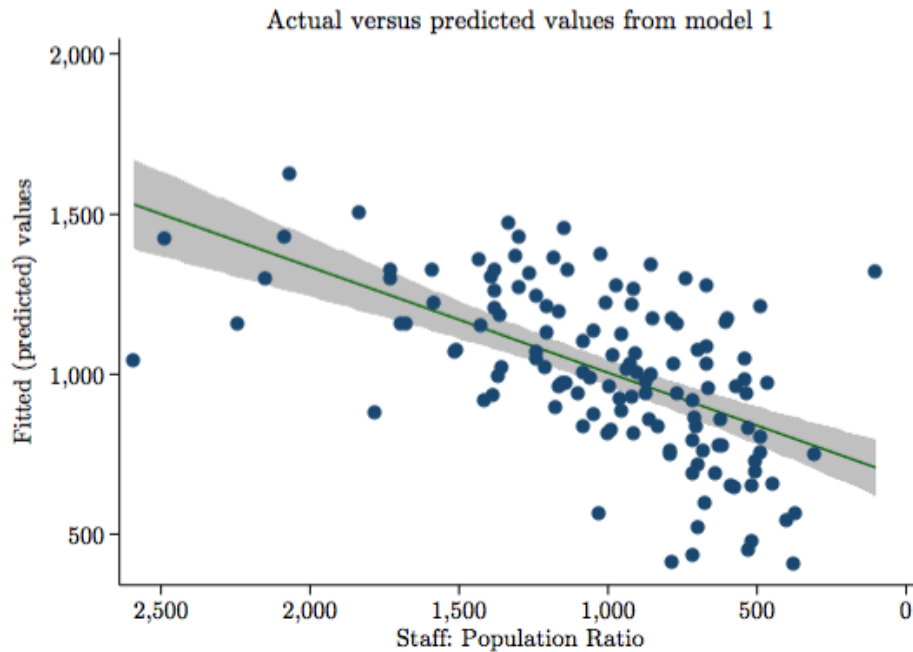
	(1 OLS) Population: Staff Ratio	(2 2SLS) Population: Staff Ratio	(3 OLS) Menial staff	(4 2SLS) Menial staff
Margin in Presidential Elections	-3.869* (1.999)	-9.397 (6.015)	-0.348** (0.163)	-0.775* (0.466)
Urban (2010)	9.545*** (2.752)	8.359*** (2.433)	0.588*** (0.202)	0.510*** (0.196)
District Age	0.691 (4.424)	0.699 (4.482)	0.671* (0.365)	0.727** (0.369)
Distance to Mine (log)	-25.726 (41.980)	31.170 (80.242)	10.216* (5.946)	14.660* (8.119)
Crop value	193.663*** (53.401)	182.249*** (48.531)	-9.091 (9.876)	-10.799 (10.075)
Illiterate (2010)	-14.204** (5.546)	-19.997*** (6.966)	0.196 (0.393)	-0.263 (0.603)
No Toilet (2010)	3.790 (3.022)	5.004 (3.182)	-0.333 (0.229)	-0.226 (0.236)
Distance to Kumasi (log)	4.462 (53.867)	-57.443 (100.307)	-10.628 (7.097)	-16.265** (7.753)
Distance to Accra (log)	70.799 (75.205)	93.697 (66.999)	20.402*** (7.056)	21.542*** (6.764)
Area (Km. Sq., Land)	-93.426* (50.188)	-63.897 (46.403)	-1.862 (6.641)	0.922 (7.677)
Ethnic Fractionalization (2010)	-2.728 (2.281)	-4.630 (3.572)	0.243 (0.238)	0.110 (0.211)
Electricity (2010)	-4.869 (3.657)	-5.379 (3.690)	0.193 (0.278)	0.127 (0.275)
Cocoa Dummy	-234.939*** (86.066)	-245.488*** (82.535)	-4.526 (8.190)	-4.895 (8.161)
Population (2010, log)			46.867*** (11.351)	43.426*** (10.824)
Constant	-1287.099** (605.831)	-1041.902 (725.011)	-565.932*** (160.241)	-498.347*** (155.858)
Observations	131	131	127	127
R^2	0.331	0.294	0.528	0.515
F-statistic		23.77		27
Cragg-Donald-Wald F-stat		25.63		28.61

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

is a more precise measure of patronage than total staff size, since total staff size combines personnel controlled by central and local government. Menial staff positions, by contrast, are typically locally controlled. Consistent with models for the staff to population ratio, results from models 3 and 4 show that highly competitive districts have relatively large numbers of menial staff. The reason the signs on the coefficients are negative in models 3 and 4, unlike in models 1 and 2, is that dependent variable is the absolute size rather than a ratio of staff to population. In model 3, the estimated coefficient for the explanatory variable is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. A one unit increase

FIGURE 6.3: Regression line for model of district staff size



in the explanatory variable (a larger margin) is associated 0.35 fewer menial staff. Substantively, and holding all controls at mean values, a one standard deviation increase in the average margin in presidential elections is associated with 7.5 fewer menial staff, which is approximately a one-eighth standard deviation change. Shifting the explanatory variable along its full range (from the smallest electoral margin to the largest) is associated with a change in menial staff size of one half of one standard deviation, holding all other variables at their means. In model 4, we see the estimated effect is twice as large for districts affected by the instrument.

6.2.2 Prosecutions for tax evasion

Models 1-3 shown in Table 6.8 find a curvilinear relationship in which prosecutions for tax evasion are least likely in competitive districts. The table shows marginal effects. Model 1 estimates a probit model for tax prosecutions in which the dependent variable is not statistically significant at conventional levels. Model 2 allows the relationship to be non-linear by introducing a squared term for the explanatory variable. The coefficients on the explanatory variable, *Margin*, and on its squared

term, *Prez. Margin Squared*, show that the effect of competitiveness on the predicted probability of prosecuting for tax evasion is non-linear. Specifically, districts are less likely to prosecute in strongholds but least likely by far in competitive districts. The estimated probit coefficient and the estimated marginal effect are both significantly different from zero at the 99% confidence level. Controlling for other variables, the effect of a one unit increase in *Margin* on the predicted probability of *prosecutions* is 2%. On the basis of these estimates, the predicted probability of a prosecution in a highly competitive district (where margin is 1%) is 4%, which jumps to 40% in districts of average competitiveness (where margin is 30%). The predicted probability then declines to about 30% in the least competitive districts (where the margin is 70%).

6.2.3 Allowances for assembly members

Results for the allowances received by officials are shown in Table 6.9. We see across the models that larger electoral margins are associated with *smaller* allowances. Models 1-3 are basic models. Models 5-8 add further controls. Values are logged to normalize large differences between districts, so coefficients are percentage changes in the dependent variable for a one unit change in the explanatory variable. In model 1 for the allowance received by chief executives, the coefficient on the explanatory variable is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. A one unit increase in the electoral margin is associated with a 0.6% decrease in the chief executive's allowance. Substantively, a one standard deviation change in electoral margin is associated with a one quarter standard deviation change in the chief executive's allowance, holding all other variables at mean values. The finding is the same for models for the presiding member's allowance (model 2), and for the chief executive and presiding member when further controls are added (models 4 and 5). Models for ordinary assembly members are not statistically significant, though the negative sign on the coefficient means the direction of the effect is the same as it is for the chief executive and presiding member. The findings are not robust to instrumenting with *Ethnic Bloc Difference*.

TABLE 6.8: Regression models for prosecution of tax evasion, showing marginal effects

	(1 Probit) Prosecution	(2 Probit) Prosecution	(3 2SLS) Prosecution
Margin in Presidential Elections	0.004 (0.002)	0.020*** (0.006)	0.022 (0.020)
Prez Margin (00-12, Sqrd)		-0.000*** (0.000)	
Urban (2010)	0.001 (0.003)	0.001 (0.003)	0.007 (0.010)
District Age	0.002 (0.005)	0.001 (0.005)	0.006 (0.019)
Distance to Mine (log)	-0.038 (0.053)	-0.017 (0.049)	-0.221 (0.278)
Crop value	0.088** (0.044)	0.068* (0.041)	0.361** (0.177)
Illiterate (2010)	0.008 (0.009)	0.007 (0.008)	0.039 (0.038)
No Toilet (2010)	-0.007 (0.005)	-0.008 (0.005)	-0.027 (0.020)
Distance to Kumasi (log)	-0.101 (0.073)	-0.077 (0.073)	-0.282 (0.372)
Distance to Accra (log)	-0.107 (0.073)	-0.100 (0.070)	-0.426 (0.281)
Area (Km. Sq., Land)	0.031 (0.063)	0.046 (0.068)	0.073 (0.248)
Ethnic Fractionalization (2010)	0.003 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)	0.013 (0.011)
Electricity (2010)	0.009** (0.004)	0.009** (0.004)	0.034** (0.016)
Cocoa Dummy	-0.158* (0.092)	-0.187** (0.086)	-0.603* (0.355)
Ethnic bloc difference			0.000 (.)
Observations	113	113	113

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

TABLE 6.9: Regressions models for district assembly allowances

	(1 OLS) Chief Executive	(2 OLS) Presiding Member	(3 OLS) Assembly Member	(4 OLS) Chief Executive	(5 OLS) Presiding Member	(6 OLS) Assembly Member	(7 2SLS) Chief Executive	(8 2SLS) Presiding Member
Margin in Presidential Elections	-0.006** (0.003)	-0.006** (0.003)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.006* (0.004)	-0.006* (0.003)	-0.000 (0.003)	0.004 (0.006)	0.001 (0.007)
Population (2010, log)	0.334* (0.186)	0.519*** (0.187)	0.445*** (0.151)	0.361* (0.188)	0.541*** (0.182)	0.473*** (0.148)	0.324 (0.204)	0.500** (0.195)
Urban (2010)	-0.000 (0.004)	-0.003 (0.004)	-0.005 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.004)	-0.003 (0.005)	-0.007 (0.005)	-0.000 (0.005)	-0.002 (0.005)
District Age	-0.012 (0.008)	-0.010 (0.007)	-0.013* (0.007)	-0.008 (0.008)	-0.007 (0.007)	-0.013* (0.007)	-0.009 (0.008)	-0.007 (0.007)
Crop value	0.117* (0.062)	0.156** (0.061)	0.093* (0.053)	0.081 (0.069)	0.120* (0.065)	0.096 (0.059)	0.113 (0.073)	0.140** (0.067)
Illiterate (2010)	-0.022*** (0.008)	-0.028*** (0.008)	-0.015 (0.009)	-0.027*** (0.008)	-0.032*** (0.009)	-0.017* (0.010)	-0.017* (0.009)	-0.026** (0.010)
No Toilet (2010)	0.008** (0.004)	0.013*** (0.004)	0.005 (0.005)	0.006 (0.005)	0.012*** (0.004)	0.002 (0.006)	0.004 (0.005)	0.010** (0.005)
Area (Km. Sq., Land)	-0.133 (0.090)	-0.162* (0.089)	-0.121 (0.090)	-0.171* (0.094)	-0.186** (0.091)	-0.148 (0.093)	-0.207** (0.099)	-0.206** (0.094)
Ethnic fractionalization (2010)	-0.000 (0.002)	0.001 (0.003)	0.001 (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)	0.006 (0.004)	0.005 (0.004)
Electricity (2010)	-0.001 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.004)	0.005 (0.005)	0.000 (0.005)	-0.002 (0.004)	0.007 (0.005)	0.003 (0.005)	-0.000 (0.004)
Cocoa Dummy	-0.078 (0.148)	-0.085 (0.137)	-0.014 (0.128)	-0.096 (0.141)	-0.084 (0.143)	-0.033 (0.133)	-0.064 (0.134)	-0.061 (0.140)
Distance to Mine (log)				-0.007 (0.135)	0.007 (0.082)	-0.027 (0.076)	-0.112 (0.143)	-0.060 (0.098)
Distance to Kumasi (log)				0.084 (0.109)	0.019 (0.092)	0.190** (0.087)	0.238* (0.140)	0.134 (0.139)
Distance to Accra (log)				0.221** (0.110)	0.171* (0.093)	0.115 (0.105)	0.164 (0.107)	0.136 (0.090)
Constant	0.421 (2.046)	-1.592 (2.092)	-1.421 (1.680)	-0.928 (1.991)	-2.422 (2.107)	-3.034* (1.754)	-1.240 (2.099)	-2.607 (2.143)
Observations	99	115	116	99	115	116	99	115
R^2	0.256	0.253	0.243	0.302	0.276	0.274		
F-statistic							25.93	17.15
Cragg-Donald-Wald F-stat							26.19	18.95

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

6.3 Public goods

Thus far I have established robust correlations between relatively high political competition and the over-provision of patronage. It is possible, however, that highly competitive districts simply receive more goods of all kinds from central or local government, which would be a different mechanism than the one suggested here. In this section I consider the relationship between competition and public goods, specifically transparency in district finances, services provided to district marketplaces, and sanitation. I find effects of political competition that are consistent with my theory.

6.3.1 Transparency

Just under one-third of districts covered in the survey had an income and expenditure board that was publicly posted outside the district building. I found that districts with higher political competition are less likely to publicly post notices detailing their expenditure. Table 6.10 reports results from OLS and logit regression models for the presence of these signs. The outcome is binary, but OLS can be used for ease of interpretation.

The first finding is that political competition does not covary with the probability of signs in its linear form (model 1). When I allow for a non-linear specification of competition, however, I find that political competition does covary with public signs. The estimated coefficients from OLS for *Margin* and its squared term are close to the conventional levels of statistical significance. Going from a highly competitive district where the margin is 1 to a district of average competitiveness, where the margin is 30, is associated with a move in the predicted probability of an income and expenditure signboard of 15% to 35%, holding all else constant. In other words, holding all else constant, a district of average competitiveness is 20% more likely to post this notice than a highly competitive district. Only at very large margins (which are empirically few) does the probability decline once again. Model 3 presents marginal effects from an estimated logit model. As expected, the results are similar to the OLS model, with p-values for associated z-scores for *Margin* and its squared term around $P > 0.12$.

TABLE 6.10: Regression models for posting of public signs

	(1 OLS)	(2 OLS)	(3 Logit)
	Income & expenditure sign	Income & expenditure sign	Income & expenditure sign (Marginal effects)
Margin in Presidential Elections	0.001 (0.002)	0.009 (0.006)	0.009 (0.006)
Prez Margin (00-12, Sqrd)		-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Population (2010, log)	-0.267** (0.111)	-0.267** (0.112)	-0.265*** (0.099)
Urban (2010)	0.002 (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)	0.002 (0.003)
District Age	0.010* (0.005)	0.010* (0.005)	0.010** (0.005)
Distance to Mine (log)	-0.019 (0.051)	-0.019 (0.049)	-0.014 (0.046)
Crop value	-0.059 (0.052)	-0.068 (0.051)	-0.067 (0.046)
Illiterate (2010)	0.001 (0.007)	0.001 (0.007)	0.001 (0.007)
No Toilet (2010)	0.001 (0.004)	0.001 (0.004)	0.001 (0.004)
Distance to Kumasi (log)	0.005 (0.058)	0.016 (0.060)	0.008 (0.051)
Distance to Accra (log)	0.060 (0.079)	0.049 (0.077)	0.043 (0.067)
Area (Km. Sq., Land)	-0.103* (0.062)	-0.088 (0.062)	-0.080 (0.060)
Ethnic Fractionalization (2010)	0.000 (0.002)	-0.000 (0.002)	-0.000 (0.002)
Electricity (2010)	0.003 (0.004)	0.003 (0.004)	0.003 (0.003)
Cocoa Dummy	-0.090 (0.105)	-0.106 (0.107)	-0.108 (0.100)
Constant	3.812*** (1.320)	3.747*** (1.334)	
Observations	152	152	152
R^2	0.139	0.150	

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

6.3.2 Services to marketplaces

Table 6.11 reports results for estimated regressions for the quality of marketplaces. In models 1 and 2 the dependent variable is *Litter*, which is a dummy variable coded 1 if the market had little or no litter, otherwise 0. The models show that the predicted probability of having a clean market (high *Litter* score) grow with larger electoral margins. In other words, highly competitive districts were least likely to have clean markets. In model 1, the marginal effect of a one unit increase in the explanatory variable on the predicted probability of *Litter* is .4%, but the explanatory variable is not statistically significant. In model 2, however, the estimated instrumented probit coefficient and the estimated marginal effect are both significantly different from zero at the 95% confidence level. The estimated coefficient is larger for districts affected by the instrumented (model 2). Controlling for other variables, the effect of a one unit increase in *Margin* on the predicted probability of *Litter* is 3.3%. The substantive effect is easier to interpret without the instrument in model 1. On the basis of these estimates, and holding all else constant, the predicted probability of a district having good litter is 38% in a highly competitive district (margin set to 1), rising 20% to 58% in a district of average competitiveness (margin set to 40).

Models 3 and 4 report estimated probit and 2SLS regressions for *Walls*, which is a dummy variable coded 1 if the market is surrounded by walls or a fence, and a visitor must enter through a gate. The results are consistent with those on market litter: highly competitive districts are associated with lower probabilities of having market walls. In model 3, the estimated coefficient on the explanatory variable is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. The average marginal effect of a one unit change in *Margin* on the predicted probability of *Walls* is .7%. Substantively, a one standard deviation shift in the explanatory variable is associated with roughly a 20% shift in the predicted probability of *Walls*. The relationship is visualized in Figure 6.4.

TABLE 6.11: Regression models for quality of marketplaces, showing marginal effects

	(1 Probit) Litter	(2 2SLS) Litter	(3 Probit) Walls	(4 2SLS) Walls
Margin in Presidential Elections	0.004 (0.003)	0.033** (0.015)	0.007*** (0.002)	0.039 (0.051)
Market size	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Population (2010, log)	-0.273** (0.137)	-0.699 (0.428)	0.142 (0.117)	0.946 (1.033)
Urban (2010)	0.005* (0.003)	0.019** (0.009)	0.001 (0.003)	0.003 (0.022)
District Age	-0.008 (0.005)	-0.030* (0.016)	-0.002 (0.004)	-0.011 (0.034)
Distance to Mine (log)	-0.029 (0.076)	-0.324 (0.283)	-0.089* (0.048)	-0.546 (0.569)
Crop value	-0.024 (0.058)	-0.006 (0.180)	0.045 (0.042)	0.264 (0.453)
Illiterate (2010)	0.004 (0.008)	0.033 (0.028)	0.016 (0.010)	0.111 (0.095)
No Toilet (2010)	-0.003 (0.005)	-0.015 (0.015)	-0.009 (0.006)	-0.060 (0.053)
Distance to Kumasi (log)	0.011 (0.077)	0.263 (0.275)	0.093 (0.060)	0.470 (0.960)
Distance to Accra (log)	-0.158* (0.090)	-0.568** (0.284)	-0.092 (0.064)	-0.667 (0.512)
Area (Km. Sq., Land)	-0.030 (0.084)	-0.147 (0.231)	-0.120* (0.071)	-0.806 (0.611)
Ethnic Fractionalization (2010)	-0.004* (0.002)	-0.006 (0.008)	0.003 (0.002)	0.015 (0.021)
Electricity (2010)	-0.006 (0.004)	-0.017 (0.012)	0.003 (0.004)	0.022 (0.031)
Cocoa Dummy	-0.210* (0.110)	-0.627* (0.352)	-0.237** (0.102)	-1.699* (0.925)
Observations	116	116	80	80

Standard errors in parentheses

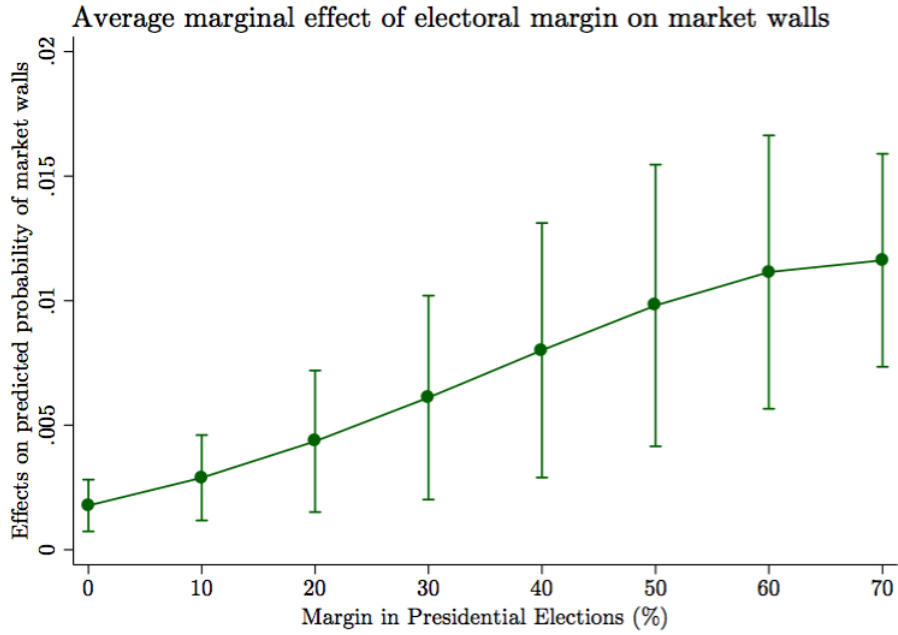
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

6.3.3 Sanitation

Next I turn to garbage collection which, outside of construction, is a major activity and responsibility of district assemblies. Results are presented in Table 6.12. My default explanatory variable is not statistically significant in model 1. When I use a dummy for competitiveness, however, I find that being in the most highly competitive districts is associated with higher values for *bad garbage*. *Competitive*, is coded 1 if the margin between the NPP and NDC presidential candidates was below 7% in 2008, which was the most recent election.⁸ In model 2, being in a district where the margin was

⁸30 of 170 districts are thus coded 1.

