

**Impact of Method and Data in the Analysis of Political Behaviour. An Analysis of
Electoral Behaviour in Africa**

Carlos García Rivero

&

Enrique Clari Galán

Valencia University

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Introduction

Historically, one of the most widespread assumptions about African politics is that ethnicity plays a fundamental role in determining political behaviour, including how people vote. With the introduction of multiparty competition in the 1990s, the idea that ethnicity would determine voting patterns became firmly established and, thus, candidates could count on co-ethnics as their support base and would find it difficult to get votes from non-co-ethnics.

Since then, researchers have dedicated time and effort to finding theoretical and empirical evidence of this link, but the conclusions reached are contradictory. The most recent literature concludes that ethnic voting is losing strength and that the African voter is more rational than expected. Evaluation of institutional performance and the economy appears to be the main factor propelling governing party voting, moving on from times when voters used to select co-ethnics in order to receive patronage or club goods for their group. In other words, ethnicity is less influential than theory used to suggest, and African voting patterns are more similar to those of advanced democracies than assumptions about ethnicity would lead us to expect.

This paper analyses governing party support at the polls in Africa from different methodological angles, to present evidence that the method and data set used will have a major influence upon the final result. Although previous research concluding that ethnicity is not particularly relevant may not be wrong *per se*, when a more comprehensive approach is taken, ethnicity emerges as a significant -though not exclusive- explanatory factor.

First, we present the theoretical framework behind electoral behaviour, followed by a comprehensive review of literature, methodology and data, before finally presenting the conclusions reached.

Ethnic vote within theories of voting behaviour. A theoretical framework

There are many theories that attempt to explain voting behaviour, including the classical sociological or structural approach, widely used in sociology, social psychology and

political science, emphasizing long-term 'bottom up' generic conditions, which states that structural cleavages determine voter choices. This approach was originally pioneered by Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet (1944) but it was Lipset and Rokkan (1967) who extended the model by connecting party systems with historical social cleavages.

Traditionally, ethnic voting has been studied via this approach. In deeply divided societies, underlying party support is based on the cleavage or cleavages that divide society. Horowitz (1985) provides perhaps the strongest account of the relationship between ethnicity and political affiliation. The psychological association between certain ethnic groups and political parties in ethnically-segmented societies means that ethnicity has a direct and unidirectional impact on political behaviour. Ethnic voting occurs when electors base their vote on a candidate's ethnic background rather than on ideological grounds, policy commitments, past performance or any other criterion. When this happens, electoral results can, even in democratic regimes, closely resemble a "racial census" (Horowitz 1985). This, however, raises legitimacy and accountability concerns (Carlson 2015). Race lends a particular psychological aspect to the endorsement of a party and interest expressed in it, while political representation comes to be perceived in racial terms. Basically, choice is determined by birth (Horowitz, 1985: 86, 326).

However, as more recent literature has shown, ethnic fractionalization (Fearon 2003) is a necessary yet insufficient condition for the emergence of ethnic voting. In order for ethnic cleavages to be "activated", other factors must coalesce: in particular, ethnic voting requires an environment of political patronage (Chandra 2007) and/or ethnic polarization (Bratton and Kimenyi 2008) as well as of executive preponderance (van de Walle, 2003). The alignment of all these variables generates the perception in the electorate that candidates will allocate resources to a favoured minority once they gain office, and that the only vote worth casting is that which guarantees one's share of the cake (Posner, 2007).

A competing theory is the so-called Michigan school (Campbell *et al.*, 1960) which bases its arguments on the party identification approach. The central point of this model was the mediating role of long-term psychological predispositions and cultural values in guiding electoral behaviour (Dalton and Wattenberg, 1993: 197). The approach assumed that partisanship was motivated by more than sociological factors such as early

socialization and social status, acquired in the early stages of the socialization process from primary groups such as family and friends, and rarely changes (Bartle, 1998: 512).

Finally, it is the rational choice or economic approach which assumes that citizens act rationally in politics by making decisions that best represent their interests. Voting decisions are based on cost–benefit analyses. This economic approach emphasizes choice, evaluation, information, uncertainty and the link between voting and government performance (Downs, 1957; Sanders, 1995). It responds to a wide spectrum of political and economic issues, including: the performance and leadership¹ qualities of candidates (Brody and Rothenberg, 1988); party position on issues (Franklin and Jackson, 1983); macroeconomic indicators such as inflation or unemployment rates; and voters' perception of prospects for the country's economy as a whole, and voters' own individual financial situations (Clarke *et al.*, 1998; Sanders, 1995).