FIGURE 6.4: Average marginal effect of electoral margin on market walls



below 7% was associated with 3.7 percent more bad garbage, holding all other variables constant. The coefficient on the dummy explanatory variable is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. The direction of the effect is different, however, for districts affected by the instrument in model 3.

TABLE 6.12: Regression models for sanitation

	(1 OLS) Bad garbage	(2 OLS) Bad garbage	(3 2SLS) Bad garbage
Margin in Presidential Elections	0.016 (0.041)		
Competitive (<7%, 2008)		3.374** (1.613)	-7.818 (8.002)
Population (2010, log)	-2.001 (1.980)	-1.544 (2.019)	-3.160 (2.468)
Urban (2010)	-0.371*** (0.054)	-0.383*** (0.049)	-0.359*** (0.055)
District Age	-0.129 (0.081)	-0.124 (0.080)	-0.139 (0.085)
Distance to Mine (log)	-1.528 (1.030)	-1.183 (0.872)	-1.721* (1.004)
Crop value	1.556 (1.019)	1.535 (0.977)	1.426 (1.074)
Illiterate (2010)	0.056 (0.115)	0.005 (0.116)	0.113 (0.153)
No Toilet (2010)	-0.015 (0.069)	-0.012 (0.068)	-0.012 (0.075)
Distance to Kumasi (log)	-1.182 (1.226)	-1.471 (1.261)	-1.066 (1.149)
Distance to Accra (log)	-2.656 (1.623)	-2.229 (1.533)	-3.376* (1.827)
Area (Km. Sq., Land)	4.304*** (1.210)	4.437*** (1.191)	4.309*** (1.379)
Ethnic Fractionalization (2010)	-0.125*** (0.037)	-0.130*** (0.035)	-0.128*** (0.038)
Electricity (2010)	-0.034 (0.063)	-0.045 (0.064)	-0.014 (0.071)
Cocoa Dummy	-0.142 (1.936)	-0.327 (1.849)	0.091 (2.086)
Constant	107.040*** (25.599)	101.139*** (25.445)	124.064*** (32.513)
Observations	168	168	168
R^2	0.712	0.719	0.643
F-statistic			6.55
Cragg-Donald-Wald F-stat			6.97

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Summary

This chapter submitted my core hypothesis to statistical testing using an original dataset of district assembly correlates. Across a range of models I found that relatively competitive districts are associated with the over-provision of patronage in the form of public jobs, protection from prosecution, and the provision of allowances for district officials. Highly competitive districts were also found to *under*-provide important public goods such as public notices, clean and safe markets, and rubbish collection.

A prominent explanation from the political economy of development literature would point to institutional quality in these highly competitive districts. Indeed, the outcomes I analyzed in this chapter hew more closely to what districts ‘do’ externally’ than how they self-administer or self-organize. So, the next chapter examines the relationship between political competition and administrative quality. It presents a striking finding: these highly competitive, patronage-providing districts typically have better administrative quality than less competitive districts. I make sense of this finding through the logic of building governing capacity for patronage provision.

Chapter 7

Alternative hypotheses: Administrative quality, political topography, & social capital

Introduction

In the previous chapter I established robust correlations between relatively high political competition and the provision of patronage over public goods. In this chapter, I add to the robustness of my main findings by engaging with three prominent alternative or competing hypotheses.

First, results may be driven by weak bureaucratic capacity in highly competitive districts, which is a paradigmatic perspective in the study of African states especially (Herbst, 2000). In these highly competitive districts that provide patronage over public goods, is the quality of internal administration any different? Are civil servants any more or less meritorious than peers in less competitive districts, either in their levels of experience or education? Is there worse institutional continuity in the form of turnover of senior civil servants? Second, outcomes may be attributable to the nature of local social institutions, which in turn may affect the quality of both trust and associational activity. I use household survey data to show data that social capital appears unrelated

to political competition. Third, outcomes could be explained in terms of the ability of the central government to monitor activity in districts that are rural and distant. In terms of the broadcast of state power and the country's political topography, I show that district density or distances from important centers is also unrelated to higher political competition.

The main finding from this chapter is that not only are highly competitive districts not poorly run, there is evidence to suggest that the opposite is the case. That is, highly competitive, patronage-providing districts are on average *better* run than less competitive districts. On the basis of my case study research, I argue that under-pressure chief executives in highly competitive places actually seek out the best technocrats to help them access resources from central government *precisely in order to provide patronage*.¹ To understand why, recall a finance officer quoted already, who told me “The chief executive does not care about having party faithful work for him. What he really cares about is having competent professionals that will not lead him astray or embarrass him.” My informants and respondents understood that chief executives were under pressure from their activists, and they needed good bureaucrats to help them secure goods from central government. While chief executives might give party activists menial jobs, they tried to strengthen their administration by bringing in competent bureaucrats.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I test the hypothesis that highly competitive districts may simply be poorly run. Second, I test the social capital hypothesis. Third, I test the political topography hypothesis. In each section I estimate models using the same specifications and controls as in the previous chapter. The identification strategy includes the use of *ethnic bloc difference* to instrument for political competition.

7.1 Administrative quality

The hiring of non-political staff on the basis of merit rather than group membership is a key explanatory variable in the political economy of development. My survey gathered data on the education,

¹See Kitschelt and Kselman, 2012 for a related idea.

origin and professional experience of the coordinating director, the head civil servant. The education of the coordinating director is measured with *Masters*, which is a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondent indicated having a masters or equivalent. Experience is measured with *Years in system*, which is a continuous variable for the years worked in the district assembly system. I also measured how long the coordinating director has worked at their present district, which serves as a measure of rotation and turnover since the government changed hands in 2009. *Since 2009* is a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondent came to their current district since 2009, or instead had worked there since before that general election. 70% of respondent coordinating directors have only been at their district since 2009 or more recently, meaning about one-third of coordinating directors were not rotated when the government went from NPP to NDC control. Last, I wanted to know if coordinating directors were co-ethno-regionals of the local population, but sensitive questions relating to ethnicity could not be asked. Since I could not ask about ethnicity directly, I use as indicators of any ethno-regional bias in hiring whether the coordinating director works in their home district or home region. *From district* and *From region* are dummy variables coded 1 if the coordinating director works in their home district or region, respectively. Summary statistics are shown in Table 7.1.

TABLE 7.1: Summary statistics for coordinating directors

Variable	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max	Note
From district	143	0.04	0.20	0	1	From this district
From region	136	0.38	0.49	0	1	From this region
Years in system	137	13.6	8.66	1	40	Years in district system
Masters	141	0.51	0.50	0	1	Masters or equivalent, excluding bachelors, certificates or diplomas
Since 2009	139	.705	.458	0	1	Joined current district in 2009

96 percent of respondents reported that they were not from the district in which they currently served. As a first cut, this tells us that these key technocrats, unlike chief executives, are almost never ‘sons of the soil.’ It also means there is little variation to exploit. Still, it is possible that they could come from neighboring districts within the same region. Models 1-3 in Table 7.2 show that a coordinating director is more likely to work in their home region as the electoral margin increases. In other words, coordinating directors in highly competitive districts are *least* likely to be co-regional with the local population. Since the dependent variable is binary, I estimate probit and instrumental

variable probit models, and the cells show marginal effects. I include results from OLS estimation for ease of interpretation.

In the first model, a one unit increase in *Margin in Presidential Elections* is associated with a .005 increase in the predicted probability of the coordinating director working in their home region. The estimated coefficient is statistically significant at the 90% confidence level. Substantively, and holding all else constant, we expect on the basis of these estimates a 25% predicted probability of a coordinating director working in their home region in a highly competitive district (where margin is 1%), compared to a 66% predicted probability in a much less competitive district (where margin is 90%). The significance of this finding is that highly competitive districts are not seeking out co-regionals to run their administration. This makes sense in light of my case study research, in which I was told that under-pressure chief executives seek to retain and to hire capable bureaucrats.

Models 4-7 in Table 7.2 relate to a coordinating director's education. In model 4, I find that a continuous form of the explanatory variable is not statistically related to the probability that a coordinating director has a masters degree. When I introduce a dummy variable for highly competitive districts, however, I find that coordinating directors are more likely to have a masters degree in highly competitive districts. In model 5, being in a district where the electoral margin was below 7% in 2008 is associated with a 24% greater predicted probability that the coordinating director has a masters degree. The coefficient on the dummy explanatory variable is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, and is robust to probit estimation in model 6. The relationship is not statistically significant in a probit instrumental variables regression (model 7), but the direction of the coefficient is consistent with the other estimates.

TABLE 7.2: Regression models for home region and education of coordinating director

	(1 OLS) Home Region	(2 Probit) Home Region	(3 IV Probit) Home Region	(4 OLS) Masters	(5 OLS) Masters	(6 Probit) Masters	(7 IV Probit) Masters
Margin in Presidential Elections	0.005* (0.002)	0.004** (0.002)	0.027* (0.015)	-0.000 (0.003)			
Competitive (<8%, 2008)					0.239** (0.115)	0.242** (0.111)	0.542 (1.512)
Urban (2010)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.010)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.004 (0.008)
District Age	-0.004 (0.005)	-0.004 (0.005)	-0.012 (0.015)	0.005 (0.006)	0.005 (0.006)	0.005 (0.006)	0.013 (0.015)
Distance to Mine (log)	0.025 (0.044)	0.023 (0.054)	-0.054 (0.237)	-0.021 (0.066)	-0.012 (0.057)	-0.012 (0.055)	-0.038 (0.166)
Crop value	0.014 (0.041)	0.021 (0.042)	0.111 (0.134)	-0.014 (0.048)	-0.017 (0.047)	-0.021 (0.047)	-0.054 (0.130)
Illiterate (2010)	-0.006 (0.008)	-0.005 (0.007)	-0.000 (0.028)	0.004 (0.008)	0.003 (0.008)	0.003 (0.007)	0.009 (0.023)
No Toilet (2010)	0.003 (0.004)	0.002 (0.004)	0.004 (0.012)	-0.000 (0.004)	-0.000 (0.004)	0.000 (0.004)	-0.000 (0.011)
Distance to Kumasi (log)	-0.014 (0.059)	-0.020 (0.053)	0.066 (0.213)	-0.037 (0.064)	-0.053 (0.061)	-0.056 (0.062)	-0.143 (0.206)
Distance to Accra (log)	0.075 (0.073)	0.087 (0.071)	0.218 (0.237)	-0.080 (0.080)	-0.061 (0.080)	-0.068 (0.078)	-0.191 (0.240)
Area (Km. Sq., Land)	0.064 (0.073)	0.062 (0.069)	0.106 (0.246)	-0.048 (0.077)	-0.033 (0.070)	-0.034 (0.068)	-0.098 (0.215)
Ethnic Fractionalization (2010)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.002)	-0.006 (0.009)	0.003 (0.003)	0.003 (0.002)	0.003 (0.002)	0.009 (0.007)
Electricity (2010)	0.002 (0.004)	0.002 (0.004)	0.006 (0.012)	0.002 (0.004)	0.001 (0.004)	0.001 (0.004)	0.003 (0.011)
Cocoa Dummy	-0.254** (0.110)	-0.256** (0.108)	-0.746* (0.385)	-0.122 (0.130)	-0.130 (0.125)	-0.128 (0.117)	-0.342 (0.326)
Constant	-0.429 (0.705)			1.331* (0.768)	1.222 (0.758)		
Observations	135	135	135	140	140	140	140
R^2	0.210			0.055	0.086		

Standard errors in parentheses. Cells for probit and IV probit models show marginal effects

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Next I test for robust correlations between competition and the experience of coordinating directors, measured as the total number of years they have worked in the district assembly system. These models control for the age of the coordinating director.² As with models for levels of education, the estimated coefficients reported for model 1 in Table 7.3 find no statistically significant relationship between the experience of the coordinating director and a continuous form of the explanatory variable. But when I introduce a dummy variable for highly competitive districts, I find a statistically significant relationship. In model 2, being in a highly competitive district is associated with .42 extra years in the district assembly system. The coefficient is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, though not in the instrumental variables estimation (model 3). This means better quality technocrats in more competitive districts.

Another temporal dimension of interest with the coordinating director is the institutional continuity they offer a district administration and to a new chief executive entering office. I gathered data on the year the coordinating director joined their present district. Unlike chief executives, coordinating directors do not automatically change districts when the national government changes and when a new chief executive arrives. In my sample, 30 percent of coordinating directors remained at their district following the 2008 general election. Since the number of years a coordinating director has spent at their district has a very long left tail (a small number stretch back to the 1990s), I use a simple dummy variable, *Since 2009*, which is coded 1 if the coordinating director moved under the NDC (if they have been at their district since 2009 or later). Estimated models 4-7 in Table 7.3 show that a coordinating director in a highly competitive district is relatively *unlikely* to have changed districts when the central government changed in 2009. In model 5, being in a district where the 2008 electoral margin was less than 7% is associated with a predicted probability of 32% that the coordinating director did not join her present district since 2009. This is consistent with the image I have tried to construct of these head civil servants in highly competitive districts, who are valuable to chief executives under stress.

²The age of personnel does not correlate very highly with their experience because new staff entered in waves to deal with the expanding number of districts. A 50 year old, for example, should not be assumed to have worked longer in the system than a 40 year old. This is why I use the number of years the respondent has worked in the system rather than respondent age.

TABLE 7.3: Regression models for experience of coordinating director

	(1 OLS)	(2 OLS)	(3 2SLS)	(4 OLS)	(5 OLS)	(6 Probit)	(7 2SLS)
	Years in system	Years in system	Years in system	Since 2009	Since 2009	Since 2009	Since 2009
Margin in Presidential Elections	-0.001 (0.005)			0.004 (0.003)			
Competitive (<7%, 2008)		0.424** (0.182)	-0.042 (1.091)		-0.324*** (0.109)	-0.287*** (0.083)	-1.455 (1.205)
Age (Coord. Dir.)	0.050*** (0.014)	0.053*** (0.013)	0.049*** (0.015)				
Urban (2010)	-0.005 (0.006)	-0.005 (0.006)	-0.005 (0.005)	-0.000 (0.003)	-0.000 (0.003)	-0.000 (0.003)	0.000 (0.009)
District Age	0.003 (0.011)	0.003 (0.011)	0.003 (0.010)	0.001 (0.006)	0.001 (0.006)	0.000 (0.005)	0.002 (0.017)
Distance to Mine (log)	-0.005 (0.087)	0.004 (0.089)	-0.020 (0.103)	0.052 (0.073)	0.072 (0.063)	0.075 (0.055)	0.204 (0.195)
Crop value	0.126 (0.103)	0.120 (0.098)	0.131 (0.104)	0.045 (0.045)	0.041 (0.041)	0.037 (0.040)	0.131 (0.129)
Illiterate (2010)	-0.009 (0.017)	-0.011 (0.015)	-0.007 (0.017)	-0.002 (0.008)	-0.004 (0.007)	-0.003 (0.006)	-0.006 (0.025)
No Toilet (2010)	0.010 (0.009)	0.010 (0.009)	0.009 (0.008)	-0.000 (0.005)	0.000 (0.004)	0.000 (0.004)	0.001 (0.013)
Distance to Kumasi (log)	0.035 (0.111)	0.009 (0.101)	0.052 (0.125)	0.096 (0.070)	0.081 (0.063)	0.074 (0.057)	0.278 (0.205)
Distance to Accra (log)	0.072 (0.136)	0.105 (0.136)	0.061 (0.164)	0.038 (0.093)	0.023 (0.091)	0.019 (0.085)	0.002 (0.304)
Area (Km. Sq., Land)	-0.258* (0.153)	-0.232 (0.143)	-0.271 (0.167)	-0.020 (0.078)	-0.016 (0.072)	-0.003 (0.062)	-0.047 (0.224)
Ethnic Fractionalization (2010)	0.003 (0.005)	0.003 (0.004)	0.003 (0.004)	0.002 (0.003)	0.001 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)	0.004 (0.007)
Electricity (2010)	0.007 (0.007)	0.006 (0.007)	0.007 (0.007)	0.005 (0.004)	0.005 (0.004)	0.005 (0.003)	0.017 (0.011)
Cocoa Dummy	-0.041 (0.245)	-0.054 (0.235)	-0.035 (0.228)	0.219* (0.116)	0.214* (0.114)	0.223* (0.119)	0.704* (0.402)
Years in System				-0.005 (0.005)	-0.004 (0.005)	-0.004 (0.004)	-0.010 (0.014)
Constant	0.082 (1.550)	-0.257 (1.531)	0.084 (1.673)	-0.721 (0.791)	-0.427 (0.757)		
Observations	133	133	133	135	135	135	135
R^2	0.203	0.226	0.197	0.088	0.136		

Standard errors in parentheses. Cells for probit models show marginal effects.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

7.2 The Putnam conjecture: is social capital driving political competition?

My explanation for the goods provision behavior of districts has centered on political institutions, specifically the party and electoral system. An important alternative hypothesis might point instead to social institutions. In the vein of Coleman (1988), Putnam (1993), and Varshney (2002), the poor public goods outcomes I observed, and even political competition itself, could be attributable to the nature of social institutions rather than political competition. This necessitates a test of the common social capital hypothesis: all else equal, communities in which there is little trust and interaction across groups will be more likely to have worse public goods outcomes.

The trust literature is highly contested, however. Putnam (1993) argued trust is generated in society, while Levi (1996) argued for its roots in political institutions (also Cook, Levi, and Hardin 2009). Varshney (2002) made a strong case for its positive effects on communal relations in India, but critics provide many counter-examples (Berman 1997; Satyanath, Voigtlaender, and Voth 2013; Widner and Mundt 1998). And while key advocates argue that trust leads to better institutions, Greif (2006) argues that it is precisely communities where trust is deficient where we see the development of formal institutions to protect private property. The social capital and trust literatures, therefore, generate opposing expectations as to the sources and the effects of the phenomena so we should approach the hypothesis with agnosticism. Whether we reject or fail to reject the null hypothesis will depend not only on statistical findings but also on the causal explanations this literature provides.

Measures of social capital typically fall into three broad camps (Grootaert and Bastelaer 2001). First, scholars attempt to measure trusting relations with survey questions about perceptions of neighbors and strangers. Second, scholars try to measure participation in community life with civic participation (such as voter turnout), associational activity (such as membership in political and non-political associations), or engagement in public affairs (such as reading newspapers). Third, scholars focus on the nature of communal collective action, such as group provision of community security.

I use data from the 2003 Core Welfare Indicator Questionnaire (CWIQ 2003) survey of 49,005 households. Since the survey was carried out in 2003 it covers the 110 districts in existence at the time, rather than the 170 existing during my research. Although the preferred test would be to include measures of social capital in my main models, this is not possible because of the different periods in which data were collected. I could match districts that were unchanged from 2003 to 2012, but this sample would be biased given the non-random nature of district creation and destruction. Nevertheless, it is possible to test the alternative hypothesis since Ghana had competitive elections in 2000, and because of the stability of electoral competition over time, in which strongholds tend to remain strongholds, and districts that were highly competitive in 2000 largely remain so today. In the models that follow, therefore, I use the 2003 household survey for measures of social capital shown in Table 7.4. The data are visualized in Figure 7.1. Control variables come from the 2000 Census, and summary statistics are shown in the Appendix.

FIGURE 7.1: Mapping social capital

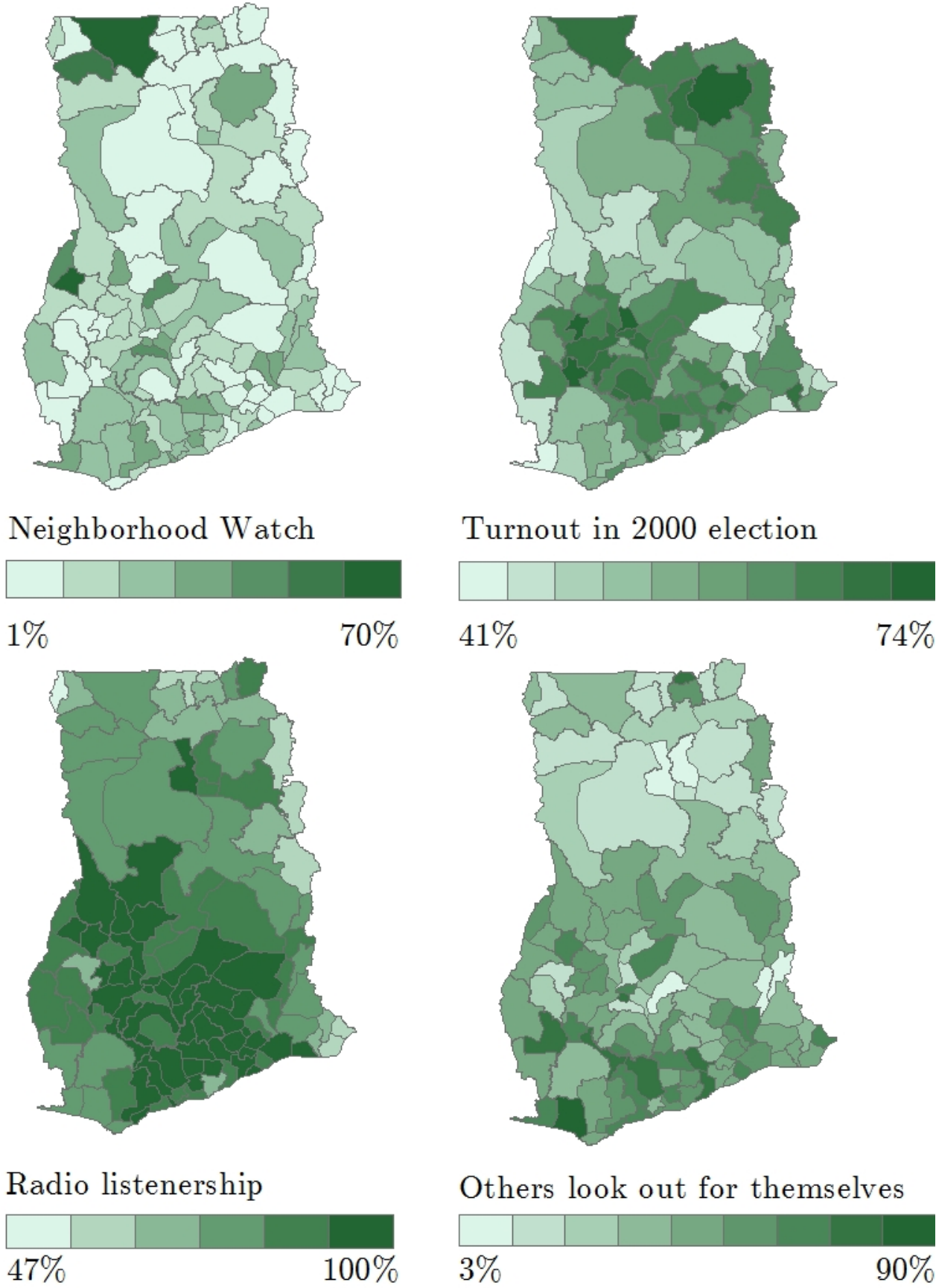


TABLE 7.4: Operationalizing and measuring social capital

Concept	Survey question	Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
<i>General trust</i>	Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful to your household or that they are just looking out for themselves?	Others look out for themselves	110	43.33	18.89	2.5	83.1
<i>Communal relations</i>	Sometimes different groups living in the same area live together peacefully. Other times there is tension and disagreement among different groups. How would you describe your community/neighbourhood these days?	Peaceful groups	110	86.12	11.01	41.1	100
	Do members of your household feel safe walking down your street at night?	Safe to walk ('very' and 'somewhat')	110	93.39	6.99	61.5	100
	What is the major cause of conflict in your community?	Conflict is political	109	2.26	3.95	0	26.9
<i>Civic engagement</i>	How often, if at all, do members of your household read a daily newspaper or have one read to them or listen to the radio?	Listens to radio ('regularly' and 'occasionally')	110	83.05	12.29	46.5	98.3
		Reads newspaper ('regularly' and 'occasionally')	110	18.05	11.42	1.2	51.4
	Turnout in 2000 presidential election	Turnout (2000)	104	62.56	6.22	40.9	73.9
<i>'Bridging' social capital</i>	How common is it for people in this area to marry outside their religion/ethnic group?	Inter-marriage (somewhat common)	110	22.62	13.26	.2	52.9
<i>Collective action</i>	Is there a policing or neighbourhood watch system in your area?	Neighborhood watch	110	18.12	13.61	0.3	68.5

I estimate variations on the following basic model where the dependent variable is generically given as a social capital outcome in district(i):

$$\begin{aligned} SocialCapital_i = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 PoliticalCompetition_i + \beta_2 GeospatialControls_i \\ & + \beta_3 DevelopmentControls_i + \beta_4 DemographicControls_i + \varepsilon_i \end{aligned}$$

In the estimated models reported in Table 7.5, I find that political competition is not associated in either direction with ‘bridging’ social capital in the form of marriage outside of one’s group (model 7), perceptions of safety and communal tension (models 2-3), collective action in the form of neighborhood watch associations (model 8), or civic engagement in the form of voter turnout or newspaper readership (models 6 and 9). Social capital does, however, appear to be related to higher political competition in the following ways. Higher political competition is associated with more general distrust (model 1), more political conflict (model 4) and more civic participation in the form of radio listenership (model 5). The last finding is especially curious. In a Putnamesque world civic-minded actors should trust more *and* participate more. Being engaged in media was theoretically important in Putnam’s Italy and in Tocqueville’s America. On newspapers Tocqueville said “hardly any democratic association can carry on without a newspaper” and Putnam said “newspaper readership is a mark of citizen interest in community affairs” (Putnam 1993, 92). My analysis finds a weak overall relationship between social capital and political competition and what findings do emerge do not fit together in a social capital frame.

In model 1, political competition is robustly associated with perceptions that people look out for themselves. The coefficient on *Margin* is statistically significant at the .05 confidence level. A one unit increase is associated with a .2 unit decrease in the district share of households reporting that “others look out for themselves,” i.e., larger electoral margins are associated with a fewer people believing respondents look out for themselves. Substantively, shifting the explanatory variable along its full range (from the smallest to the largest margin) and holding all else constant is associated with a change in the dependent variable of almost one standard deviation. In other words, highly competitive districts appear to be on average more distrustful than districts with less political competition.

In model 5, however, we see that these same distrusting communities appear to have high levels of civic engagement in the form of radio listenership. Significantly, I control for actual ownership of radios and still I find that higher radio listenership is associated with higher political competition. In model 5 a one unit increase in the explanatory variable is associated with a .08 unit decrease in radio listenership. The coefficient on the electoral margin is statistically significant at the .05 confidence level. Substantively, shifting the explanatory variable along its full range is associated with almost a one standard deviation decrease in the radio listenership, holding all other values at their means. In other words, with larger electoral margins we see decreases in radio listenership.

TABLE 7.5: Regression models for social capital

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
	Others look out for themselves	Peaceful groups	Safe to walk	Conflict is political	Listens to radio	Reads newspaper	Inter- marriage	Neighbor- hood watch	Turnout (2000)
Margin 2000 election	-0.198** (0.081)	0.047 (0.048)	0.040 (0.036)	-0.040** (0.016)	-0.082** (0.033)	0.017 (0.051)	-0.009 (0.056)	-0.048 (0.060)	0.036 (0.035)
Ethnic fractionalization	-2.106 (9.073)	10.915** (5.386)	-0.207 (3.235)	1.248 (2.153)	2.163 (3.660)	3.180 (5.203)	-3.682 (7.873)	-17.431** (7.264)	0.594 (3.350)
Population (2003, log)	-1.353 (4.398)	-7.841*** (2.410)	-1.574 (1.520)	-0.086 (0.729)	-3.983** (1.558)	1.039 (1.907)	1.226 (3.087)	-0.498 (3.489)	-4.254*** (1.346)
% Urban (2000)	0.025 (0.184)	0.130 (0.090)	0.114* (0.064)	-0.022 (0.032)	0.058 (0.068)	-0.052 (0.072)	-0.022 (0.136)	0.150 (0.126)	0.109** (0.043)
District age	1.586 (3.049)			-1.327 (1.351)	0.369 (1.672)				
Dist. region cap. (log)	2.305 (1.686)	1.257 (1.107)	0.242 (0.782)	-0.714** (0.322)	-0.690 (0.494)	-1.497* (0.762)	1.048 (1.284)	-0.588 (1.230)	-0.737* (0.409)
Distance Accra (log)	-4.723 (2.878)	-1.873 (1.972)	-0.898 (1.349)	0.928 (0.689)	-2.621*** (0.915)	-0.924 (1.107)	-0.432 (2.065)	1.871 (2.212)	-1.193 (0.879)
Distance Kumasi (log)	-1.272 (3.042)	-0.712 (1.542)	-1.339* (0.766)	0.339 (0.421)	-4.807*** (1.300)	0.139 (1.011)	-1.399 (1.709)	-1.752 (2.032)	-1.932** (0.826)
Distance mine (log)	-3.560 (2.159)	-3.560*** (1.078)	-0.290 (0.992)	0.313 (0.322)	-0.676 (0.688)	-1.088 (0.705)	0.126 (1.589)	2.416 (1.856)	-0.762 (0.596)
Illiterate (2000)	0.296*** (0.106)	0.037 (0.072)	-0.064 (0.054)	0.032 (0.029)	0.072 (0.052)	-0.114** (0.055)	0.385*** (0.081)	0.128 (0.116)	-0.100** (0.045)
Good wall (2003)	0.305** (0.131)	0.089 (0.082)	-0.152** (0.059)	-0.025 (0.025)	-0.058 (0.054)	0.129* (0.069)	0.044 (0.119)	-0.121 (0.100)	-0.109** (0.053)
Poor roof (2003)	-0.033 (0.105)	0.058 (0.065)	-0.093* (0.052)	-0.020 (0.027)	0.044 (0.047)	-0.085 (0.056)	0.168* (0.096)	-0.121 (0.103)	0.015 (0.051)
Good water (2003)	-0.066 (0.113)	-0.107 (0.069)	-0.040 (0.054)	0.011 (0.018)	0.051 (0.042)	0.116** (0.056)	0.064 (0.099)	0.017 (0.084)	-0.001 (0.038)
Owns radio (2003)					0.602*** (0.092)				
Constant	63.156 (68.380)	192.384*** (35.423)	129.790*** (25.122)	18.647 (25.987)	124.942*** (38.779)	19.672 (25.898)	-8.035 (47.307)	19.383 (49.825)	137.717*** (18.341)
Observations	103	103	103	102	103	103	103	103	103
R^2	0.405	0.278	0.196	0.176	0.718	0.604	0.216	0.165	0.238

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Last, I find higher political competition is associated with political conflict in particular. In model 4, the dependent variable is the district share of respondents who said community conflict is about political differences. A one unit increase in the explanatory variable is associated with a .04 decrease in the dependent variable. The explanatory variable is statistically significant at the .05 confidence level. Shifting the explanatory variable along its full range is associated with a decrease in *Conflict is political* of approximately one standard deviation, holding all other variables at their means. In this model higher political competition is unsurprisingly associated with more political conflict.

Taken together these findings do not provide a convincing case for a social capital explanation. Recall that a direct test of the social capital hypothesis would involve regressing measures of patronage and public goods on social capital, but this is not possible since the data come from two different periods. I therefore examined the relationship between levels of competitiveness and social capital, reasoning that if social capital rather than competitiveness is driving patronage, social capital would likely be correlated with competitiveness. I found that, at a minimum, several of the social capital variables appear unrelated to political competition, so it is unlikely that competition is instead being driven by social capital. At best, where I find relationships between political competition and social capital (for trust, radio listenership and conflict) the data are more consistent with my own theory of political competition than with social capital theory. A social capital theory would predict normatively better outcomes where trust is high and the citizenry is engaged. I find instead that the citizenry is engaged—or at least informed—in the same places where trust is the weakest. Moreover, heightened political competition more readily helps us make sense of reports of heightened political tension.

7.3 The Herbst conjecture: Political topography and weak states

The next major alternative explanation emerges from Africanist social science. It focuses less on local social institutions and more on the quality of center-periphery relations and the ability of rulers to broadcast power over their territory. Herbst (2000) is a prominent proponent of the image of the African state as historically dominant in the center but with weakly radiating power as one moves into the periphery, away from urban centers and the capital city and into small towns and rural areas. For Herbst, low population density meant rulers fought over people and trade routes rather than territory, and so African states before, during and after colonialism tended to under-develop institutions that would enable them to control their territory. The long-term result is the many African states today that are unable to control their people or their territory.

To test the weak states hypothesis, it is important not to misrepresent Herbst's theory. It was not the mere distance from the ruler that mattered for the long-term development of states. Rather, it was that population densities shaped the ability of rulers to develop infrastructure through which they could broadcast power. The topography hypothesis might then be that the nature of local institutions should co-vary with the ability of the center to develop institutional and physical control infrastructures over local actors, which itself will be a function of the isolation and density of those communities. It should also be noted that Herbst did not consider Ghana to be a country with unfavorable geography, but I engage with the hypothesis nonetheless given its prominence in the literature (see for example Fukuyama, 2011 and Nunn, 2008).

We can test the hypothesis with some simple bivariate in the form of t-tests for the difference in means for district competitiveness and geospatial variables of interest. Table 7.6 can be read as follows. The mean distance of all districts to Accra is 258km. The difference in the means for districts where the electoral margin was below 7% (averaged over 2000-12) was -25, but the difference is not statistically significant. The difference in means at the 10% margin was 30km. The correlation coefficient between distance to Accra and the average margin for 2000-12 was -.12, but the correlation

is not statistically significant. Standard errors are shown beneath in parentheses. The significance of these t-tests is to show the general absence of any relationship between highly competitive district and variables that are relevant to the Herbst hypothesis.

TABLE 7.6: T-tests of the Herbst hypothesis

Variable	Mean	7% Margin	10% Margin	Average Margin
Dist. region capital	69	-16.13* (12.119)	2 (10.223)	-0.087
Distance to Accra	258	-25 (38.831)	30 (32.541)	-0.12
Land area (km. sq.)	1,471	-101 (366.279)	183 (307.104)	-0.134
Population density	383	204 (300.328)	126 (252.178)	-0.018

We can also examine these geospatial variables in the context of the multivariate models already estimated. Across multiple models, controls for population factors and isolation were rarely statistically significant predictors for outcomes of interest. Even when they were, so were the coefficients on political competition. What I observed during fieldwork makes these findings unsurprising. Central government not only is aware of the behavior of districts, it is frequently central government actors that provide the means with which districts provide patronage. In one of my research sites, for example, a chief executive told me that the regional Deputy Minister promised him his Ministerial seat in the future in return for the chief executive's help in ensuring that the Deputy Minister would win the upcoming parliamentary election. In the months leading up to the 2012 general election the Deputy Minister provided materials for construction projects to the chief executive, who in turn connected local co-partisans to these resources and ensured they ended up in the 'right' neighborhoods. The behavior was not at the cost of central control over a small rural polity, but rather that central and local actors interact in ways that were mutually beneficial *and* produced perverse governance outcomes.

Conclusion

In the previous chapter I found that higher political competition was associated with the provision of patronage over public goods. In this chapter I examined whether the level of political competition was instead being driven by deeper factors that were unaccounted for thus far. I began with simple difference of means tests which showed that highly competitive districts were not unique in significant ways, such as in their size, age, or levels of poverty. I then examined three prominent hypotheses. First, across multiple measurable outcomes I found that, at a minimum, there is no evidence to suggest that the quality of civil servants is weak relative to other districts. In fact, there is evidence that the administrative service in highly competitive districts may indeed be better qualified relative to other districts. I found that districts with higher political competition were associated with a greater likelihood that key civil servants were not from the region in which they served, were better educated, had more experience in the local government system, and were less likely to have changed jobs following a national election. I also found weak evidence for the social capital and weak states hypotheses. Taken together, I suggest these robustness checks provide compelling evidence that the provision of patronage over public club goods is indeed driven by levels of political competition, and that it is this competition which incentivizes office-holders to invest in their patronage-provision capacity.

Part IV

Conclusion

Chapter 8

States and political competition in comparative perspective

Introduction

This project was motivated by how democratization and decentralization have affected the behavior of states in developing countries in ways that matter to political economists; that is, in their interest and ability to provide inputs to human development. I began by narrowing this broad topic to a more specific research question: how does electoral competition within local government affect the everyday behavior of a state? My answer to that question took me through a discussion of the politicians and bureaucrats who occupy the offices of Ghanaian local government, as well as the active partisans and market traders that provide important insights into how official power worked. What struck me most about those engaging with, through, or against the Ghanaian state was their constraints. Market traders felt powerless to get better services for taxes paid. Bureaucrats felt powerless to cross their political masters even if it meant not doing their duties. Politicians felt hounded by their partisans, while partisans felt powerless to make their patrons govern in their favor. In this chapter, I draw together the main findings and seek to generalize to theory, cases, or both.

I begin with voters, who are constrained by strong parties. The implication of the argument I have developed is that vote buying should be more likely in weakly institutionalized party systems, since the benefits of clientelistic politics are more likely to accrue to voters rather than party workers. I find this relationship exists across a number of African countries: self-reported vote buying is higher in countries with weakly institutionalized party systems. Second, local government ‘Big Men’ are constrained by ‘small boys’ who are the life blood of the party. In reflecting on what this means for our understanding of the importance of Big Men in African politics, I argue for a return to the original meaning of the term, in which Big Men are constrained actors rather than centers of unchecked power.

Third, bureaucrats are constrained less by their own (in)competence or lack of resources, and much more so by the general political environment in which they find themselves. Districts that over-provide patronage and under-provide public goods do not do so due to any administrative weakness. Rather, they build better administrative capacity *in order to* provide patronage. Motivated by this, I conclude with a proposal for a new research agenda focusing on the local state in Africa. Scholarship on development and the state in Africa remains too focused on central government, with local governments often assumed to be politically unimportant and mostly ineffective. I will argue that the skill and competence I found among local government bureaucrats in Ghana is not an outlier in Africa. This research agenda proposes examining local bureaucratic capacity as it actually is, rather than assuming it to be weak, and then situating this knowledge in an understanding of the politically constrained environments in which civil servants work.

8.1 Strong parties and voter (im)mobility

An important step in the causal chain laid out so far has linked strong party systems to low voter mobility between parties, meaning parties only need to buy turnout rather than having to buy turnout *and* the vote choice itself. This implies that in contexts of low party system strength, we should observe higher voter inter-party mobility and more vote buying directly to voters. The role of strong party systems in explaining cross-country differences in vote buying is remarkably absent in extant

literature, which tend to focus on poverty, income inequality, electoral institutions, or bureaucratic capacity. To the best of my knowledge, only Kramon (2013) has identified a link between party system institutionalization and vote buying, though I argue below for an explanation that differs from his.

My hypothesis is that party system institutionalization should be associated with variation in party switching and in vote buying. Looking at data on party switching would not suffice, however, since this kind of behavior is factored in to indices of party system strength, in addition to the fact that such cross-national data are not available in large samples. As an alternative, I examine the relationship between measures of the strength of party systems and self-reported vote buying. The research question is, ‘what explains cross-national variation in vote buying?’ I hypothesize that the strength of the party system is an important determinant.

The dependent variable is clientelism in the form of vote buying. I use two different datasets since small sample sizes mean findings could be sensitive to slight alterations of samples or specifications. The first measure of vote buying comes from survey responses from 50,404 respondents across 29 African countries in the Afrobarometer Survey (Round 5, 2010-2012). The question asked, “During the last national election, how often, if ever did a candidate or someone from a political party offer you something, like food or a gift or money, in return for your vote?” *Gift: Never* is the country average for respondents reporting no such activity. The large survey sample size would allow for estimation with country fixed effects, but the explanatory variable does not vary within countries.

The second measure of vote buying comes from expert opinion data gathered through the Democratic Accountability and Linkages Project (DALP) under Kitschelt (2013). Over 1,400 social scientists and journalists answered questions in 2008 and 2009 relating to specific parties in 88 electoral democracies, including 15 in sub-Saharan Africa. The data of interest include questions on whether parties used non-public goods to attract voters, including consumer goods, selective public benefits, government employment, government contracts, and preferential regulatory schemes. Each good was asked about in a separate question, then summed, giving one score for each party, which

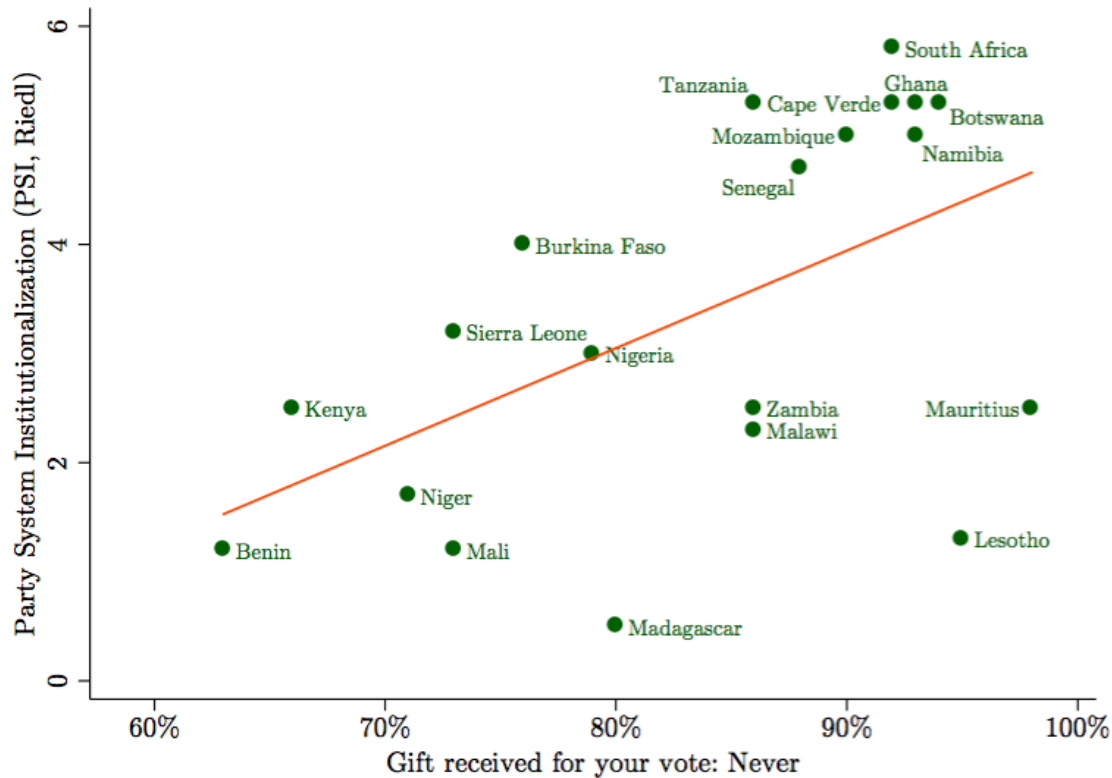
was then weighted for the size of the party. *Vote buying (DALP)* is the average weighted sum of clientelistic vote buying of parties in a country, where higher numbers indicate a greater presence of vote buying.