Against this background, the next section presents the most relevant findings from previous research.

Ethnic vote. Review of the literature

Early scholarship on ethnic politics tended to assume, either explicitly or implicitly, that ethnic cleavages dominate African party systems because their electorates are democratically immature. Citizens voting along ethnic lines, it was argued, are holding on to their atavistic attachments rather than rationally evaluating the candidates' credentials, which in turn poses a serious obstacle for democratic development on the continent. Crudely, this is the idea present in Bates's (1974) depiction of African voters as mere pawns on their political elite's chessboard. According to this author, "[p]erhaps the main reason for [ethnic] conflicts is that in the competition for power, ethnic appeals are useful to politicians". In a similar vein, Chazan (1982) lamented that Ghana's political elite had chosen to exploit ethnic divides in order to gain power.

Against this backdrop, empirical research on ethnic voting has tried to assess the extent to which African voters truly correspond to the tribalistic, irrational, clientelistic and somewhat gullible image commonly ascribed to them. In their seminal article, Norris and

Mattes (2003)¹ concluded that “belonging to the largest ethno-linguistic group is a significant predictor of attachment to the governing party in most, but not all, of the African nations under comparison” but they also found subjective evaluations concerning the party’s performance to be statistically significant. In other words, African voters do favor their co-ethnics, but they also value sheer political aptitude. This raised the hypothesis – supported by related evidence on Africans’ largely intrinsic support for democracy (Bratton and Mattes 2001) – that African voters might not be that different from their Western counterparts: ethnic voting may just be rational behaviour under the particular incentives set by sub-Saharan party systems, *i.e.*, aggrandized executives (van de Walle 2003), political patronage (Chandra 2007), and ethnic polarization (Bratton and Kimenyi 2008).

Ferree (2004) laid out a theoretical framework to classify ethnic voters according to their motives. An initial possibility is that, due to a feeling of “social identity” (Dickson and Scheve 2006), voters really choose co-ethnics irrespective of their past or expected performance – what Ferree refers to as the *expressive framework*. A second possibility is that voters believe that a co-ethnic representative will best defend their common interests, especially in contexts of ‘winner-takes-all’ politics (*straight policy framework*). Finally, it could be that in the absence of better information – for instance, when the press and the media are underdeveloped, or when citizens are poorly educated – voters rely on the candidates’ ethnicity as a heuristic tool (*informational framework*), just as Downsian voters use ideologies as cost-efficient cues.

So, what does the evidence suggest? Using survey data from South Africa for the 1994-2000 period, Ferree (2006) finds strong support for the informational framework and some support for the straight policy framework, whereas the expressive framework shows no significance. This means that in the South African party system, “party labels are heavily racialized” and voters tend to choose co-ethnics who are perceived to be good politicians. In a similar fashion, Long and Gibson (2015) summarize the results from a 2007 exit poll by saying that “while candidates can rely on co-ethnic votes, performance clearly and consistently matters to Kenyans as well”. Lindberg and Morrison (2008),

¹ Although their conclusions are partially foreshadowed in Posner’s and Simon’s (2002) analysis of the Zambian case.

after interviewing a representative sample of Ghanaians, conclude that around 90% of the voters decide their ballot on evaluative grounds, whilst only 10% are really clientelistic or driven by ethnic identities. As they note, however, their analysis ignores “issues of structural factors affecting voting rationale and behaviour such as gender, class, age, social status, employment status, and ideological orientation, in favour of a detailed examination of the reasons for voting behaviour given by the voters themselves.” This is the very critique raised by Erdmann (2007), who emphasizes that ethnic identities operate as political *cleavages* in many African party systems and that, therefore, voters’ declared rational motives do not say much about the structuring power of other social, cultural, and political conditions.