My main measure of the strength of party systems is *Party System Institutionalization (PSI)* which I produced for 23 African countries above a democracy threshold. Her measure builds on the now standard measure of party system institutionalization of Mainwaring and Scully (1995) and Mainwaring and Torcal (2006). Her *PSI* measure has three components. First, she measures stability in inter-party competition with volatility in presidential and legislative elections. Second, she measures parties' rootedness in society with lower house seats currently held by parties in existence since transition, as well as their average over the parties age. Third, she measures actors' expectation that party competition will persist in the future by scoring the quality of post-transition elections. For 23 countries from their first democratic election through to 2008, Riedl's composite index produces a continuous variable, *PSI*, where higher numbers indicate a more stable and deeply rooted party system, with South Africa the highest and Mali the lowest.

An initial test of the relationship between party system strength and vote buying is suggestive. The strong relationship between the explanatory variable, party system institutionalization, and the dependent variable, vote buying, is shown in the scatterplot in Figure 8.1 ($R^2 = 0.54$). The countries with the highest scores for institutionalized party systems have the largest share of respondents reporting never having received gifts for their votes.

Control variables correspond to the existing literature on cross-national variation in vote buying. First, because of literature associating clientelism with poverty, rural life, and income inequality, I include controls for *Poverty* (headcount ratio at national poverty lines), *Urban* (population living in urban areas), and *GINI* (index for income inequality) (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007, 73, Hicken, 2007, Jensen and Justesen, 2014, and Faughnan and Zechmeister, 2011). Second, *Proportionality* is a continuous variable ranging from single-member districts to highly proportional systems. It is included because clientelism may co-vary with the level of within-district competition between candidates (Persson et al., 2003).

FIGURE 8.1: Scatterplot of party system strength and vote buying



Third, *Bureaucracy* acknowledges research in the tradition of Shefter (1977) which links the pervasiveness of clientelism not to poverty per se, but to the relationship between party and state formation in contexts of under-development. Bustikova and Corduneanu-Huci (2011) find that passed an income threshold, clientelistic goods are “relatively unattractive if the bureaucracy has already established a credible reputation.” I use the *Bureaucratic Quality Index* of the Inter-Country Risk Guide (ICRG) because of its popularity in the field. Last, emerging research has related clientelism and vote buying to the existence of local-level organizations which politicians can buy-off *en masse*, since these organizations and associations essentially solve parties’ collective action problem. Following Holland and Palmer-Rubin (ND) who find a relationship between associational membership and vote buying in Latin America, I use data on active membership in a series of associations from the Afrobarometer Round 3, including religious, professional or business, trade union or farmers association, or community development associations. Summary statistics are shown in Table 8.1.

Table 8.2 presents estimated coefficients from OLS regressions for *Gift: Never* (models 1-4),

TABLE 8.1: Summary statistics for cross-national models

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N	Source
Gift: Never	0.82	0.11	0.58	0.98	29	Afrobarometer 5
Consumer goods	2.88	0.47	1.6	3.34	15	Kitschelt (2013)
Vote buying (DALP)	10.94	1.61	7.78	13.45	15	Kitschelt (2013)
PSI (Riedl)	3.31	1.63	0.5	5.8	23	Riedl (2014)
Type A volatility	17.78	7.49	1.5	25.38	35	Weghorst & Bernhard (2014)
Type B volatility	14.07	3.87	10.56	25.35	35	Weghorst & Bernhard (2014)
Close to party	0.58	0.15	0.26	0.84	28	Afrobarometer 5
Promises	0.38	0.1	0.21	0.57	18	Afrobarometer 3
Urban	38.61	15.74	10.64	85.7	46	World Bank
Proportionality	6.34	11.54	1	51	34	Weghorst & Bernhard (2014)
Poverty	47.82	14.2	19.3	75.3	43	World Bank
Community assoc.	0.14	0.09	0.01	0.36	18	Afrobarometer 3
Religious assoc.	0.41	0.18	0.06	0.62	18	Afrobarometer 3
Professional assoc.	0.06	0.04	0.01	0.14	18	Afrobarometer 3
Trade union	0.11	0.06	0.02	0.25	18	Afrobarometer 3
Bureaucracy	1.09	0.73	0	2	32	ICRG
GINI	44.46	9.30	31.16	65.77	43	World Bank

which is the country share of respondents reporting never receiving gifts in return for their vote in the most recent national election. Controls are added incrementally and in isolation because of the small sample size. In model 5, the dependent variable is the expert score for vote buying from Kitschelt's Democratic Accountability and Linkages Project (DALP). The coefficient on the explanatory variable for the strength of party systems (*PSI*) is statistically significant across all models. In the most parsimonious model (1), the explanatory variable is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. Controlling only for levels of poverty, going from the lowest to the highest score for party system institutionalization is associated with a 22% increase in the share of respondents never receiving a gift for their vote. The estimated coefficient on the explanatory variable is statistically significant when controlling for urban/rural status, proportionality of the electoral system and income inequality (model 2), as well as a measure of bureaucratic capacity (model 3), and of membership in a variety of associations and organizations (model 4). Last, the estimated coefficient is robust to using Kitschelt's *DALP* score for vote buying (model 5).

I also use two other measures of the strength of party systems for robustness. First, Weghorst and Bernhard (2014) distinguish between two types of stability in party systems. *Type A volatility* measures system volatility from the entry and exit of parties from one election to the next. *Type B volatility* measures system volatility due to varying electoral fortunes from one election to the next.

TABLE 8.2: Regression models for election gifts (1)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Gift: Never	Gift: Never	Gift: Never	Gift: Never	Vote buying (DALP)
PSI (Riedl)	0.042*** (0.013)	0.039* (0.020)	0.040** (0.018)	0.078** (0.027)	-0.297* (0.145)
Poverty	0.001 (0.001)	0.002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)	0.021 (0.027)
Urban		0.000 (0.002)	0.003 (0.002)	-0.005 (0.002)	-0.052* (0.027)
Proportionality		-0.002 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.021 (0.026)
GINI		0.005** (0.002)			
Bureaucracy			0.042 (0.038)		
Community assoc.				0.844 (0.570)	
Religious assoc.				0.143 (0.114)	
Professional assoc.				-1.572 (1.181)	
Trade union				-1.666** (0.615)	
Constant	0.624*** (0.102)	0.392** (0.151)	0.447** (0.148)	0.813*** (0.204)	13.210*** (1.957)
Observations	19	19	16	16	13
R^2	0.399	0.556	0.652	0.779	0.685

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Their unit of analysis is the election dyad, across which volatility is measured. Their data comes from all elections held in sub-Saharan Africa since independence, where two multi-party elections were held consecutively without interruption, giving them 141 observations in 41 countries. Their measure of general volatility follows the standard Pedersen (1979) approach, which uses parties varying legislative seat shares, but *Type A volatility* includes parties that held seats in only one of the two election dyads, while *Type B volatility* includes only parties that held seats in both. The significance of this distinction will become apparent when I discriminate between alternative hypotheses. Second, as a final measure of party strength, I include Afrobarometer Round 5 survey responses to the question, “Do you feel close to any particular political party?” This question (*Close to party*) is included because it is reasonable to suggest that respondents are less likely to profess strong feelings for parties in systems that are weakly institutionalized.

The estimated relationship between party system strength and vote buying is also robust to using another specification of the explanatory variable. Table 8.3 reports estimated coefficients from OLS regressions for vote buying. In models 1-4, the explanatory variable of interest is two types of system institutionalization from Weghorst and Bernhard (2014). *Type A* and *Type B volatility* are not statistically related to vote buying using Afrobarometer survey data (models 1-2). In models 3-4 using *DALP* data, however, we see that the effect on *Vote buying* is twice as large for *Type B* than it is for *Type A*, albeit on a small sample. In model 3, a one standard deviation change in *Type A* is associated with approximately a one-quarter of one standard deviation change in *Vote buying*, but in model 4 a one standard deviation change in *Type B* is associated with a two-third change in dependent variable, holding all other variables at their means.

This finding is significant because, in the only other study I found that links party system strength to vote buying (Kramon, 2013, 72), the relationship is interpreted using an informational logic. For Kramon, politicians in weakly institutionalized party systems use cash handouts because they are otherwise unable to signal the credibility of their electoral promises. While I find the same positive relationship between weak party systems and vote buying, my explanation is different. Were voters unable to determine the credibility of candidate promises, *Type A volatility*, which captures newly created parties, should be related to vote buying, since voters have no information about the intentions of new parties. But *Type A* is actually associated with more negative reports of vote buying and better expert scores in the *DALP* dataset. We actually observe a much larger effect of *Type B volatility*, which measures volatility in the performance of parties between elections. The relationship is also robust to controlling for responses to survey questions about the credibility of politicians' promises (not shown).

In models 5-6 I use *Close to party* as a different measure of the strength of party systems. In model 5, higher shares of respondents reporting feeling close to a political party is associated with higher shares reporting never receiving an electoral gift, though the relationship is not statistically significant. In model 6, the effect of *Close to party* on *Vote buying* is negative and statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, with higher shares of self-reported closeness to parties associated

with lower *Vote buying*. Substantively, a one standard deviation change in *Close to party* is associated with almost half of one standard deviation change in *Vote buying*, holding all else constant. The relationship holds when controlling for views on the credibility of politicians' promises (model 7), and indeed the estimated coefficient is larger.

TABLE 8.3: Regression models for election gifts (2)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Gift: Never	Gift: Never	Vote buying (DALP)	Vote buying (DALP)	Gift: Never	Vote buying (DALP)	Vote buying (DALP)
Type A volatility	0.000 (0.002)		-0.085* (0.037)				
Type B volatility		-0.014 (0.008)		0.335* (0.175)			
Close to party					0.187 (0.198)	-4.993** (2.033)	-8.111** (3.037)
Urban	0.002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)	-0.041 (0.034)	-0.058* (0.026)	0.003 (0.002)	-0.104** (0.037)	-0.120** (0.047)
Proportionality	0.002** (0.001)	0.002* (0.001)	-0.032 (0.024)	-0.017 (0.024)	0.001 (0.001)	-0.006 (0.028)	0.023 (0.037)
Poverty	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.001)	0.070** (0.030)	0.032 (0.021)	0.000 (0.002)	0.008 (0.025)	-0.028 (0.041)
Promises							5.017 (3.116)
Constant	0.783*** (0.108)	0.949*** (0.130)	11.296*** (2.666)	7.726** (2.625)	0.590** (0.250)	17.572*** (2.999)	19.413*** (3.985)
Observations	23	23	13	13	23	13	12
R^2	0.216	0.314	0.767	0.741	0.273	0.734	0.758

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

These data point to a relationship in the hypothesized direction between the strength of party systems and the prevalence of vote buying. While the data do not allow for a nuanced test of forms of vote buying, specifically vote buying versus turnout buying, I argue that there is merit in the argument linking party strength to voter mobility. More generally, the findings suggest the need for expanded research on the links between party system institutionalization and the quality of government, including the forms and pervasiveness of clientelism.

8.2 ‘Big Men’ and the agency of ‘small boys’

To a visitor at a district assembly, chief executives look like the archetypal ‘Big Men’ that are a recurrent character in Africa’s political history. These figures monopolize resources and act as bottlenecks in local development. Many of these “decentralized despots” grew in stature during the indirect rule of the colonial period (Mamdani, 1996), though Big Man Rule could be found in much of Africa before colonialism (Vansina, 1990, 2004). Their power is rooted not only in strong executive powers but also in dense webs of dependents beneath them (Medard, 1996). The term is usually used in the context of overly-strong presidents, but its use is not restricted to holders of national offices (Daloz, 2003). A person who is fortunate to have access to a Big Man may enjoy the privileges of state, so long as they remain consistent in their displays of loyalty. In this respect, a Big Man is akin to a patron in comparative politics, though in the African context a Big Man is also one who can act above or outside the law, and the term is often understood in familial or kinship terms (Nugent, 1995; van Cranenburgh, 2008; Diamond, 2008; Schatzberg, 2001).

The ability of Big Men to survive and thrive is often interpreted in terms of his rootedness in social organization: “Political actors in Africa do not respond to the incentive structures provided by economic and governance reform efforts, because their rationality—and thus strategic action—is embedded in *personalistic relations* of reciprocity” (Hyden, 2006, 114, emphasis added). I suggest that Big Men are more constrained than is often acknowledged and that, contrary to Hyden, these constraints are variable with respect to incentives that are shaped by political, rather than personal, phenomena. An important finding to emerge in Chapter 4 was how constrained incumbents in highly

competitive districts felt by their activist supporters. Many of the Big Men I knew would be surprised to learn that social scientists thought of them as unchecked centers of power. The discourse of Big Men elides the agency of ‘small boys,’ the party activists whom I introduced in this dissertation.

In making this argument, I refer back to the work of Sahlins (1963), one of the originators of the Big Man concept. In his work on Pacific island societies, Sahlins explained that a Big Man’s authority comes from his personal power, which is amassed first and foremost by his ability to command a following. But he also noted the frailty of the Big Man’s power, because his followers must constantly be compensated. The ‘Melanesian contradiction’ arises when the Big Man accumulates debts to his growing ranks of followers, yet remits less and less to them in order to sustain his newly acquired social status. My charge is not that Africanist political science has mis-applied Sahlins’ ideas, but that contemporary Africanist political scientists have drifted too far from its original meaning. My modest aim is to rekindle our understanding of Big Men as powerful actors with meaningful constraints, thereby returning the term back to its original and proper use.

8.3 A research agenda for the contemporary state in Africa

Imagine a friend is about to travel to a country in sub-Saharan Africa for the first time. Your friend is generally well read, but has no experience in, or knowledge about, the sub-continent. They ask you to recommend five books to help them understand how politics in Africa works. What five would you recommend? Of the five, how many are on local governance? This simple thought experiment is meant to illustrate a point: whether the state is decentralized or deconcentrated, local government is the face of the state for most Africans, yet our core ideas about African states have not kept up with this reality.¹ The research presented in this dissertation shows that local governance is worthy of study, but that it is also much more complex than the dominant weak states model might suggest. I found local civil servants to be skilled and respected by office holders as well as those in opposition. If a market was dirty, if a streetlight had no bulbs, it was insufficient to say ‘local government is weak.’ I conclude this dissertation by proposing a new research agenda that is motivated by these

¹This thought experiment was proposed to me by Michael Schatzberg.

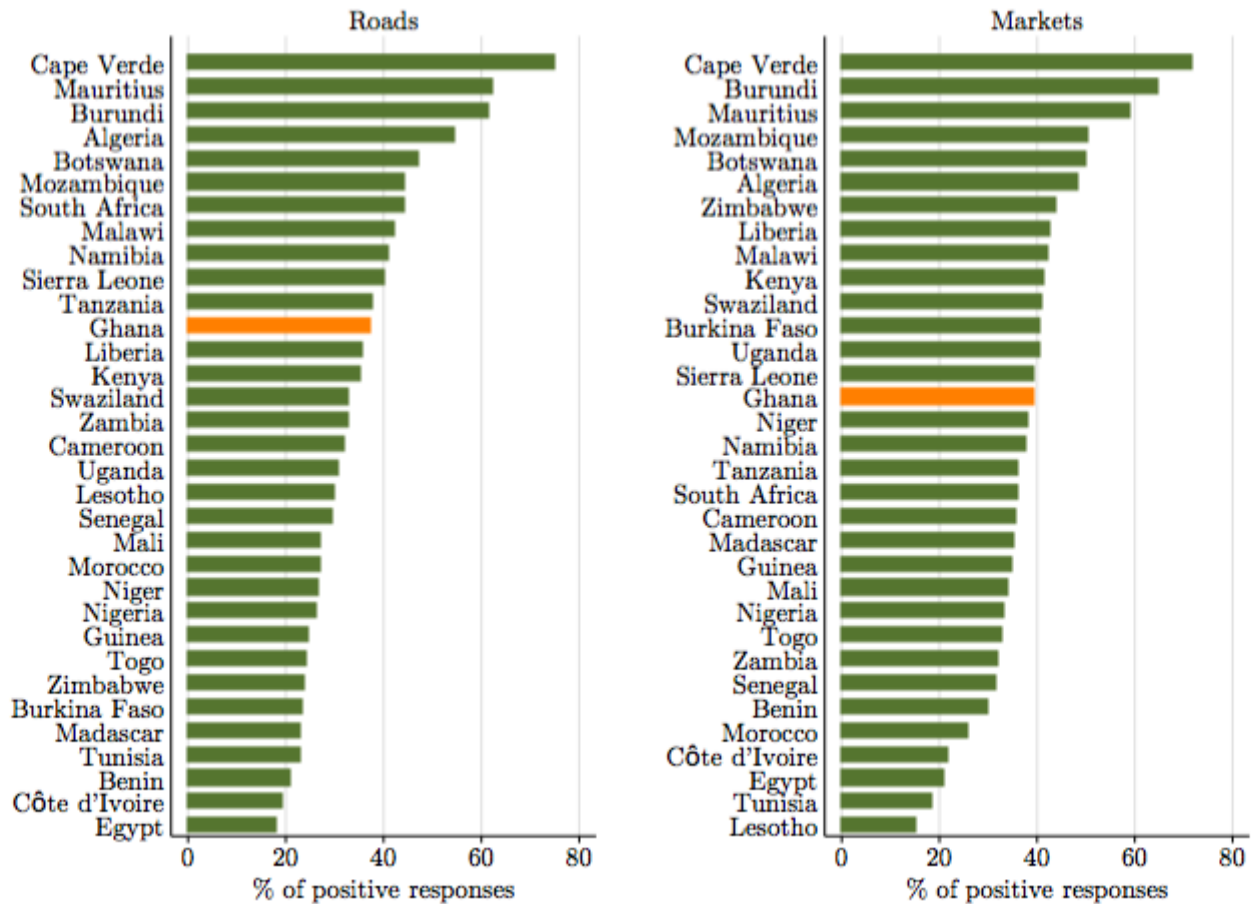
two factors: first, that African states have become de-centered and scholarship must keep up; second, that failures in local government cannot be easily explained away by invoking long-standing ideas about ineffective African states.

It is possible, of course, that the high levels of competence I found among local civil servants is unique to Ghana. Were this the case, there would be few generalizable lessons to draw. One of the major lacunae in research on local governance in Africa is the dearth of comparable cross-national survey research of the sort I undertook in Ghana. This means one cannot easily compare the quality of local civil servants in Ghana to its neighbors. Nevertheless, available cross-national data suggest that Ghana is no outlier. Figure 8.2 shows responses from 50,405 people in 33 sub-Saharan African countries to survey questions about satisfaction with local government services. Ghana is clearly an ‘average’ country in this respect.

Were Ghana an exceptional case, one might reasonably expect that its local government would be generally better than that of its neighbors. But these data suggest that it is not. This raises the possibility, therefore, that under-performing local governments in other parts of Africa may not be driven by weak capacity, but by something else entirely. This opens up new avenues for scholarly inquiry, which begins by refining the concept of state capacity rather than discarding it.

Social scientists have identified the importance of state capacity for its direct effects on economic growth (Evans and Rauch, 1999; De Haan and Warmerdam, 2012; Besley and Persson, 2010; Bates, 2008a; Dincecco and Katz, 2012), as well as its indirect effects on economic and human development through its effects on violence and political order (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Hendrix and Young, 2012; Straus, 2006; De Juan and Pierskalla, 2014; Fjelde and De Soysa, 2009; Sobek, 2010), and on representation, democratization, or democracy itself (Linz and Stepan, 1996; Fortin, 2012; Andersen et al., 2014). Although I began my research with an interest in the concept, I found it to be an unhelpful explanatory tool for understanding what local governments were doing. State capacity mattered in the sense that many civil servants were poorly equipped and district offices were not optimally organized, but these weak state effects were symptomatic rather than causal. I found that districts with the most qualified bureaucrats were precisely those that provided the most patronage.

FIGURE 8.2: Satisfaction with local government across Africa



Note: Data from Afrobarometer Round 5 (2011-13). Respondents were asked “What about local government? I do not mean the national government. I mean your Metropolitan, Municipal or District Assembly. How well or badly would you say your local government is handling the following matters, or haven’t you heard enough about them to say: Maintaining local market places/roads?” The graph shows positive responses, which combines ‘fairly well’ and ‘very well’ responses. $N=50,405$.

In these districts, public goods were absent not because of some generalized state *incapacity*. Indeed, governing capacity was crafted in order to provide non-public goods. It is on this basis that I suggest the value of state capacity as a causal force is easily over-emphasized. Rather than discard the concept, however, I argue for greater focus on one specific dimension of state capacity—*political capacity*—which is the salient form of capacity that contemporary developing states need to develop (Weiss, 2000).

State capacity is the ability of a state to formulate and implement policies throughout its

territory. Most definitions rely on Mann's (1984) classic distinction between a state's despotic and infrastructural power.² Contemporary states have shifted from rule by despotism to rule through infrastructural power, however, so the despotic state category is of marginal analytic value (Foucault, 1977; Giddens, 1985).³ In Polity IV's data for 2013, for example, only 4% of states had executives that ruled without constraints, and none of these were in sub-Saharan Africa.

A more relevant disaggregation of state capacity is of the different dimensions of infrastructural capacity. Although it is often over-looked, Mann acknowledged that infrastructural capacity has two faces (Mann, 1993; Soifer and vom Hau, 2008). I call the first the *bureaucratic capacity* of the state, including the ability of state leaders to control qualified and materially well resourced officials. The second is the *political capacity* of the state, which is a state's ability to monitor and regulate bodies and assets. This capacity exists in relations between the state and non-state actors. Scholars often focus on one of these to the exclusion of the other. A focus on meritocratic bureaucracies tells us little about the ability of those bureaucracies to penetrate society (Brautigam, 2008), while a focus on the state's reach through its territory tells us little about what the state is able to do in remote villages and hilltop forts (Fearon and Laitin, 2003).

The bureaucracy is the governing technology of the state.⁴ It is comprised of the non-political officials of the state as well as the organizational resources that make their work possible, such as phones, cars, guns, railways, or outposts. *Bureaucratic capacity* is the quantity and quality of state officials and their material resources, including their spatial spread. This encapsulates two elements of states that scholars often treat distinctly: the quality of the bureaucrats and the spatial reach of the state. The capacity of a state is enhanced as much by having a drone capability as it is by having a rocket scientist who can maintain it. Both are important.

²Mann said despotic power is "the range of actions which the [state] elite is empowered to undertake without routine, institutionalized negotiation with civil society groups," and infrastructural power is "the capacity of the state actually to penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm" (113).

³Mann would agree. He thought a despotic state is not simply one that is brutal, but one that is *arbitrary* and in which the state elite does not need to engage or consider the views of non-state actors. A despotic state was one with an unconstrained executive, which is why "the exercise of despotic power is a sign of a weaker state" (353). The utility of Mann's notion of despotic power is thus in its historical applications—in helping us think comparatively about the power of the ancient Akkadians, Assyrians or Romans.

⁴A technology refers to the intentional use of knowledge to produce something or to change how something is produced.

Political capacity is the ability of a state to monitor and regulate bodies and assets.⁵ States may do this directly, as Scandinavian countries did with eugenics programs in the 1930s, or the Chinese state has done with its one-child policy. Or states may use intermediaries like slave owners, chambers of commerce, or religious authorities. Crucially, states cannot build significant political capacity without some negotiation with social actors, which is why increases in bureaucratic power lead to decreases in despotic power (Scott et al., 2002; Acemoglu, 2005; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012). State officials would like to read your bank account and watch you talk to your children over breakfast, but they find it very hard to do so in the absence of quasi-voluntary compliance (Levi, 1988).⁶

Once non-state actors allow for state monitoring and regulation of their domains—their children, slaves, tenants, customers, or employees—both the state and the economy may grow given appropriate use of public investments (Bates, 2008a; Rodrik, 2011). This was true in the Industrial period, where constrained executives were able to mobilize resources to invest in public goods like impermeable borders, public universities, health technologies, or insurance markets, as well as among states that developed their economies over the past half century, who were able to coordinate actors, provide solutions to market failures, and thereafter continued to innovate and engage in creative destruction (Schumpeter, 1942; Weiss, 1998; Evans, 1996; Ostrom, 1996).

Political capacity is important for sustaining such gains. States have experienced declines in their capacity either because the institutions that underpinned state-society relations were personalized rather than institutionalized (van de Walle and Bratton, 1997; Jackson and Rosberg, 1982a; Posner and Young, 2007), or they did not provide for institutional evolution, innovation, or creative destruction (Adams, 2005), or because those with the power to disrupt order were excluded from enjoying rents (Khan, 2010, 2005; Parks and Cole, 2010; North et al., 2007). The last factor is crucial in many developing countries, where non-state elites block state access to bodies and assets. Thus,

⁵The term is similar to the usage by Grindle (1996), but distinct from the term as used by Thies (2010), whose measure is actually a measure of revenue extractive capacity, as well as Cummings and Norgaard (2004), whose measure includes internal administrative relations.

⁶Note, for example, that public opinion data suggest that the one-child policy is overwhelmingly supported by the Chinese public (Pew, 2008).

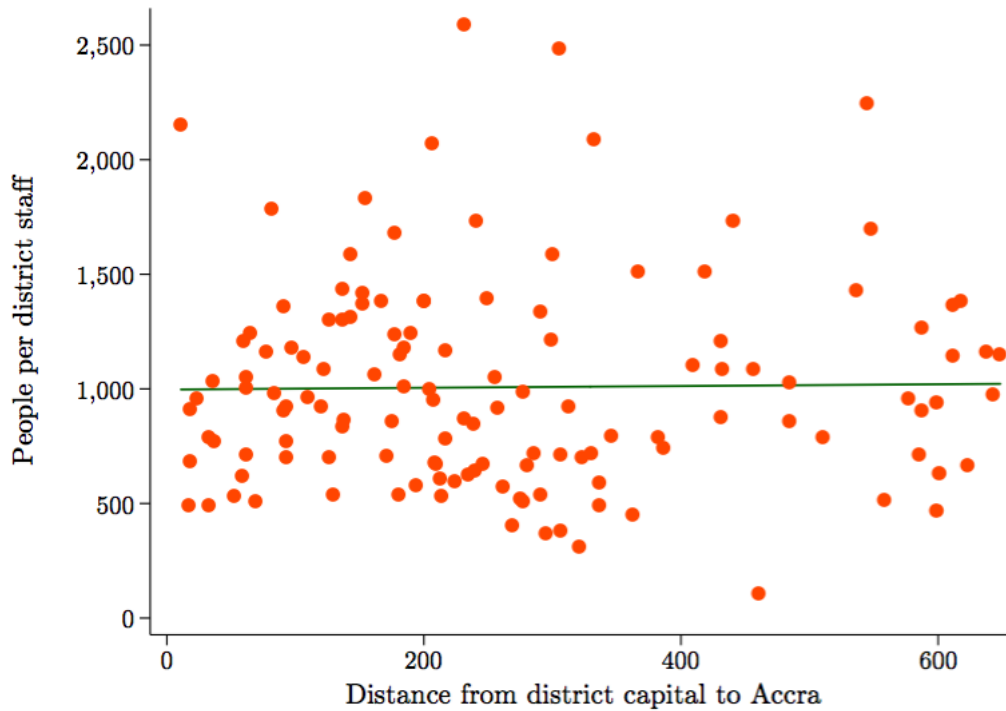
political capacity is best understood as a set of distinct equilibria rather than as a linear phenomena (Kang, 2003; Booth and Cammack, 2013).

What keeps weak states weak is the logic of their political equilibrium: the non-state sector may wish for public inputs, but doing so requires an enhanced penetrative power by the state in order for it to raise revenue, fund investments, coordinate behavior, and punish free riders. State leaders would like such an enhanced penetrative power, but non-state actors will not voluntarily grant it because they believe (probably correctly) that it will enhance the incumbent's welfare at their expense. It is akin to the Stag Hunt in game theory, in which both actors can elevate their welfare by cooperating, but mistrust leads to persistent sub-optimal outcomes.

How, then, might this research agenda think about how electoral competition affects *political capacity* in contexts of clientelism and low productivity? Competitive electoral politics may matter in two ways. First, it may incentivize zero-sum, divisive, and exclusionary modes of politics, the result of which is the under-provision of public goods. Second, it may decrease the willingness to be exposed to state authority among voters who are primary witnesses to such electoral politics. Competitive electoral politics may thus causally impact states by shaping citizens' willingness to be monitored or controlled.

In Ghana's basic political equilibrium, one party holds exclusive control of the state, yet elections are sufficiently fair and closely fought to sustain the opposition's engagement even if they are otherwise excluded from state rents. The consequence is that although a given government may improve bureaucratic capacity, perhaps by raising the entrance standards to the civil service, they find it much harder to enhance their political capacity by doing things like improving their revenue extraction ability. Recall the budget officer in Chapter 5 who wished to make legible district wealth through a grand asset census, but was prevented from doing so by his political master. The state's constraint was the politicians, not its agents. As I documented in Chapter 5, the state has reasonably well qualified and competent staff who are present throughout the territory. Figure 8.3 plots district staff against distance from the capital. Each dot is a district. The state's constraint is not in any failure to be present throughout the realm.

FIGURE 8.3: Spatial presence of the central state



Rather than bureaucratic capacity, the Ghanaian state's core deficiency is weak political capacity. It lacks it because of formal institutions like highly competitive electoral politics, and because of informal institutions, such as clientelism, which incentivizes patronage over public goods provision. The roots of this particular equilibrium can be found in the state building impulses in the 1980s. As I detailed in Chapter 2, the system of local government was originally an attempt to rebuild the state by extending its reach into the countryside after repeated economic and political crises in the 1970s and 1980s. Decentralization was to increase the state's capacity by posting its officials to remote areas, and by making those officials beholden to the central government rather than to local people (Olowu et al., 2004). The state was engaged in what Althusser called the process of 'primitive political accumulation' that is always at the heart of state formation, which is a phase "during which the means of coercion and extraction are expropriated from autonomous and private powerholders through their subordination or incorporation into central state bureaucracies and conversion into paid public servants" (Sidel, 1999, 18. Also Khan, 2005 and Brenner, 1982.) Primitive political accumulation was the logic behind the creation of the local government system in 1980s, in which

a local government system was intended to incorporate local elites into a system ultimately controlled by the center. In the late 1980s, the Ghanaian state emerged from economic disaster having developed a particular type of capacity relevant to its survival: a distributive apparatus skilled at delivering patronage.

But the kinds of political concessions required for it to become skilled in delivering public goods did not emerge. Rawlings' state was reliant, as it is now, on non-state actors to collect information and to regulate bodies and assets. Consider, for example, historical struggles by Ghanaian presidents to weaken the power of powerful Akan chiefs (Rathbone, 2002). The government is still reliant on these non-state actors for access to their land and to their people. It is interesting to note that no map of chieftaincy boundaries has actually been attempted in Ghana for more than a half century.⁷ Chiefs are a tremendously important force in social, political and economic life, but the Ghanaian state has been unable to codify or regulate their spheres of power. Consider also how national governing and opposition elites rely on low-level party workers and volunteers for information on neighborhood and village-level events. It is significant that the two main parties actually have more levels of functioning governance than the state itself. The eyes and ears of Ghanaian central government are not local state officials; they are neighborhood- and village-level non-state actors.

The state relies on such non-state actors for information and enforcement because the zero-sum manner in which official power is wielded generates too much opposition and too little quasi-voluntary compliance. Actors know the state serves supporters of the incumbent, so they avoid official attempts at codification or monitoring of their bodies or assets. Electoral competition matters here because it incentivizes returns to such zero-sum politics. The challenge for such political systems is not incremental improvements in civil service merit. Rather, the challenge is a political one: breaking out of a low capacity equilibrium so non-state actors can be better controlled by a state apparatus they so wisely avoid.

⁷Author interview, 8/2/2010.

Appendix A

Summary statistics

TABLE A.1: Summary statistics for district assemblies

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N	Note
District Age	8.23	8.16	2	22	170	District age
Area (Km. Sq., Land)	6.9	0.9	3.1	9.2	170	District land area in km. sq., logged
Distance to Kumasi (log)	5.	0.9	0	6.3	170	Distance to Kumasi
Distance to Mine (log)	4.7	1.1	0	6.3	170	Distance to nearest major mine
Distance to Accra (log)	5.3	0.9	0	6.5	170	Distance to capital city

TABLE A.2: Summary statistics for demographics and welfare

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N	Note
Population (2010, log)	11.7	0.5	10.8	14.5	170	
Urban (2010)	35.9	24.1	0	100	170	
Ethnic Fractionalization (2010)	0.41	0.21	0.02	0.82	170	
Illiterate (2010)	32.2	18.4	7.12	79.67	170	% population illiterate
No Toilet (2010)	30.732	29.567	2.84	93.27	170	% Households with no toilet or latrine
Electricity (2010)	51.4	21.2	8.28	94.35	170	% Households with electricity
Cocoa Dummy	0.28	0.45	0	1	170	At least 20% of respondents plant cocoa (2005)
Crop value per capita (log, Ghana Cedi)	6	1.3	0.69	7.98	168	2010 value of crops excl. cocoa

Note: 2010 data is Census 2010. Cocoa data is from 2005 Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS 5). Crop data is from Ministry of Agriculture (2010).

TABLE A.3: Summary statistics for social capital models

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N	Note
Ethnic fractionalization	0.41	0.2	0.1	0.8	110	
Population (2003)	187,857	237,319	49,253	1,818,050	110	
% Urban (2000)	30.02	21.75	0	100	109	
Distance Accra	249.23	167.84	1	638	110	
Distance Kumasi	198.87	127.52	1	509	110	
Distance mine	174.39	136.21	1	505	110	Distance to nearest major mine
Illiterate (2000)	43.66	17.42	12	87	110	% share of district population illiterate
Good wall (2003)	30.22	23.42	0.70	92.60	110	% of households with concrete walls
Poor roof (2003)	24.27	24.58	0	90.3	110	% of households with mud or thatch roofs
Good water (2003)	30.61	26.01	0	99.5	110	% of households with outdoor tap, piped, or vendor water

Note: 2003 data is from Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ 2003). 2000 data is from Census 2000.

Appendix B

Description of district assembly dataset

I built an original dataset of district assembly correlates. My unit of analysis is the district assembly, of which there were 170 for the period under study. Data are cross-sectional and, where possible and relevant, are time-series. The dataset covers two major types of data:

1. Data on districts
 - (a) Objective data, such as staff size, from original survey
 - (b) Subjective (opinion) data of district personnel from original survey
 - (c) District fiscal data
2. Data on districts generally
 - (a) Demographic (population, urbanization, etc.)
 - (b) Political/administrative (electoral)
 - (c) Geospatial (distances)
 - (d) Wealth and welfare (development, agricultural output, etc.)

In Section 1 I present the data on the internal characteristics of districts, which presents my district assembly survey. In Section 2 I present the data on district characteristics.

Data on districts

B.0.1 Survey of district assembly politicians and bureaucrats

The centerpiece of the dataset is an original survey of district assembly politicians and bureaucrats that, to the best of my knowledge, is the most comprehensive survey of local government officials conducted in sub-Saharan Africa. The survey was piloted and implemented country-wide between May and August 2012.

Survey design

The survey is more accurately called a census, since it targeted the universe of districts, but since I use inferential statistical techniques common to sampling methodologies, I refer to it here as a survey. The purpose of the survey was to collect objective and subjective data on districts. This includes objective matters such as the size of district assembly staff, and subjective matters such as the incumbent's perception of the quality of her civil servants.

Each instrument was comprised of six separate surveys, one each for the chief executive (elected head of the district assembly), coordinating director (head civil servant), presiding member of the assembly (elected), finance officer, human resources/personnel officer, and revenue officer (tax collector). The survey instruments were developed after six months of fieldwork, and in concert with informants in six case study districts and the Ministry of Local Government. The survey was pre-tested and then implemented countrywide between May and August 2012. The survey instruments are provided in the Appendix.

Hiring researchers

I needed to physically transmit surveys to, and then collect from, each of 170 districts. With a limited budget and a poor transportation network, hiring researchers at my base in Kumasi and sending them out to remote districts was not feasible. It was also unfeasible to use Ghana's postal system. Not only is it highly unreliable, but I knew from my qualitative research at districts that, unless a researcher was physically present to provide and collect a questionnaire, it would simply be ignored.

Given these constraints, I combined a snowball sampling technique with social media to hire over two hundred research assistants. I took advantage of a pre-existing network of university graduates engaged in public service work in every district in the country. These graduates were employed through the state National Service program, a mandatory two-year posting to entry-level government positions for all of the country's university graduates. They number in the tens of thousands and are placed in schools and government offices throughout the country. The National Service personnel I knew were intelligent, motivated and, crucially for me, bored and underpaid. They were also tech-savvy. All had smart phones and used social media.

I realized that if I could tap into this network, I could hire a very large number of assistants for two to three days of data gathering. I attempted to build a nationwide network of research assistants by first asking the 20 or so National Service personnel that I knew to recommend National Service personnel in other districts, and to see if those personnel could recommend personnel in yet another district. This 'two degrees of separation' method was important because I did not have the resources to employ a survey firm or to personally implement the survey. The method ensured that the many research assistants I hired would be trustworthy, since they were connected to me through a friend that we both had in common. After only a few days, I had contacted interested National Service personnel in every district in my region, all of whom were connected to me through a social network. Confident that the technique would work, in May 2012 I started to develop my complete nationwide network.

Because I was attempting large-N data gathering with limited resources, I could not meet most of my research assistants. An obvious principal-agent problem arose, because I could not ensure that work would be carried out as requested. I built several mechanisms into my hiring and management process to deal with this principal-agent problem. A research assistant had to do the following in order to be hired:

1. **Add me on Facebook.** Facebook is hugely popular among Ghanaian university graduates, and I did not meet any without an account. Asking the research assistant to add me achieved two things. First, being my friend on Facebook helped research assistants become more comfortable with me. They could view my pictures and we chatted online about my research. This helped us overcome basic trust issues, since the majority of my researchers never met me in person. Second, it helped to ensure that the researcher to whom I would eventually be sending money was a real person, and it added further social pressure to ensure work would be carried out.
2. **Recommend National Service personnel** in two other districts. This was intended to expand my network. The advantage of this technique in Ghana is that most graduates attended one of only a few universities, and thereafter were dispersed throughout the country for their public service. These dispersed networks maintained long-distance friendships through mobile phones and social media, so building my network in this way proceeded quickly. I also provided cash incentives to researchers who could recommend personnel beyond the minimum required. This also proved very effective, as a small number of my researchers were exceptionally well-connected to significant numbers of graduates through university social clubs.
3. **Agree to complete two tasks**, which I explained in a detailed memo by email and by phone. First, they printed and submitted a survey to the district assembly. Second, while the district assembly was completing the survey, researchers completed the *Area Profile Survey*, which asked basic questions about easily observable district characteristics. The *Area Profile Survey* was an important exercise, because it enabled me to collect independent data on district characteristics without relying on (likely biased) data from official sources. The *Area Profile Survey* took advantage of the fact that my network of well-educated National Service personnel would have a week or so in between distributing and collecting the district's survey, as well as the fact that National Service personnel were well-traveled domestically and thus could comparatively assess the condition of infrastructure like government buildings. Last, the *Area Profile Survey* exercise took advantage of the fact that so many data of interest in Ghana are easily observable yet extremely difficult to gather in a nationally comprehensive way, such as the strength of mobile phone or radio signals in the district capital, the number of internet cafes, or the frequency of electricity outages. These data could serve as useful correlates for the behavior of districts. They required no interviews or requests for official information.
4. **Agree to be paid by phone**, either in phone credit or in a direct cash transfer. I used the mobile payment services of the main phone operators to pay all researchers, meaning no in-person meeting was ever required. Mobile banking was the key to this strategy for building a research team, since I could not otherwise pay for work. It even allowed me to keep the research going while I was hospitalized with malaria.

Within three weeks I had hired over 200 National Service personnel located in the capital of almost every district in the country. This was above the number necessary to cover the 170 districts because I hired more than one researcher in a randomly sampled 5% of districts. This was in order to validate the data research assistants were collecting through the *Area Profile*, the observational survey the research assistant (not the district assembly) was to answer. Importantly, I told *every* research assistant that a second researcher had also been hired in their district but that they would not be identified to one another. I explicitly told my research assistants that all of the data I received would be compared to that of the other research assistant, even though in most districts I only hired one research assistant.

I managed all researchers from my base in Kumasi by mobile phone, email and Facebook. Since I was attempting to carry out a nationally representative survey for under \$10,000, I devoted all of my resources to research assistant pay as well as printing and travel allowances for those researchers that had to take expensive trips to remote market places. Ultimately, my network of researchers allowed me to cover 167 of the 170 districts.¹

Official endorsement

One of the main constraints for social scientists collecting large-N subnational data in developing countries is access. Even if logistical problems can be overcome, government officials are often unwilling to spend time completing questionnaires unless told to do so. To combat this constraint, I had built up contacts within the Ministry of Local Government over several preliminary fieldwork trips, and by 2012 I had built a relationship with the Deputy Minister of Local Government. This took several years because I had no contacts upon arriving in Ghana for the first time. Over several trips, however, I built a relationship which I maintained through Facebook while back in the US. This relationship was crucial in achieving a very high response rate of 88%.

Ghana has undergone a slow decentralization process over the past 25 years, and even the central government often lacks basic data on local government facilities and activities. I knew that a survey without an official letter would not only have a low response rate, but many officials would not respond to a survey without an authorizing letter. To gain the support of the Ministry of Local Government, therefore, I offered to use my research skills and my own funding to gather data that even the Ministry did not have. For the Ministry the survey exercise would be relatively costless: I asked only for a letter from the Deputy Minister asking (not instructing) district officials to consider participating in the data-gathering exercise.

In a letter sent by the Ministry (shown in Appendix), the Deputy Minister informed each district that the government did not seek any personal or identifying information from respondents. This point was important because I was concerned that respondents might either self-censor or exaggerate if they felt their responses would be reviewed by the Ministry. The letter was transmitted to every district assembly using the official wire service. It gave advance warning that the district would soon receive a survey, delivered either through the mail or in-person by a research assistant hired by me. The surveys would contain no identifying information such as the district's name. Districts were instructed to identify only their region in their response. They were assured that the government

¹Thus Adaklu Anyigbe in the Volta Region, Cape Coast in the Central Region and Bia in the Western Region are not represented in either the *District assembly Survey* or the *Area Profile Survey*.

would not be able to connect completed surveys with individual districts. Completed surveys were then collected by my research assistants and returned to me, not the Ministry. The support of the central government was not only crucial for ensuring a satisfactory response rate, it actually meant a census of districts would be possible for me, and no sampling techniques would be required.