Overall, it seems that some researchers have found that ethnic voting played a salient role in sub-Saharan politics in several countries in early 2000 (Norris and Mattes, 2003) or the mid-2000s (Cheeseman and Ford, 2007) or in single country like Ghana (Chazan 1982), Malawi (Posner 1995), South Africa (Ferree 2006), Kenya (Bratton and Kimenyi 2008, Long and Gibson 2015), Uganda (Conroy-Krutz 2012, Carlson 2015), or Benin (Adida 2015) lend further credence to the hypothesis of ethnic voting.

As implied by Bratton and Kimenyi (2008), however, ethnicity is not a hard-wired identity but is often wielded instrumentally. For example, a negative-sum game emerges in which voters favour their co-ethnics in the ballot box and buy into their clientelistic promises when they fear that voters belonging to a different ethnicity will do the same – the result being a racial race for the pork. Further proof of the fluctuating intensity of ethnic conflict is the fact that that ethnic attachments become more salient the closer an election lies and the more disputed it is (Eifert et al. 2010). In fact, minority groups tend to side with the ethnic majority and vote against their co-ethnics if that allows them to secure a piece of the cake (Ichino and Nathan 2013).

Likewise, politicians play the ethnic card whenever they sense that they can benefit from it. They lure their co-ethnics with club-goods and other clientelistic offers (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972, Bates 1974, Chandra 2007, Burgess et al. 2015), they adapt their ethnic message to their constituency’s size (Posner 2007), and they focus on narrower yet more loyal sectors in order to articulate a cohesive group of voters (Cheeseman and Ford 2007).

Experimental data from different sub-Saharan countries corroborates the salience of ethnicity in African politics, as well as its relative malleability. Conroy-Krutz (2012) finds that Ugandans will vote along ethnic lines only in the absence of better information about the candidates' qualifications, which lends further credence to the informational framework. Adida (2015) shows that Beninese voters give co-ethnics a 16% support premium over non-co-ethnics with the same performance record. However, the ethnic bias is not unconditional, since voters only favour those co-ethnics who are also perceived to be good performers (Carlson 2015).

In an attempt to settle the debate once and for all, Bratton (*et al.*, 2012) built a multilevel model to analyse Afrobarometer data from 16 countries. They concluded that, contrary to common wisdom, ethnic identity plays a minor role in determining voters' choices, and is only activated when a voter belongs to the governing ethnic group (increasing the likelihood of voting for the incumbents) or to an ethnic group discriminated against (increasing the likelihood of voting for the opposition). Otherwise, economic interests dominate. To our knowledge, theirs is the only study that grapples with the nested structure of cross-country survey data through a multilevel model. However, their sample is restricted to one year (2005), and as Gelman (2005, 461) puts it, "it is a big leap to interpret differences between countries as a potential effect of a change within a country", so a cross-country *and* longitudinal analysis of the determinants of ethnic voting in sub-Saharan Africa is still wanting. In this article, we intend to fill that gap.

All in all, the phenomenon of ethnic voting is proof of the complex² and entangled web of incentives that can preside over an electoral system.

Methodology

Most previous studies have fallen within one of the following groups: 1) focus on single country election (Long and Gibson, 2015; Carlson, 2015; Burguess *et al.*, 2015; Adida, 2015; Ichino and Nathan, 2013; Conroy-Krutz, 2012; Bratton and Kimenyi, 2008), ii) group of countries in a certain year (Bratton *et al.* 2012; ii) analyse only individual level variables (Bratton *et al.*, 2000 the only exception); iii) compare two or three countries and/or over two or three years but not a cross-time analysis (Eifert *et al.* 2010; Lindberg and Morrison, 2008; Posner, 2007; Cheeseman and Ford, 2007; Ferree, 2006). None of

the previous studies have incorporated country-level variables to measure the impact of context on individual attitudes,³ and none of them includes a time-variant variable, other than, at most, comparing countries/waves at different moments but separately (Cheeseman and Ford, 2007; Lindberg and Morrison, 2008).

However, to obtain inferential conclusions regarding the impact of ethnicity on governing party support, it is necessary to analyse a wide selection of both countries *and* years and incorporate the contextual level impact into the analysis and its evolution over the years (country-year variables). Hence, we propose three levels of analysis. The first is at the individual level using the latest data available (Afrobarometer Round 7, 2019, 32 countries⁴). This permits comparison with previous studies that mostly use logistic regression analysis and analysis of how results change when a more comprehensive analysis is run.

We then go a step beyond logistic regression, by running a multilevel analysis using the same data, incorporating contextual variables (country-level) into the analysis. This improves the analysis for the following reasons. First, although it is customary to incorporate exogenous variables in a regression analysis, this procedure has its limitations, as it leads to misestimation of standard errors for the model parameters, which leads to errors of statistical inference, such as *p-values* smaller than they should be. Second, the between-country effect has been studied through the use of ordinary least squares models which employ country dummy variables instead of random intercepts. The problem with “dummy variables in fixed-effects models [is that they] hold constant and thus control for differences among countries, though this control comes at the cost that time-invariant country-level variables cannot be included, because the country dummies use up all the degrees of freedom. The fixed-effects approach thus allows for the estimation of only “within” effects, not “between” effects, and cannot test for the correlates of cross-sectional differences across countries” (Fairbrother, 2014: 121; see also Wilson and Butler 2007).

Third, we incorporate a cross-country and longitudinal analysis from 2005 to 2019 to observe any evolution of variables over time (5 waves) and cross-country. This framework of analysis has been developed by Schmidt-Catran and Fairbrother (2016; see also Alpino y Obyderkova, 2020). This specification assumes that respondents at level 1 are nested within 90 country-years units at level 2, which are nested in 18 countries at

level 3⁵. This is by far the most comprehensive method, which should provide the most reliable conclusions.

Dependent variable: Following Norris and Mattes (2003), our dependent variable is governing party electoral support versus others. Concretely, the model used here investigates the log-odds of a “vote for opposition” (0) response as opposed to a “vote for governing party” (1) response. “Don’t know” and “No answer” were dropped.

As independent variables, we have an array of individual, country-year and country level variables. At the *Individual level*, there are sociodemographic, cultural and performance variables. Sociodemographic: Ethnicity is measured via the question “What is your tribe? You know, your ethnic or cultural group.” (sic) This variable is recoded, following Norris and Mattes (2003) into a binary variable, “1” being main ethnic group and “2”, the rest. Level of education, rural/urban and employed or not. Cultural: trust in institutions is an index comprising trust in several state institutions, specifically, trust in the president, in parliament, in the electoral commission, in the police and in the courts. Performance and evaluation: i) the level of perceived corruption is an index including perceived corruption of the president, of local government, of central government, of the police and of justice and ii) an index measuring the evaluation of performance of institutions, including performance of president, parliament and government. There is also evaluation of the economy, which is an index comprising evaluation of country’s economy in the present and the future, and personal economy in the present.

At the *Country-year level*, variables included are the level of unemployment⁶ in the country, gathered from the World Bank Data, and the level of democracy measured through V-Dem data (liberal democracy index). We believe this latter variable to be of considerable importance, as some ethnic groups (not the main group) may be afraid to vote for the opposition in the absence of political freedoms and civil rights (i.e. Mdebele ethnic group under Mugabe’s rule for decades).

Finally, at the *Country level*, ethnic division is included, measured in terms of number of languages spoken in the country as presented in the survey (see Cheeseman and Ford, 2007⁷).

Following Ferree (2004), depending how ethnicity operates, there are three main possible hypotheses. If ethnicity is basically a psychological attachment to a population group, ethnicity should be the main factor propelling electoral support for the governing party. This represents the simplest version of *ethnic vote*. Voters cast their vote for the co-ethnic, for better or worse.

H1. Belonging to main ethnic group is the most likely factor behind a vote for the governing party

If voters perceive that they have a common interest with their co-ethnics, this interest will be better represented and defended by another member of the ethnic community, increasing their chances of obtaining a larger portion of the cake. This is what we call a *rationality ethnic vote*⁸. A rational calculation leads voters to support a co-ethnic as the best option to increase benefits.

H2. Belonging to main ethnic group and positive evaluations of economy and of performance of institutions increases the likelihood of voting for the governing party

If, on the contrary, voters are highly rational and socio-structural divisions of the past are not relevant anymore, ethnicity plays no role when explaining the vote and the vote is a *rational vote*.

H3. Evaluation of economy and institutional performance explains vote for governing party and ethnicity has no effect.