The final operational challenge for survey implementation was how to safely and securely gather completed surveys. Because of the low-cost, high-volume survey research design, I could not pay research assistants to physically pass completed surveys to me. In lieu of this, I did two things. First, surveys would be mailed to me with no identifying district information outside or inside the envelope. Only the researcher's name would be included, so that I could match eventually envelopes to districts, but should the surveys ever get lost or stolen they could not be connected to specific districts. Second, before mailing, research assistants entered the data into templates I built online. With only a few open-ended questions, researchers could quickly transmit data to me in a way that was safe and backed up, should the mail service fail. Researchers could also enter the data into a smart phone app. This large-scale data gathering exercise thus proceeded quickly: by the time the district had completed its survey, the research assistants had gathered observable data for the *Area Profile*, and within a matter of hours they sent me the data, which I verified, and I paid them by mobile phone by the end of the same day.

Survey response rates

The response rate was 88% (n=149), meaning 88% of districts submitted some completed part of the questionnaire.² Response rates for individual respondents are shown in Table B.1 and are visualized in Figure B.1. Cells show responses as percentages of all districts (not percentages of respondents). The response rate is lowest for the presiding member because they do not work full time at the district building.

TABLE B.1: Response rates for district assembly survey

Response rates by respondent	%
All districts	88
Chief executives	78
Presiding members	71
Coordinating directors	84
personnel officers	78
revenue officers	82
Finance officers	81

Non-responses were quasi-random owing to the sudden death of Ghana's president on July 24, 2012. Districts that had not completed their survey by that point ultimately returned no survey at all because government business ground to a halt for the late president's funeral. By the time government business resumed I was hospitalized with malaria and immediately thereafter was scheduled

²85% of respondents (not all districts) completed at least five of the six sections.

FIGURE B.1: Map of survey responses

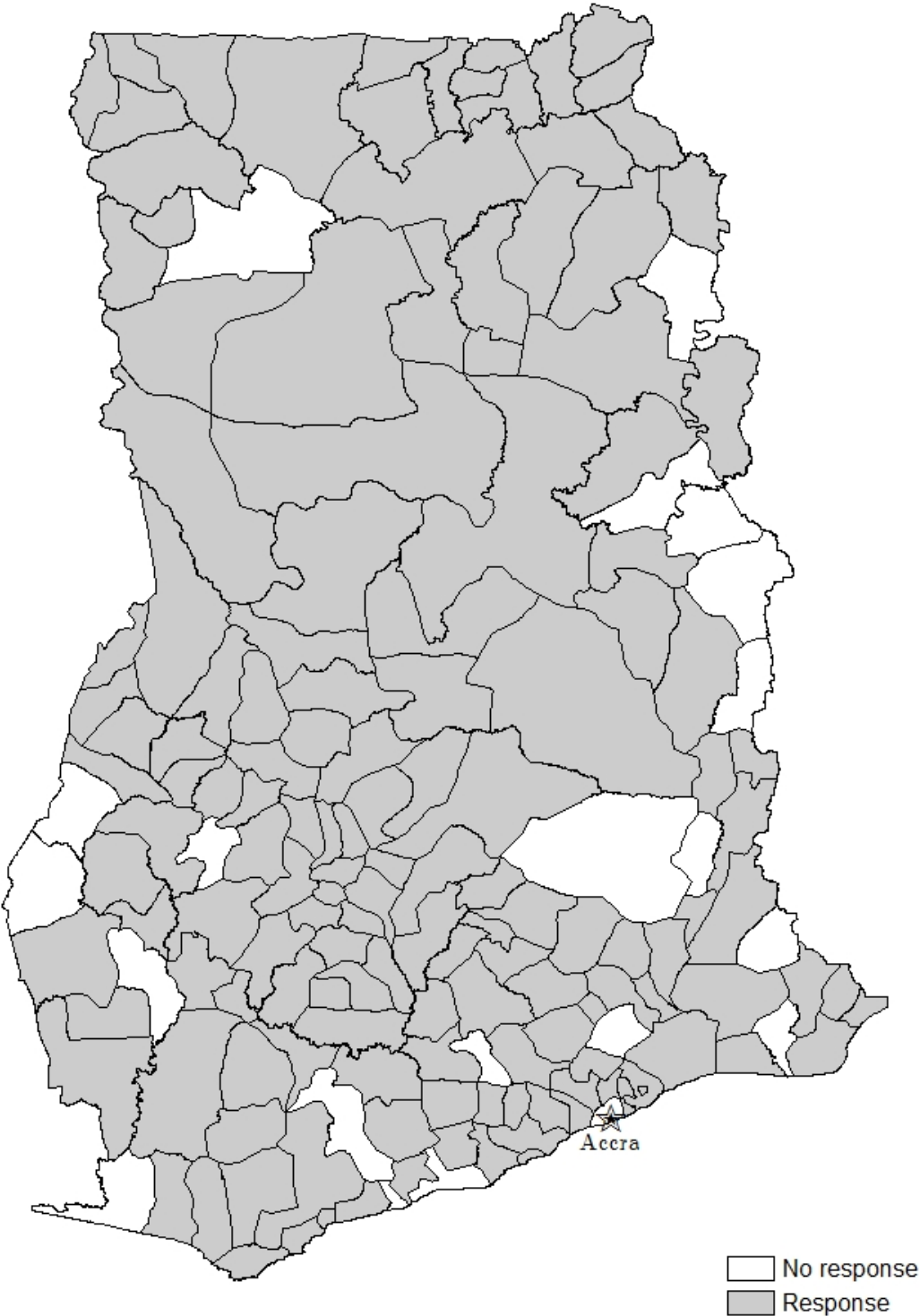


TABLE B.2: Regression for bias in survey responses

	(1 Marginal effects from probit) Any survey section complete	(2 OLS) Num. sections complete (max 6)
Population (2010, log)	-0.043 (0.071)	-0.628 (0.485)
Urban (2010)	0.003* (0.002)	0.012 (0.010)
District Age	0.000 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.024)
Distance to Mine (log)	-0.009 (0.031)	-0.143 (0.216)
Crop value	-0.038 (0.032)	-0.017 (0.223)
Illiterate (2010)	-0.000 (0.004)	-0.012 (0.028)
No Toilet (2010)	0.002 (0.002)	0.008 (0.015)
Distance to Kumasi (log)	-0.126*** (0.045)	-0.404* (0.223)
Distance to Accra (log)	0.020 (0.047)	-0.033 (0.312)
Area (Km. Sq., Land)	-0.002 (0.042)	-0.021 (0.259)
Ethnic Fractionalization (2010)	0.001 (0.001)	0.004 (0.010)
Electricity (2010)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.015 (0.016)
Cocoa Dummy	-0.022 (0.072)	-0.364 (0.458)
Margin in Pres. Elections (00-12)	0.000 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.011)
Ethnic bloc difference	-0.000 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.007)
Constant		15.818*** (6.039)
Observations	168	168
R^2		0.051

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

to leave Ghana. Additionally, some of those that had not completed the survey by the time of the president's death were those that had not received a survey at all. Non-responses were attributable to idiosyncratic difficulties with research assistants rather than district characteristics, which do not bias the data. Table B.2 shows no systematic relationship between the predicted probability that a district returned at least some part of the survey (model 1) or the total number of sections returned (model 2).

Survey instruments for the chief executive, coordinating director (head civil servant), presiding member and finance officer focused mostly on their professional background and their opinions of the functioning of the assembly. Survey instruments for the human resources/personnel and revenue officers focused more on gathering objective data such as staff sizes and tax rates.

Area Profile

One of the main tasks research assistants had to complete was a short survey called an *Area Profile Survey*. The *Area Profile Survey* aimed to gather information that would be basic and easily obtainable. Crucially, it did not require any interviews or requests for official information. The survey was split into three sections: questions about the district generally, questions about the district assembly building specifically, and questions about the district's main marketplace. The instrument is provided in the Appendix. Sample questions included:

- Is there at least one internet cafe in the district capital?
- Look at your mobile phone. Most phones have a picture of bars to show the strength of the signal or reception. What is the signal strength right now?
- Can you see a tax revenue sign board posted publicly at the assembly?
- How many air conditioning units can you see at the District assembly building?

Researchers also collected data on the size and quality of the district marketplace(s). Most districts have 1-3 marketplaces, typically one in each of the main towns, that are the center of economic and social activity. In the survey design phase, I used interviews and then focus groups with market traders to arrive at a set of concerns that mattered to traders and that could reasonably be measured. The main complaints of traders across focus groups was sanitation and security. Markets are typically owned by the district assembly, and in return for taxes paid the district is responsible for cleaning the market. Naturally this was done to a highly varied degree, and I exploit that variance. Traders also complained about their (in)ability to leave their goods safely overnight at the market, as many markets were not even wholly fenced in with walls and gates. For some traders this meant putting their yams, soap, or beans into taxis at the start and end of every day at considerable expense. Because a districts' own data on local service provision would likely be biased, I created an original dataset on marketplace infrastructure throughout the country.

Researchers were asked to visit the marketplace and then record publicly available information, such as the extent of litter at the entrance or the presence of walls and lamps. Since markets vary in size—some might be one acre, others might be five times that size—I was concerned that market size might also drive market infrastructure quality. So researchers also collected two estimates of the size of marketplaces by recording, first, the number of footsteps and, second, the time required to walk the perimeter of each important market. I explained the methodology with simple instructions and a sample illustration.

B.0.2 Fiscal data

I collected detailed time-series data on revenue and expenditure gathered from the Ministry of Local Government and the Controller & Accountant General. Fiscal data cover 1994-2010 and for most recent years include projected revenue/expenditure in addition to actual revenue/expenditure.

Fine grained data on things like revenue from marketplaces or expenditure on specific named projects are reported by districts to central government but these data are not recorded. The reporting process generally works as follows. At the end of each month, every district assembly prints their 'trial balance,' which is a statement of revenue and expenditure for that month. The 'trial balance' is hand-delivered by a district worker in hardcopy to two offices in Accra: one to

the Inspectorate Division at the Ministry of Local Government and one to the Local Government Accounts office of the Controller & Accountant General, which are two separate and physically distant government offices. In both offices civil servants then enter only the summary data from each district's trial balance; that is, although the trial balances state how much was received from licenses for marriage or how much was spent on maintenance of vehicles, the central government offices manually enter only the summary values for broad categories like revenue from all licenses or expenditure on all maintenance. These monthly summary values are entered into a master excel sheet for all districts for that month, which are then combined into one master excel document for all district fiscal data for that calendar year.

The process of transmitting monthly trial balances from every district appears inefficient at first glance. Staff in the budget office at each district assembly manually enter detailed revenue and expenditure data into Excel every month and print a lengthy trial balance document (often 20-40 pages, depending on the size of the district). Rather than email the document or put it on a disc, the paper document is then personally delivered by district staff to Accra. It is then made electronic once again by civil servants in Accra who record only summary data in Excel. Although I wanted this fine-grained fiscal data, I learned during preliminary research that coding this hardcopy data would be hard for two reasons. First, monthly trial balances for every district from 1994 to 2010 amounts to 25,944 lengthy financial documents. In some cases year-end trial balances were available which obviated the need for coding monthly reports, but even year-end financial reports would be over 2,000 financial documents for that same period. Second, and more important, trial balances in hardcopy were missing for all but the most recent years. The Ministry of Local Government office could not locate many district financial reports for even the past few years. Both their office and that of the Controller & Accountant General overflow with hardcopy reports that are stacked floor to ceiling. Even summary financial data that are recorded on computer are prone to viruses (and thus complete data loss) and there are frequently inconsistent entries when comparing the same records as entered by the two offices.

My district assembly fiscal data thus cover only summary data as recorded by central government offices. Since markets are often a major source of local revenue for districts, and since I began my fieldwork with a strong interest in relations between districts and their markets, I collected for a sample of districts fine-grained data on tax collection from markets from 2006 to 2009 using hard copies of district trial balances.

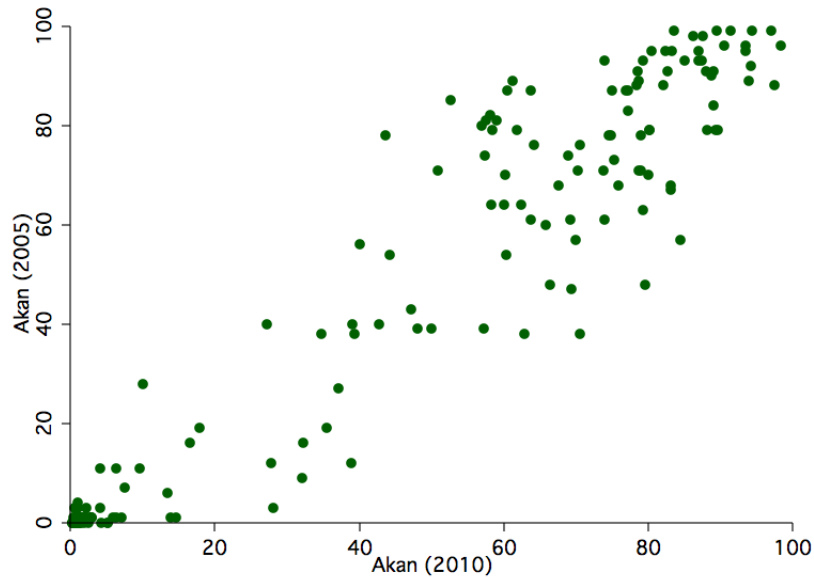
Data on district characteristics

I collected demographic, political/administrative, geospatial, and welfare data on the populations of every district. This can be thought of as all the data that is *not* about the internal workings of districts.

B.0.3 Demographic data

Population, urban/rural, and ethnicity data come from the 2010 Census. To calculate the degree of ethnic heterogeneity at the district level I use the conventional formula for *Ethnic Fractionalization*.

FIGURE B.2: Akan population using GLSS 5 2005 and Census 2010 data



This is a simple Herfindahl concentration index where $EthnicFrac = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^n s_i^2$ where s_i is the share of group i ($i=1, \dots, n$). Measuring the size of key ethnic groups at the district level is not only important for a study of African politics, since a concern with the effects of ethno-regionalism remains important to Africanist political science, but also because the exact size of key ethnic groups is important to my own argument. In particular, it is important to accurately estimate the size of Akan sub-groups, since four major sub-groups of the Akan are loyal to the NPP while other Akan groups are not.³

Statistical inquiries into Ghanaian politics frequently include measures of the size of Akan populations, but they do this in error since the Akan are heterogeneous in political behavior (see for example Bossuroy, 2011). The problem is often one of data availability, however, since census data records only if a person is Akan rather than any of its important sub-groups such as Asante, Akyem or Kwahu. Contacts at the Ghana Statistical Service tell me such fine-grained ethnicity data is actually recorded during the census but that all Akan groups are pooled when the data are entered electronically.

To overcome this problem I estimate the district proportions of Akan sub-groups using the Ghana Living Standards Survey 5 (2005). This is a nationally representative survey of almost 40,000 people in almost 9,000 households. Figure B.2 presents my estimates of the size of Akan populations by district and allows for a comparison of the accuracy of my Akan sub-group data with ‘true’ values from the census. Each dot is a district. The horizontal axis shows the percentage of the district population that is Akan using census data from 2010. The vertical axis presents the same using household survey data from 2005. We see that although there is variance along the line, the 2005 estimates do correspond broadly to the 2010 data. The variables are highly correlated ($r^2 = .96$).

³Akans make up 47.5 percent of all Ghanaians according to the 2010 Census. Of the Akans, Asantes, Akyems, Akuapem and Kwahus generally vote NPP, while Fantes, Nzemas and Sefwis generally vote NDC. Akan sub-groups fitting into neither category include Brongs, Ahantas, Ahafos, Agonas, Assins, Denkyiras, Awutus, Aowins, and Wasa.

There are four main ways in which the Akan sub-group data are measured with error. First, and most obvious, the 2005 survey data are measured with greater error since they are not a census. Second, there is a time lag between the two data collection periods. Third, while the census data is generated at the level of the 170 districts, the 2005 data was generated for the 138 districts in existence from 2004-08. For some districts that were later split I had to use the same ethnicity values as the mother district. The Akan sub-group data are thus clearly imperfect, but they are all we have. In the analysis that follows I use the Akan sub-group data advisedly given the weakness I have outlined, but knowing also that it is important to not treat the Akan as homogenous. Last, it is important to note that I only use GLSS 5 2005 data for Akan sub-groups. For all other major ethnic groups I use 2010 census data.

B.0.4 Political data

Data on district assembly elections are not housed centrally by the Electoral Commission. In any event, since district assembly elections are formally non-partisan such data would not tell us anything about the strength of either party in a district. Since I knew from my case studies that party strength in national elections mapped on to party strength in district assembly elections I turned to national election data to proxy for party strength and political competition.

Political data comprise data from five presidential elections from 1996 to 2012 and from four parliamentary elections from 1996 to 2008. Although Ghana has had democratically elected government since 1992, the first election was boycotted by the opposition so I do not use it here. Raw election data is at the constituency level. Most districts have within them one constituency, and boundaries of electoral and administrative areas are coterminous by law. That is, a constituency never straddles two districts.

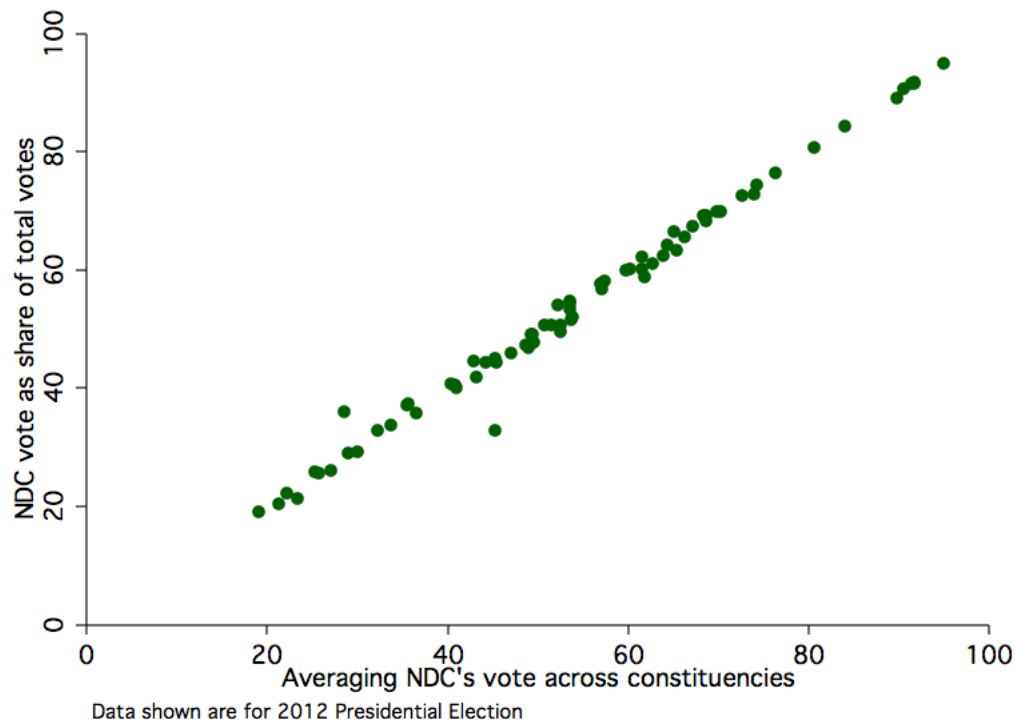
To aggregate constituency level election results to the district level for districts with more than one constituency, I averaged across constituencies within the district. Averaging vote shares across constituencies might misrepresent the electoral profiles of constituencies if two constituencies within one district are politically polarized and differ in population size. Consider two hypothetical constituencies within the same district. Averaging across the NDC vote share would misrepresent the voting make-up of the overall district since constituency A is larger than B. A more appropriate calculation might be to instead to pool all votes (not vote shares) for a party within the district and express as a percentage of all voters in the district.

Method 1: Averaging vote shares	No. voters	% Vote NDC
Constituency A	80,000	80
Constituency B	20,000	20
<i>District average</i>		50

In the first scenario NDC's vote share for the overall district will be calculated as 50 percent compared to 68 percent in the second. The second is clearly better because the phenomena I am studying takes place at the level of the district, not the constituency. Since assemblies are elected by

Method 2: Pooling votes	No. voters	No. votes NDC	NDC share of total
Constituency A	80,000	64,000	
Constituency B	20,000	4,000	
District sum	100,000	68,000	68%

FIGURE B.3: Aggregating constituency level election data



overall districts, not their constituencies, it is the overall strength of a party in a district that needs to be calculated.

Although simply averaging vote shares proved more straight forward in constructing my dataset I was concerned that averaging would generate precisely the error explained, so for the 2012 presidential I constructed two measures, one using vote share averages and the other using raw vote summation. Figure B.3 shows that in practice, since constituencies are typically both similar in size and vote the same way, the two measures generate the same district-level values. The graph shows district level aggregates for districts with more than one constituency. The vertical axis plots NDC votes as a share of total votes across constituencies within a district. The horizontal axis plots NDC votes when averaged across vote shares for each constituency. We see that either measure generates highly similar values.

In addition to the vote shares of both major parties in presidential elections, I also collected data on parliamentary elections, as well as data on voter turnout.