Analysis

Table 1 shows the effect of ethnicity on voting for the governing party in 2019. Model 1 incorporates socio-structural factors, among them, ethnicity. Ethnicity certainly plays a role, but the percentage of explained variance (less than 1%) is not comparable to the weight of the model of evaluation of institutional performance (11%). Even values (trust) explain more than ethnicity.

Table 1 here

For a more detailed analysis, the same regression has been run *but* only including the countries that held elections when the survey was conducted⁹. Table 2 shows the results.

The same independent variables are included. The results are revealing. Ethnicity as such does not play any role, and only does so when evaluation and values factors are included in a second and third model. Evaluation of performance has indeed tripled the percentage of explained variance, evidencing the importance of this factor when the time comes to vote. Values and attitudes still play a stronger role than ethnicity in an election year.

Table 2 here

These results already prove the following. First, in 2019, although Africans may, in principle (table 1) respond along ethnic lines, when the time comes, the evaluation of institutional performance easily transcends any ethnic effect (table 2). Ethnicity only has an effect when evaluation and performance indicators are included (corroborating H2). Second, country characteristics (such as election year or not) seem to play a significant role. The fact that ethnicity shows an impact in Table 1 but not in Table 2 under different contexts (election year and selection of countries) evidences the need for a more detailed analysis with country level variables. As such, ethnicity individually does not seem to play a role for Africans when the time comes (election time) to cast their vote. However, as mentioned earlier, traditional regression analysis may conceal significant relations when the analysed data is nested.

Most research on the issue, however, excludes a multilevel approach,¹⁰ and to our knowledge no previous research runs a longitudinal analysis, (at most, there is comparison of two or three years separately). Hence, with this background it is very difficult to draw conclusions, as previous research focuses on a certain year, and is thus affected by the events and context of that particular year and/or country.

The first step is to determine the percentage of variance depending on between countries and between country-year differences. There is common consensus that above 10%, multilevel analysis is relevant. Table 3 presents the results.

Table 3 around here

The upper part of the table presents the result for just Afrobarometer 2019, round 7¹¹. The ICC¹² resulting from figures indicates that over 40% of the variability in supporting the governing party at the polls lies between countries' differences. The lower part of Table 3 indicates that with 18 countries, five waves (2004, 2008, 2012, 2016 and 2019).

Following the same formula, the ICC resulting from these figures indicates that over 36% of the variability in governing party support lies in between countries differences, and about 13% is due to between country-year differences from 2004 to 2019 in an 18-country sample (lower part of the table).

Table 4 presents results for multilevel analysis using 32 countries in 2019. We use a hierarchical block-wise entry in different models. First, individual level variables, second, individual intra-level interaction, and third, individual-country levels of interaction. In line with previous results, only evaluation of economy and institutional performance show an effect, but not ethnicity. The second model shows intra-level effects and results are identical. Economic and performance evaluation effects on governing party support are identical, regardless of ethnic group.

Table 4 here

Finally, the third model includes country and individual cross-level effects. Previous significant indicators remain identical. Tellingly, less divided societies tend to promote ethnic voting more than more divided democracies (i.e. the cases of Zimbabwe, Guinea¹³ or Côte d'Ivoire), as does level of unemployment. A decrease in unemployment may promote governing party support among the main ethnic group. However, the effect is very limited.

Overall, the first conclusion is that, in 2019 at least, ethnicity appears to have no effect on voting for the governing party, *but does when level of fragmentation is low and in a context of economic difficulties.*

This however refers to the characteristics of a single year, and voters may change over the years and/or may respond differently when those country-year characteristics differ. In a context of a theoretical argument about a causal relationship, some researchers have reached a conclusion about social change (i.e. Martin and Brady, 2007; Ruiter and van Tubergen, 2009), assuming that in many instances, cross-sectional and longitudinal equivalence will not be valid and such data will fail the standard Hausman (1978) test of equivalence between cross-sectional and longitudinal relationships (Fairbrother, 2014: 121; Wilson and Butler, 2007; Gelman, 2005). At a glance, country level characteristics should not only be compared between countries but also between country-years

(Fairbrother, 2014; De Boef and Keele, 2008: 184). Consequently, the research now becomes a cross-sectional multilevel analysis covering a 2004-2019¹⁴ time span in five waves. Table 5 presents the results.

Table 5 here

All variables are fixed-effect, except for race and time, and all are incorporated block-wise: individual level, intra-level interaction, and cross-level interaction. All variables are time controlled. The first model shows ethnicity does play a significant role and remains through all models. Model 2 includes the remaining individual level variables (evaluation and performance) which show effect and also remain significant through all the models.

In a third model, intra-level effects show no relevant effect. Model 4 introduces several cross-level interactions. This model yields interesting findings. For example, as shown in table 4 with 2019 data, an ethnic vote is more likely in a less divided society. Those ethnically fragmented African countries with a low level of fragmentation evidence a higher level of ethnic voting than those with a higher level of fragmentation.

Interestingly, level of democracy also has an effect. Tellingly, this is the most relevant factor: opposition parties will obtain support from non-main ethnic groups depending on the level of democracy. In other words, in a context of democratic freedom and liberty, opposition supporters will cast their vote for the opposition, whereas in the absence of liberties, most probably fearing repression, they will not. This has already been pointed out by Scarritt (2006) and Cheeseman and Ford (2007). A clear example of this during the period was Zimbabwe under Mugabe's rule. For instance, in the 2008 presidential contest, Tsvangirai, leader of the main opposition party MDC, decided to withdraw from the elections and not run for office due to the scenario of insecurity for his supporters¹⁵. In the same way, Mugabe was accused of using food aid as an electoral weapon¹⁶. Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), for example, hundreds died in the months surrounding the first post-conflict election in 2006. With continued violence in the east of the country and limited administrative capacity, the DRC faced a difficult context in which to hold an election. Ultimately, the incumbent Joseph Kabila won, although the election was marred by irregularities. A similar situation arose in Kenya in the December 2007 elections, when the opposition leader, Odinga, alleged electoral fraud by the incumbent, Kibaki. Clashes produced some 1,500 deaths. In Nigeria in 2011, the

election of Jonathan triggered ethno-sectarian uprisings causing around 500 casualties. Similarly, in Togo, in the 2005 April elections, there were more than 100 deaths. This suggests that ethnicity becomes a stronger predictor for opposition parties *in a context of economic hardship¹⁷ and in the absence of freedoms and rights*.

Overall, ethnicity seems to be intertwined with other factors such as unemployment and democracy. A context of crisis (unemployment, low expectation of economic future) and lack of liberties will deter minor ethnic groups from supporting opposition parties, especially in (low) fragmented countries. This seems to validate the idea that voters may select co-ethnics to receive patronage or club goods for their group, especially in a not very democratic scenario.

However, the question that arises is, if we had to choose one factor, which is the main one explaining a vote for the governing party? Ethnicity, performance, values, a combination of some of these...? This question is answered by the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC)¹⁸. According to both indicators, if we had to choose one factor only, the best model by far is Model 2, which includes ethnicity and evaluation and performance. Briefly, though not exclusively, *the most relevant factor explaining governing party support in Africa is a combination of ethnicity and evaluation*. Both AIC and BIC indicators decrease dramatically when evaluation is included in the analysis. Basically, when acting along ethnic lines, voters assume that they have common interests, which are better represented by another member of their ethnic community, increasing their chances of obtaining a larger share of the cake (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972, Bates 1974, Bratton and Mattes, 2003). At a glance, and validating hypothesis 2, it seems that *the African vote would be a rational but ethnically channelled one*.

Conclusions also lend credence to the idea that opposition parties may be becoming more ethnic than governing parties, and that the level of freedom and rights seem to be behind this factor. This is not explored any further here for reasons of space, but should be investigated in more detail¹⁹.