B.0.5 Geospatial data

I created six spatial measures. First, distance to the central government in Accra. Second, distance to a district's regional capital. Third, distance to the culturally, economically and politically significant city of Kumasi, which has the largest marketplace in West Africa in addition to the distinction of being home of the powerful Asantehene (Ashanti King). Fourth, distance to the nearest border with Ivory Coast to control for any spillover effects from the political upheavals that occurred during the period under study. Fifth, as Ghana is one of the top ten gold producers in the world, I calculated the distance from a district capital to the nearest major mine. Sixth, district land area.

To calculate distances I used a GIS shapefile and Google Earth to obtain geo-coded locations of every district capital and I then used a form of the Haversine equation for calculating distances between two points in kilometers.⁴ Care is required in calculating the physical size of districts since some border Lake Volta, the largest reservoir by surface area in the world. To avoid including water in my calculations I overlaid two GIS shapefiles, one with boundaries and one with Lake Volta, and manually clipped out from each district bordering Lake Volta the water portion and then used ArcMap to re-estimate land area in kilometers squared.

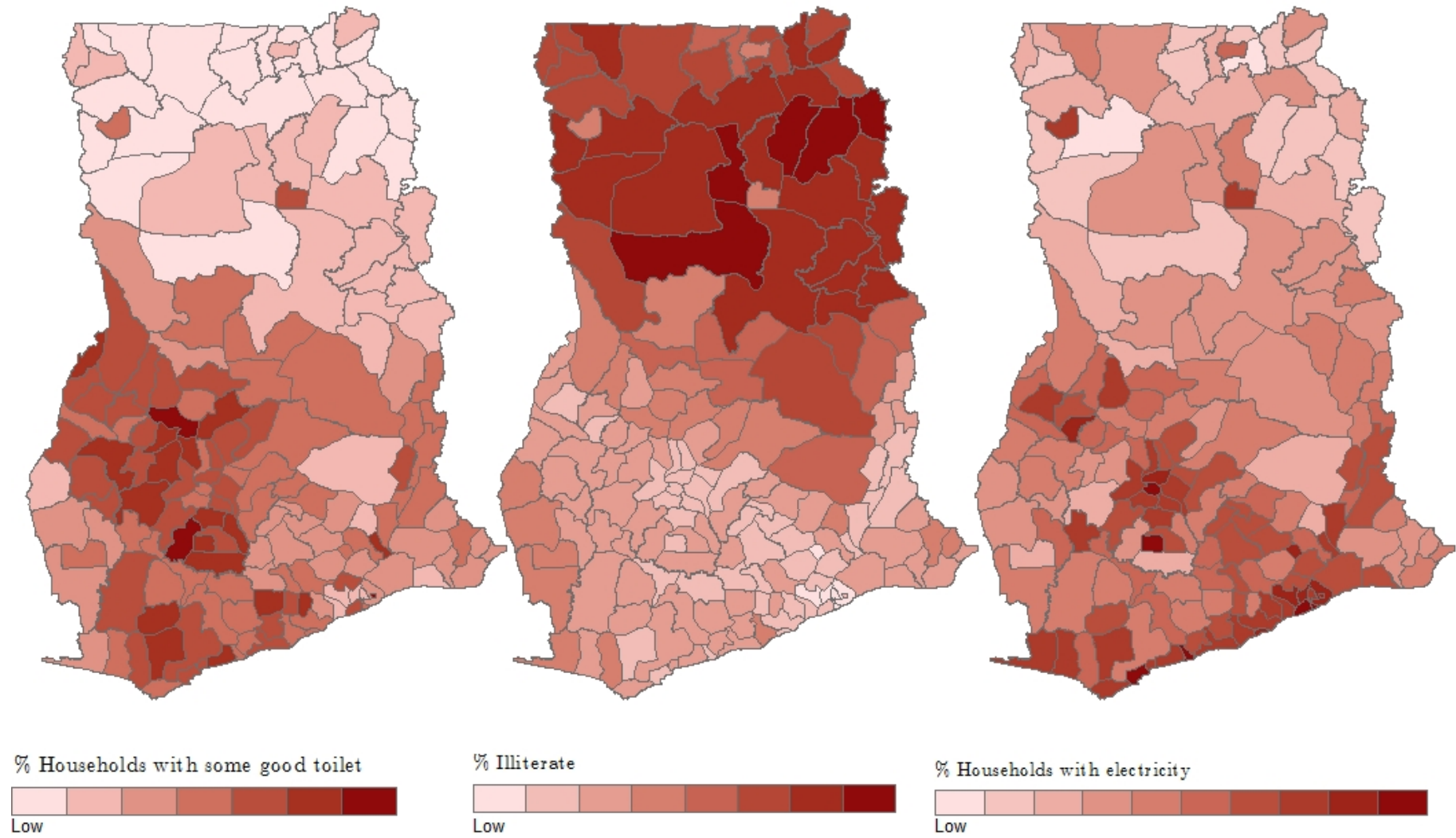
To get an accurate list of major mines I combined data from the Annual Reports of the Ghana Chamber of Mines and Minerals Yearbooks from the US Geological Service with Google Earth to first establish a list of all mines currently active and operated by a legally recognized company. This coding decision ensures my data cover all districts with mines of significant size. There is no concern that using a list of legally operating firms under-counts actual mining operations. Mines of significant size are operated by multi-national mining companies such as Anglo-Gold Ashanti and their operations are so large as to be easily observable by satellite imagery. Small-scale operations, by contrast, are labor intensive, technology-lite, of low yield and do not contribute to central or local revenue. Using the list of major mining operations I then located each mine using Google Earth to obtain its coordinates, and used my geospatial formula to calculate the distance of each district capital to the nearest mine. The variable is then calculated as a continuous rather than dummy variable to allow for spillover effects into neighboring districts. Note that Ghana's coastal oil had not started flowing during the period under study.

B.0.6 Wealth and welfare data

I use multiple proxies for district human development, including data on toilets, household electricity, and literacy. These data can be divided into data that are intended to proxy for wealth/poverty and those intended to measure public service outcomes.

⁴In Excel I used the formula =ACOS(COS(RADIANS(90-A2)) *COS(RADIANS(90-A3)) +SIN(RADIANS(90-A2)) *SIN(RADIANS(90-A3)) *COS(RADIANS(B2-B3))) *6371 (earth's radius)

FIGURE B.4: Toilets, literacy and electricity across districts



The most direct measure of wealth—household income or assets—is not available for Ghana. As alternatives I use data on the quality of toilets, waste disposal, electricity and literacy. Care must be taken when using these data as they actually map on to distinct governance and development processes, such that a generalized index would not be helpful. The quality of literacy and electricity, for example, are distinctly national processes, rather than local or individual, since the country’s electricity grid and the provision of educational facilities are controlled centrally. In contrast, toilets and waste disposal facilities are provided by districts, if at all.⁵ Other variables commonly used to proxy poverty map on to yet more distinct processes. The material used for roofs, floors and walls, for example, is a function of private wealth in Ghana rather than central or local governance outcomes. Combining data on these variable in an aggregate poverty index obscures the distinct governance processes within each one, which is why I prefer to use disaggregated welfare data. Figure B.4 shows that although poverty in Ghana corresponds to a broad north-south division, disaggregating by proxy reveals that electricity, for example, does not correspond to that broad pattern as strongly as do the data on illiteracy and toilets.

To these measures of household welfare I add data on district endowments more generally. First, the dataset includes a measure on district proximity to major mines, as explained already. Second, the dataset includes multiple estimates of the size of district cocoa economies. Cocoa data at the district level are surprisingly hard to collect. The Ministry of Agriculture collects data through its local offices on the yields of multiple major agricultural commodities such as yams and plantains, but it does not collect data on cocoa. The task of collecting data on cocoa falls to the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), which does not report district level cocoa data. To measure cocoa yields, therefore, I use data from a nationally representative household survey in 2005, which asked farming households about past and future farming activities. I confirmed the accuracy of this data by overlaying it with maps of exposure to direct sunlight and of soil types.

The dataset also includes Ministry of Agriculture data on the cultivated area, production, yield and value of major cash crops for 2010. To calculate the value of each crop, and the value of all crop production for each district, I used bi-monthly commodity wholesale price data from 2010. I took the median price of each crop across all available towns to get median prices across the country for one month. I then calculated median prices for the year using the monthly median price for each commodity. For each district this generates one value, which is the total estimated value of all crop production in Ghana Cedis.

I also coded district Medium Term Development Plans (MTDP) at the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) archive in Accra. District MTDPs are multi-year planning documents that typically include forward and backward looking details of projects as well as district assets such as the number of schools, nurses, and police as well as the length of tarred roads. I found the data to be inconsistent, however, with many districts having not submitted their MTDP or submitting using slightly different metrics. Moreover, data on things like teachers and nurses actually speak to the behavior of central, not local, governments, and thus the MTDP data is included in the dataset but does not feature heavily here.

⁵Private toilets in the home are rare. 2010 Census data show 15 percent of households have access to a toilet within a home, compared to 35 percent using a public toilet, 19 percent using a private pit and 19 percent with no facility at all.

Last, as explained above, the dataset includes an original measure of the size and frequency of major markets in each district, since marketplaces can represent significant taxable economic assets for districts.

Appendix C

District assembly survey instrument

Part 1. Questions for the Chief Executive

1. Are you male or female? Circle one.
2. What is your age?
 - (a) Under 35 years of age
 - (b) 36 to 45
 - (c) 46 to 55
 - (d) 56 years or older
3. In what year did you begin your current tenure as Chief Executive?
4. Before becoming Chief Executive, how did you spend most of your professional life? Circle one.
 - Working abroad – Medical professional – Civil servant – Educational professional – Construction/contractor – Farming – Mining – Logging – Military/Police – Elected office – Banking/Finance – Law - Other private sector – None of these
5. Are you from this district?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
6. If no, are you from this region?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
7. Is this your first time being a M/DCE?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
8. Have you ever served as an assembly person?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
9. Have you ever served as an MP?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
10. Do you have a Master's Degree or equivalent? Do not include Bachelor's degrees, certificates or Diplomas.
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
11. Do you feel you receive the help you need from RCC to attract foreign companies, donors, or central govt projects to your district?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No

12. If no, why not?
 - (a) There is not much they can do
 - (b) Our district is not well represented in Cabinet or Parliament
 - (c) Some other reason
13. Do you feel you receive the help you need from central government to attract foreign companies, donors, or central govt projects to your district?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
14. If no, why not?
 - (a) There is not much they can do
 - (b) Our district is not well represented in Cabinet or Parliament
 - (c) Some other reason
15. Do you feel you are appropriately remunerated for your work?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
16. Have you ever borrowed money or used personal savings to pay for small favors for constituents, like school fees?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
17. Would you say the release of funds from central government. . .
 - (a) Is too slow.
 - (b) Come with too many instructions, restrictions or deductions.
 - (c) A and B
 - (d) None of the above
18. Do you feel you have the power you need to appropriately punish non-performance amongst your technocrats?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
19. If yes, which statement would you agree with most?
 - (a) I can punish, but it is not easy: I have to draw on my own government contacts to find a more suitable technocrat with which I can work, and if I can have the current one rotated elsewhere.
 - (b) Yes, it is very easy to get rid of staff.
 - (c) It is possible for me to punish non-performing staff, but for some other reason.
20. If no, which statement would you agree with most?
 - (a) I can't do any thing. If I have a technocrat with which I cannot work, I am stuck with them unless their own superiors decide to transfer them.
 - (b) If I try to get rid of a civil servant I will be accused of compromising the political neutrality of the civil servants, so I can't do anything.
 - (c) I don't have the power I need, but for some other reason.
21. Do you support the direct election of MMDCEs?
 - (a) Yes, and I would stand for election next time.
 - (b) Yes, but I would not stand for election next time.
 - (c) No, I do not support the direct election of MMDCEs.
22. How are relations between political groups in your district? Think about how much trust and cooperation, or distrust and conflict, there is. We are interested in the relations between political groups, rather than your relationship with them.
 - (a) Very good: there is rarely any tension, and never any violence
 - (b) Good: there is less tension than most places in Ghana, and rarely any violence
 - (c) Normal: about the same as most places in Ghana
 - (d) Bad: there is more tension than most places in Ghana, and violence has been known to happen
 - (e) Very bad: a lot of tension, which frequently becomes violent
23. How are relations between religious groups in your district? Think about how much trust and cooperation, or distrust and conflict, there is. We are interested in the relations between religious groups, rather than your relationship with them.
 - (a) Very good: there is rarely any tension, and never any violence
 - (b) Good: there is less tension than most places in Ghana, and rarely any violence
 - (c) Normal: about the same as most places in Ghana
 - (d) Bad: there is more tension than most places in Ghana, and violence has been known to happen

- (e) Very bad: a lot of tension, which frequently becomes violent
24. How are relations between ethnic groups and tribes in your district, including between Ghanaians and non-Ghanaians? Think about how much trust and cooperation, or distrust and conflict, there is. We are interested in the relations between ethnic/tribal groups, rather than your relationship with them.
- Very good: there is rarely any tension, and never any violence
 - Good: there is less tension than most places in Ghana, and rarely any violence
 - Normal: about the same as most places in Ghana
 - Bad: there is more tension than most places in Ghana, and violence has been known to happen
 - Very bad: a lot of tension, which frequently becomes violent
25. How are relations between traditional leaders in your district? Think about how much trust and cooperation, or distrust and conflict, there is. We are interested in the relations between traditional leaders, rather than your relationship with them.
- Very good: there is rarely any tension, and never any violence
 - Good: there is less tension than most places in Ghana, and rarely any violence
 - Normal: about the same as most places in Ghana
 - Bad: there is more tension than most places in Ghana, and violence has been known to happen
 - Very bad: a lot of tension, which frequently becomes violent
26. How would you rate the skill and technical expertise of your core civil servants?
- Excellent
 - Good
 - Average
 - Poor
 - Very bad
27. How would you rate the political neutrality of your core civil servants?
- Excellent
 - Good
 - Average
 - Poor
 - Very bad
28. How would you rate your relationship with the assembly itself? Think about how much mutual trust and cooperation there is.
- Excellent
 - Good
 - Average
 - Poor
 - Very bad
29. How would you rate your relationship with traditional authorities in the district? Think about how much mutual trust and cooperation there is.
- Excellent
 - Good
 - Average
 - Poor
 - Very bad
30. How would you rate your relationship with the MP(s) in the district? Think about how much mutual trust and cooperation there is.
- Excellent
 - Good
 - Average
 - Poor
 - Very bad
31. How would you rate the revenue potential of the district?
- Excellent
 - Good
 - Average
 - Poor
 - Very bad
32. How do you rate the Assembly's actual Internally Generated Funds (IGF) performance?

- (a) Excellent
 - (b) Good
 - (c) Average
 - (d) Poor
 - (e) Very bad
33. How would you rate the problem of leakage in the district?
- (a) No problem at all
 - (b) Less leakage than most places in Ghana
 - (c) About the same as most places in Ghana
 - (d) More than most places in Ghana
 - (e) Much more than most places in Ghana
34. Do you think the government's Functional & Organisational Assessment Tool (FOAT) provides a good assessment of assemblies performance?
- (a) Yes
 - (b) No
35. If yes, would you say...
- (a) FOAT does a very good job of assessing MMDAs.
 - (b) FOAT does a good job, but there are other dimensions that it doesn't examine.
 - (c) Neither
36. If no, would you say...
- (a) FOAT is too easily corrupted or politicized
 - (b) FOAT is poorly done and doesn't reflect reality
 - (c) Neither
37. Are there any significant areas of your professional life that are not addressed here that you think are important and would care to comment on?

Part 2. Questions for the Presiding Member

1. Are you male or female? Circle one.
2. What is your age?
 - (a) Under 35 years of age
 - (b) 36 to 45
 - (c) 46 to 55
 - (d) 56 years or older
3. For how many years have you served in your current role as PM? Do not include any previous terms. (write number of years)
4. How many members are there in the assembly? Include govt appointees but do not include the Chief Executive (enter number).
5. Since January 1, 2011 how many full assembly meetings have taken place? Do not include sub-com or Executive committee meetings. (number)
6. What is the current per diem (sitting allowance) paid for attending an assembly meeting for the following people:
 - (a) Assembly members (cedi amount)
 - (b) M/DCE (cedi amount)
 - (c) PM (cedi amount)
 - (d) Heads of Department (cedi amount)
7. Which of these statements do you agree with most?
 - (a) The assembly is highly partisan; assembly members are usually split on party lines
 - (b) There is partisanship on some issues, but other times assembly members consider more than just their party.
 - (c) There is very little partisanship amongst the assembly members.
 - (d) None of the above
8. As the representative for the assembly members, how would you say assembly members feel about the core civil servants beneath the Chief Executive? Do not include low-level staff like drivers, and do not include staff in centralized Departments like Ghana Education Service. Think about the main civil servants and technocrats.

- (a) Assembly members have complete confidence that the core civil servants discharge their duties impartially
 - (b) Assembly members have confidence in the impartiality of core civil servants, despite occasional exceptions.
 - (c) Assembly members often feel that key civil servants are behaving in a partisan way.
 - (d) Assembly members have no confidence that key civil servants can be trusted.
 - (e) None of the above
9. How many Chief Executives (including the current Chief Executive) has the district had under the current government? (enter number).
10. How often does the MP(s) attend assembly meetings?
- (a) Every time
 - (b) Most of the time
 - (c) Sometimes
 - (d) Rarely
 - (e) Never
11. When and by what vote were you elected as PM most recently? Do not include any previous times you were elected. Please give the number of votes in the box below, rather than percentages.

Year	Round	No. of votes you received	2nd candidate votes	3rd candidate votes	Abstained + Rejected	Total
	1					
	2					
	3					
	4					
	5					

12. When and by what vote was the current Chief Executive confirmed? Please give the number of votes in the box below, rather than percentages.

Year	Round	Number of votes M/DCE received	Abstained + Rejected	Total
	1			
	2			
	3			
	4			
	5			

13. How would you describe relations between political groups in your district? Think about how much trust and cooperation, or distrust and conflict, there is. We are interested in the relations between political groups, rather than your relationship with them.
- (a) Very good: there is rarely any tension, and never any violence
 - (b) Good: there is less tension than most places in Ghana, and rarely any violence
 - (c) Normal: about the same as most places in Ghana
 - (d) Bad: there is more tension than most places in Ghana, and violence has been known to happen
 - (e) Very bad: a lot of tension, which frequently becomes violent
14. Would you say this district is a stronghold of one party?
- (a) Yes, one party is very dominant
 - (b) No, it is competitive
 - (c) Neither
15. How would you describe relations between religious groups in your district? Think about how much trust and cooperation, or distrust and conflict, there is. We are interested in the relations between religious groups, rather than your relationship with them.
- (a) Very good: there is rarely any tension, and never any violence
 - (b) Good: there is less tension than most places in Ghana, and rarely any violence
 - (c) Normal: about the same as most places in Ghana
 - (d) Bad: there is more tension than most places in Ghana, and violence has been known to happen
 - (e) Very bad: a lot of tension, which frequently becomes violent
16. How would you describe relations between ethnic groups and tribes in your district, including between Ghanaians and non-Ghanaians? Think about how much trust and cooperation, or distrust and conflict, there is. We are interested in the relations between ethnic/tribal groups, rather than your relationship with them.

- (a) Very good: there is rarely any tension, and never any violence
 - (b) Good: there is less tension than most places in Ghana, and rarely any violence
 - (c) Normal: about the same as most places in Ghana
 - (d) Bad: there is more tension than most places in Ghana, and violence has been known to happen
 - (e) Very bad: a lot of tension, which frequently becomes violent
17. How would you describe relations between traditional leaders in your district? Think about how much trust and cooperation, or distrust and conflict, there is. We are interested in the relations between traditional leaders, rather than your relationship with them.
- (a) Very good: there is rarely any tension, and never any violence
 - (b) Good: there is less tension than most places in Ghana, and rarely any violence
 - (c) Normal: about the same as most places in Ghana
 - (d) Bad: there is more tension than most places in Ghana, and violence has been known to happen
 - (e) Very bad: a lot of tension, which frequently becomes violent
18. How would you rate the skill and technical expertise of the Assembly's core civil servants?
- (a) Excellent
 - (b) Good
 - (c) Average
 - (d) Poor
 - (e) Very bad
19. How would you rate the political neutrality of the core civil servants?
- (a) Excellent
 - (b) Good
 - (c) Average
 - (d) Poor
 - (e) Very bad
20. How would you rate the Executive's relationship with the assembly? Think about how much mutual trust and cooperation there is.
- (a) Excellent
 - (b) Good
 - (c) Average
 - (d) Poor
 - (e) Very bad
21. How would you rate the Executive's relationship with traditional authorities in the district? Think about how much mutual trust and cooperation there is.
- (a) Excellent
 - (b) Good
 - (c) Average
 - (d) Poor
 - (e) Very bad
22. How would you rate the revenue potential of the district?
- (a) Excellent
 - (b) Good
 - (c) Average
 - (d) Poor
 - (e) Very bad
23. How would you rate the actual Internally Generated Funds (IGF) performance of the district?
- (a) Excellent
 - (b) Good
 - (c) Average
 - (d) Poor
 - (e) Very bad
24. How would you rate the problem of leakage in the district?
- (a) No problem at all
 - (b) Less leakage than most places in Ghana
 - (c) About the same as most places in Ghana
 - (d) More than most places in Ghana
 - (e) Much more than most places in Ghana

25. As Presiding Member, do you have much power in the tender process?
 - (a) Yes, I play an important role.
 - (b) I play a role but I am not important
 - (c) I do not play any role
 - (d) None of the above
26. Does the Assembly itself play a significant role in the tender process, or is the tender process dominated by the Executive?
 - (a) The Assembly plays a significant role
 - (b) The Assembly has some power, but not much. The Executive has most power.
 - (c) The Assembly has no power at all. The Executive completely dominates.
 - (d) None of the above
27. After replying to the questions above, is there anything you would like to add or elaborate? Are there any significant areas of your work as Presiding Member that are not addressed here that you think are important and would care to comment on?

Part 3. Questions for the Coordinating Director

1. Is this Assembly. . .
 - (a) A metropolitan/municipal assembly
 - (b) A district assembly
2. Are these questions being answered by the CD or his Director/Subordinate?
 - (a) CD
 - (b) Director/Subordinate
 - (c) Other (please explain)
3. Are you male or female? Circle one.
4. What is your age?
 - (a) Under 35 years of age
 - (b) 36 to 45
 - (c) 46 to 55
 - (d) 56 years or older
5. Are you from this district?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
6. If you are not from this district, are you from this region?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
7. How many years have you worked in the district assembly system? (years)
8. Not including your present location, at how many other district assemblies have you worked?
9. What is your current rank?
10. Do you have a Master's Degree or equivalent? Do not include Bachelor's degrees, certificates or Diplomas.
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
11. Are you currently undertaking any further studies, such as distance-learning or part-time courses?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
12. In what year did you join this assembly? (year)
13. How many Deputies do you have?
14. What is their rank?
 - (a) 1st Deputy
 - (b) 2nd Deputy
 - (c) 3rd Deputy
15. What do you think occupies most of your time? You may selected more than one.
 - (a) Managing staff/personnel issues
 - (b) Dealing with political issues
 - (c) Locals looking for small favors

- (d) Doing administrative work for RCC/Accra, like submitting proposals, reports, and answering requests for information
 - (e) Managing assembly financial issues
 - (f) Time outside of the district at various meetings and conferences
 - (g) Receiving guests from outside the district
 - (h) None of the above
16. Do you have a good relationship with your RCC?
- (a) Yes
 - (b) No
17. If no, why not?
- (a) The RCC is too intrusive.
 - (b) The RCC is too absent; they are never available to help.
 - (c) The RCC just favors some MMDAs in the region.
 - (d) I have no strong opinion. The RCC isn't too important or involved in my work or that of the assembly.
 - (e) Other (please explain)
18. Most Coordinating Directors are not from the district in which they serve. Using your experience as a knowledgeable outsider, how would you describe relations between political groups in this district? Think about how much trust and cooperation, or distrust and conflict, there is. We are interested in the relations between political groups, rather than your relationship with them.
- (a) Very good: there is rarely any tension, and never any violence
 - (b) Good: there is less tension than most places in Ghana, and rarely any violence
 - (c) Normal: about the same as most places in Ghana
 - (d) Bad: there is more tension than most places in Ghana, and violence has been known to happen
 - (e) Very bad: a lot of tension, which frequently becomes violent
19. How would you describe relations between religious groups in your district? Think about how much trust and cooperation, or distrust and conflict, there is. We are interested in the relations between religious groups, rather than your relationship with them.
- (a) Very good: there is rarely any tension, and never any violence
 - (b) Good: there is less tension than most places in Ghana, and rarely any violence
 - (c) Normal: about the same as most places in Ghana
 - (d) Bad: there is more tension than most places in Ghana, and violence has been known to happen
 - (e) Very bad: a lot of tension, which frequently becomes violent
20. How would you describe relations between ethnic groups and tribes in your district, including between Ghanaians and non-Ghanaians? Think about how much trust and cooperation, or distrust and conflict, there is. We are interested in the relations between ethnic/tribal groups, rather than your relationship with them.
- (a) Very good: there is rarely any tension, and never any violence
 - (b) Good: there is less tension than most places in Ghana, and rarely any violence
 - (c) Normal: about the same as most places in Ghana
 - (d) Bad: there is more tension than most places in Ghana, and violence has been known to happen
 - (e) Very bad: a lot of tension, which frequently becomes violent
21. How would you describe relations between traditional leaders in your district? Think about how much trust and cooperation, or distrust and conflict, there is. We are interested in the relations between traditional leaders, rather than your relationship with them.
- (a) Very good: there is rarely any tension, and never any violence
 - (b) Good: there is less tension than most places in Ghana, and rarely any violence
 - (c) Normal: about the same as most places in Ghana
 - (d) Bad: there is more tension than most places in Ghana, and violence has been known to happen
 - (e) Very bad: a lot of tension, which frequently becomes violent
22. How would you rate the skill and technical expertise of your core civil servants?
- (a) Excellent
 - (b) Good
 - (c) Average
 - (d) Poor
 - (e) Very bad
23. How would you rate the political neutrality of your core civil servants?
- (a) Excellent
 - (b) Good

- (c) Average
 - (d) Poor
 - (e) Very bad
24. How would you rate the Executive's relationship with the assembly itself? Think about how much mutual trust and cooperation there is.
- (a) Excellent
 - (b) Good
 - (c) Average
 - (d) Poor
 - (e) Very bad
25. How would you rate the revenue potential of the district?
- (a) Excellent
 - (b) Good
 - (c) Average
 - (d) Poor
 - (e) Very bad
26. How would you rate the actual Internally Generated Funds (IGF) performance of the district?
- (a) Excellent
 - (b) Good
 - (c) Average
 - (d) Poor
 - (e) Very bad
27. How would you rate the problem of leakage in the district? a. No problem at all b. Less leakage than most places in Ghana c. About the same as most places in Ghana d. More than most places in Ghana e. Much more than most places in Ghana
28. Do you think the Functional & Organisational Assessment Tool (FOAT) provides a good assessment of assemblies performance?
- (a) Yes
 - (b) No
29. If yes, would you say...
- (a) FOAT does a very good job of assessing MMDAs.
 - (b) FOAT does a good job, but there are other dimensions that it doesn't examine.
 - (c) Neither
30. If no, would you say...
- (a) FOAT is too easily corrupted or politicized
 - (b) FOAT is poorly done and doesn't reflect reality
 - (c) Neither
31. Do different groups in this district have associations or unions that can the Assembly can interact with when needed? Examples could be associations for traders, bakers, farmers, or drivers.
- (a) Yes
 - (b) No
 - (c) Don't know
32. If yes, which statement would you agree with most?
- (a) Associations exist to represent people in the district, and the Assembly interacts with these associations a lot.
 - (b) Associations exist, but when the Assembly is making decisions or implementing projects, it mostly involves leading authorities, like chiefs and elected officials, and associations don't get involved much.
 - (c) Neither.
33. How much would you say you like living in this district?
- (a) This is a great place to live
 - (b) This place is better than most in Ghana
 - (c) It's like any other place in Ghana
 - (d) This place is worse than most in Ghana
 - (e) This is a very bad place to live
34. After replying to the questions above, is there anything you would like to add or elaborate? Are there any significant areas of your professional life that are not addressed here that you think are important and would care to comment on?

Part 4. Questions for the Human Resources/Personnel Officer

1. How many assembly staff are there in total at the assembly, including mechanized (paid by central government) and non-mechanized (paid by the assembly) staff? Do not include national service personnel or the staff of centralized departments or agencies, like the Ghana Education Service. Only include assembly staff, including senior technocrats, mid-ranking civil servants, labourers, and so on. Total assembly staff (number)
2. How many of these are mechanized (paid by central government)?
3. How many of these are non-mechanized (paid by the assembly)?
4. Of the mechanized staff, how many are employed by the Controller & Accountant General?
5. How many staff are employed as security personnel, such as night watchmen?
6. How many staff are employed as cleaners, such as refuse collectors?
7. How many staff are employed as drivers? Count drivers of assembly vehicles, not including drivers of construction equipment.

Part 5. Questions for the Head Revenue Officer

1. Are you male or female? Circle one.
2. What is your age?
 - (a) Under 35 years of age
 - (b) 36 to 45
 - (c) 46 to 55
 - (d) 56 years or older
3. Are you from this district?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
4. If you are not from this district, are you from this region?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
5. How many years have you worked in the district assembly system? (years)
6. Not including your present location, at how many other district assemblies have you worked?
7. What is your current rank?
8. How many revenue collectors do you have?
 - Commission collectors (number)
 - Paid collectors (number)
 - Total (number)
9. What percentage of revenue do commission collectors receive? (percentage)
10. How many revenue stations do you have? (number)
11. What are the main revenue sources? List the top three, such as markets, telephone masts, mines, property rate, etc.
 - (a)
 - (b)
 - (c)
12. How many important markets are there in district? Think about all the markets from which you collect revenue, not just the biggest market. (number)
13. And how frequent are they? Circle answer for each one. If you have more than five, just answer based on the five most important markets.
 - (a) Market 1: Daily/Main market days only/Daily with some main market days
 - (b) Market 2: Daily/Main market days only/Daily with some main market days
 - (c) Market 3: Daily/Main market days only/Daily with some main market days
 - (d) Market 4: Daily/Main market days only/Daily with some main market days
 - (e) Market 5: Daily/Main market days only/Daily with some main market days
14. Does the district employ revenue collecting companies?

- (a) Yes
(b) No
15. If yes, how would you rate their usefulness?
(a) Excellent; they have dramatically improved our revenue performance
(b) Good; they have improved our revenue performance
(c) Average; they have not made much difference
(d) Bad; they haven't helped at all, and they just take a large percentage
16. If no, why not?
(a) There are none in our area
(b) We tried them before, but it didn't work out well
(c) We haven't considered it
(d) We considered it, but we heard bad things about them, or they wanted too large a percentage of the revenue.
(e) Some other reason
17. Even well-run MMDAs have some revenue leakage. How would you rate the problem of leakage in your district?
(a) Excellent; we do an excellent job of stamping it out.
(b) Good: we do a good job, despite occasional mishaps.
(c) Average: like everywhere, it is occasionally a problem here
(d) Bad: it happens a lot
(e) Very bad: it is extremely bad here.
18. Looking at the leakage you have, whether it is small or large, do you think...
(a) Our revenue collectors do a good job, and it is mostly tax payers, like traders or artisans, who try to evade tax
(b) People generally pay their taxes, but the leakage occurs with the collectors
(c) The collectors and the payers often collude with one another
(d) None of the above.
19. Has the Land Valuations Board visited the district and assessed your properties in the last few years?
(a) Yes
(b) No
20. How would you rate the Assemblies knowledge of its revenue potential? In other words, do you think you have a good database, or good knowledge, about all of the properties, artisans and so on, from which you can generate revenue?
(a) Very good: we have a very good listing or database of various payers of fees and rates.
(b) Good: our listing is better than most districts.
(c) We have a list but it is not complete
(d) Our list is outdated or often incorrect
(e) Our list is very bad or we have none at all.
21. Apart from revenue from things like property or markets, do you have any major revenue sources from natural resources, such as mines or forests? Circle as many of the following as you like:
(a) Major mines. Do not include if you only have very small scale mining.
(b) Major forests. Select this if the district receives significant revenue from the Office of Stool Lands.
(c) Other major natural resource (please specify)
(d) No significant natural resource.
- In the boxes that follow, please fill in the assembly's fees/rates. Categories for different rates are different for each district, so it may be hard to match the items below with a specific item in your fee fixing resolution. But please try to give the answer you believe is most accurate, perhaps by taking the average of two different rates within one category. For example, if the fee for a petrol station is different for different towns in the district, use the average of the two rates. Also, please make sure to indicate if the amount is per day/week/month/year.
22. If a household wants to have their refuse collected by the assembly, approximately how much do they pay? Assemblies often calculate this slightly differently, so just do your best to explain how much a household would pay to have their household refuse collected. If the Assembly does not offer any such household service, write 'not offered.'
23. Does the district rely on any groups to collect taxes from their own members on behalf of the assembly? Do not include things like revenue companies. Instead, think of whether organizations like unions collect taxes which they pass on to the assembly. Does anything like this ever happen at the assembly?
24. In the past two years, approximately how many people have been prosecuted in court for non-payment of taxes? (number)

Recurring taxes (daily, weekly, etc.)	
Lorry parks: urvan/kia/207 bus	(per day)
Market tolls for main daily market	(per trader, per day)
Market tolls for main market day	(per trader)
Property rate for assessed commercial properties	(amount per cedi of value)
Property rate for assessed residential property in major towns	(amount per cedi of value)
Unassessed commercial: how much is charged for a bank?	(per year)
Unassessed commercial: how much is charged for a hotel?	(per year)
Unassessed residential: how much for two-storey or higher home?	(per year)
Unassessed residential: how much for self-contained or compound home?	(per year)
Large billboards	(per year)
Major banks license	per month/year
Forex Bureau license	per month/year
Pharmacy license	per month/year
Petrol station license	per month/year
Chop bar license	per month/year
Seamstress license	per month/year
Newspaper vendor license	per month/year
Mobile phone company (MTN, Tigo, etc) license	per year
Lockable market stores in main market	per month/year
Importing bag of rice	Per bag
Exporting bag of rice	Per bag
Once-off taxes/fees	
Marriage	
Divorce	
Telephone masts	(per installation)
Burial fee for adult	
Tomb or vault	

Part 6. Questions for District Finance Officer

1. Are you male or female? Circle one.
2. In what year did you join this Assembly? (year)
3. What is your age?
 - (a) Under 35 years of age
 - (b) 36 to 45
 - (c) 46 to 55
 - (d) 56 years or older
4. Are you from this district?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
5. If you are not from this district, are you from this region?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
6. How many years have you worked in the district assembly system? (years)
7. Not including your present location, at how many other district assemblies have you worked?
8. What is your current rank?
9. Do you have a Master's Degree or equivalent? Do not include Bachelor's degrees, certificates or Diplomas.
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
10. Are you currently undertaking any further studies, such as distance-learning or part-time courses?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No

11. How would you rate the Executive's relationship with the Assembly Members? Think about how much cooperation and mutual trust there is.
 - (a) Great relationship
 - (b) Better than most MMDAs in Ghana
 - (c) About the same as most places in Ghana
 - (d) Not as good as most MMDAs in Ghana
 - (e) Very bad
12. How would you rate the revenue potential in your district?
 - (a) Very good potential
 - (b) Good potential
 - (c) Average
 - (d) Poor potential
 - (e) Very bad potential
13. Given this potential, how would you rate the Assembly's Internally Generated Funds (IGF) performance?
 - (a) Excellent
 - (b) Good
 - (c) Average
 - (d) Bad
 - (e) Very bad
14. Even well-run MMDAs have some revenue leakage. How bad do you think it is here?
 - (a) Excellent; we do an excellent job of stamping it out.
 - (b) Good: we do a good job, despite occasional mishaps.
 - (c) Average: like everywhere, it is occasionally a problem here
 - (d) Bad: it happens a lot
 - (e) Very bad: it is extremely bad here.
15. Looking at the leakage you have, whether it is small or large, do you think...
 - (a) Our revenue collectors do a good job, and it is mostly tax payers, like traders or artisans, who try to evade tax
 - (b) People generally pay their taxes, but the leakage occurs with the collectors
 - (c) The collectors and the payers often collude with one another
 - (d) None of the above.
16. How much would you say you like living in this district?
 - (a) This is a great place to live
 - (b) This place is better than most in Ghana
 - (c) It's like any other place in Ghana
 - (d) This place is worse than most in Ghana
 - (e) This is a very bad place to live
17. After replying to the questions above, is there anything you would like to add or elaborate? Are there any significant areas of your professional life that are not addressed here that you think are important and would care to comment on?

Appendix D

Official letter for district survey

FIGURE D.1: Official letter to districts regarding survey

In case of reply, the Number and date of this Letter should be quoted

Our Ref

Your Ref

Fax Nos. 682003/66 79 11/ 66 10 15

Tel. M 68 20 01
D 66 36 68
D 66 47 63



REPUBLIC OF GHANA

**MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
P.O. Box M 50
ACCRA**

**FROM: HON. ELVIS AFRIYIE-ANKRAH, DEPUTY MINISTER OF
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

TO: REGIONAL COORDINATING COUNCILS, EXCEPT ASHANTI REG.

INFO: ALL MMDAs IN GHANA, EXCEPT ASHANTI REGION

DATE: 16TH MAY 2012

SUBJECT: DATA GATHERING IN MMDAS

Your attention is hereby requested for a brief data-gathering exercise which the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) believes will be of value to our national development plans. We expect it should take only a few minutes of your time.

This data gathering exercise is intended to supplement existing data about our MMDAs, and help develop district profiles. Some of the questions are on factual matters, such as staff size, while others are on subjective matters, such as the Chief Executive's opinion of the technocratic quality of core staff. MLGRD will **not** use the results of this exercise to measure the performance of MMDAs in anyway, or as a guide in the awarding of projects or funds. For this reason, **the Ministry will not know the name of your district**. You are requested to indicate only your region and your status as Metropolitan/Municipal or District. Because of this, you are encouraged to be frank in your responses.

The Ministry is cooperating with a researcher, Mr. Barry Driscoll, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the United States. Mr. Driscoll has been known to the Ministry since 2009 through his work on decentralisation and the district assembly system. Mr. Driscoll has helped to develop this short exercise, which is designed to maximize use of other data sources, such as MTDPs made available through the NDPC, in order to avoid asking for information that is already available elsewhere. **No personal, sensitive or political information is sought, such as names, remuneration, or political activity.**

Enclosed with this letter you should find short questionnaires for different personnel, each of which are titled accordingly. We kindly ask that the separate questionnaires be distributed amongst your staff for completion, and that they be ready for collection on Wednesday **July 11th, 2012**. A research assistant will collect these documents and confidentially transmit them for analysis. Contact details for this research assistant, as well as for Mr. Driscoll, can be found on the next page. Please contact Mr. Driscoll with any questions you may have, including requests for replacement questionnaires.

Thank you for your anticipated participation.



HON. ELVIS AFRIYIE-ANKRAH
DEPUTY MINISTER

Cc: All MMDAs in Ghana except Ashanti

Appendix E

Estimating tax performance

TABLE E.1: OLS models for tax collection

	IGF per cap. (median, deflated)
Population (2010)	-0.00000365*** (-3.78)
Urban (2010)	0.0167*** (3.49)
Illiterate (2010)	-0.0355* (-2.44)
No Toilet (2010)	0.0156 (1.73)
Electricity (2010)	-0.00320 (-0.49)
Land Area (Km. Sq.)	-0.00000236 (-0.07)
Population Density	0.000537** (2.72)
District Age	-0.0370*** (-5.07)
Distance to Accra (log)	-0.0459 (-0.26)
Distance to Region Capital (log)	0.0107 (0.15)
Distance to Kumasi (log)	0.00594 (0.06)
Distance to Mine (log)	-0.285* (-2.46)
Cocoa Dummy	-0.251 (-1.24)
Crop value per capita (log, Ghana Cedi)	0.0353 (0.31)
Constant	3.703** (2.73)
Observations	165
R^2	0.478

t statistics in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Appendix F

Test of the 1st stage

I estimate the following equation where *Instrument* is *Ethnic Bloc Difference*:

$$\begin{aligned} PoliticalCompetition_i = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 Instrument_i + \beta_2 GeospatialControls_i \\ & + \beta_3 DevelopmentControls_i + \beta_4 DemographicControls_i + v_i \end{aligned}$$

The Durbin-Wu-Hausman F-statistic is shown at the bottom of the table. As a rule of thumb, an F-stat equal to or above 10 is taken to mean that the instrument is correlated with the endogenous regressor (Sovey and Green, 2011, 199). This does not mean one possesses a ‘good’ instrument, but simply that the instrument meets the condition that the instrument and endogenous explanatory variable are correlated. A weak instrument, in which there is a low correlation between the endogenous regressor and the instrument, generates a biased 2SLS estimator.

TABLE F.1: Tests of the 1st stage

	(1) Avg. Margin in Presidential Elections (2000-12)	(2) Avg. Margin in Presidential Elections (2000-12)	(3) Avg. Margin in Presidential Elections (2000-12)	(4) Avg. Margin in Presidential Elections (2000-12)
Ethnic bloc difference	0.327*** (0.045)	0.279*** (0.043)	0.255*** (0.042)	0.240*** (0.044)
Population (2010, log)		3.433 (3.326)	0.385 (3.372)	-0.389 (3.781)
Urban (2010)		-0.131 (0.082)	-0.074 (0.081)	-0.125 (0.107)
District Age		-0.073 (0.201)	-0.125 (0.185)	-0.097 (0.174)
Area (Km. Sq., Land)		-3.284* (1.802)	-0.485 (2.192)	5.290** (2.258)
Fractionalization (2010)		-0.135* (0.074)	-0.245*** (0.083)	-0.214*** (0.074)
Distance to Mine (log)			6.910*** (1.880)	9.450*** (2.485)
Distance to Kumasi (log)			-11.850*** (1.837)	-9.919*** (1.821)
Distance to Accra (log)			-2.077 (1.982)	5.318** (2.374)
Dist. to Region Cap. (log)			0.969 (1.639)	2.266 (1.573)
Crop value p/capita (log, Ghana Cedi)				-1.719 (1.630)
Illiterate (2010)				-1.205*** (0.215)
No Toilet (2010)				0.242* (0.125)
Electricity (2010)				-0.089 (0.147)
Cocoa Dummy				-1.423 (3.517)
Constant	11.653*** (1.960)	7.673 (40.120)	62.371 (43.167)	13.530 (49.398)
Observations	170	170	170	168
R^2	0.249	0.286	0.422	0.562
F-Stat (DWH)	53.46	10.9	13.12	12.85

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

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