Conclusions

Historically, ethnicity has been regarded as one of the most relevant factors explaining political, and therefore, voting behaviour. In recent years, however, researchers have questioned this interpretation. Conclusions gathered here over a 15 year-period at country and individual levels vis-à-vis voting behaviour in Africa suggest that:

- 1) When properly analysed, ethnicity is still a predictor of governing party vote, even when no other variable is included (Model 1, Table 5)
- 2) Rational evaluation, in terms of evaluation of the economy and of institutional performance, plays an important role, but is intertwined with ethnicity, which seems to be the channel through which interest is defended.
- 3) Contextual factors are of considerable relevance. Issues such as economic issues (unemployment), freedom (level of democracy) or ethnic division also have an effect. Level of democracy is especially relevant when explaining opposition party voting by minority ethnic groups. This has yet properly to be studied in the discipline.
- 4) If inferential results are sought, the methodology and data used are highly significant. As shown in this research, longitudinal and cross-sectional relationships are not necessarily the same. On the one hand, the incorporation of contextual effects or dummy variables to study between-country differences may lead to errors of statistical inference. On the other, a proper representation of countries *both* in number *and* years is essential.
- 5) Overall, African voting is rationally ethnic.

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Table 1. Ethnic vote for governing party in Africa 2019

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Exp(B)	S.E.	Exp(B)	S.E.	Exp(B)	S.E.	Exp(B)	S.E.
Constant	,41	,02	,56***	,04	,07***	,10	,07***	,12
<i>Socio-demographics</i>								
Race	1,39***	,03	1,39***	,03	1,34**	,03	1,33***	,03
Education			,96***	,01	,98*	,01	1*	,01
Urban/Rural			1*	,00	1***	,00	1***	,00
Unemployed			,77***	,03	,82***	,03	,82***	,03
<i>Evaluation of performance</i>								
Lack of resources					,97***	,00	,97***	,00
Economy expectation					1,04***	,01	1,03***	,01
Level of Corruption					,98***	,00	1	,00
Institutional Performance					1,26***	,01	1,18***	,01
Suffered crime					1,1***	,01	1,1***	,01
<i>Attitudes and culture</i>								
Trust in institutions							1,1***	,00
Nagelkerke R ²	,007		,013		,128		,156	
% Correct Predictions	0		0		18,6		23,7	
N				43424				

Exp(B) is the exponentiation of the B logistic regression coefficient, S.E. the Standard Error. % Correct Predictions (only the prediction of 1 value - vote for governing party)

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .005$; and *** $p < .001$

Table 2. Ethnic vote for governing party in Africa on election year (2019)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Exp(B)	S.E.	Exp(B)	S.E.	Exp(B)	S.E.	Exp(B)	S.E.
Constant	,08**	,09	,01**	,40	,00***	,75	,00***	,83
<i>Socio-demographics</i>								
Main Ethnic group	1,15	,15	1,26	,15	1,56**	,17	1,64**	,18
Education			,98	,04	1,07	,05	1,10	,05
Urban/Rural			4,53**	,17	4,47**	,18	3,82***	,19
Unemployed			1,19	,17	1,71***	,19	1,67**	,19
<i>Evaluation of performance</i>								
Lack of resources					,96	,02	,96	,02
Economy expectation					,98	,03	,95	,03
Perceived Corruption					,94**	,02	1,02*	,02
Institutional Performance					1,73***	,05	1,40***	,05
Suffered crime					,92	,07	,94	,07
<i>Attitudes and culture</i>								
Trust in institutions							1,18***	,02
Nagelkerke R ²	,001		,093		,362		,424	
% Correct Predictions	0		0		21,8		29,6	
N				7199				

Exp(B) is the exponentiation of the B logistic regression coefficient, S.E. the Standard Error. % C. Predictions (only the prediction of 1 value - vote for governing party)

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; and *** $p < .001$

Table 3. ICC – Ethnic vote for governing party in Africa

32 Countries in 2019							
<i>Random effect</i>		<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Wald Z</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>95% conf. interval</i>	
						<i>Lower bound</i>	<i>Upper bound</i>
Int. (country)	Var.	2,419	,708	3,414	0,001	1,362	24,294
18 Countries 2004-2019							
Int.[country]	Var.	1,80	0,100	1,796	,072	,060	,536
Int. [country*year]	Var.	,529	0,090	5,864	,000	,379	,739

Dependent variable: governing party vote

Table 4. Multilevel analysis ^a. Ethnic vote in Africa 2019 (32 countries)

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	B.	S.E.	Exp(B)	B.	S.E.	Exp(B)
Intersection	-1,03	,27	,36***	-,982	,29	,37	-,986	,29	,37***	-1,01	,29	,365***
<i>Individual level</i>												
Ethnic group=1	,3	,23	1,4	,191	,23	1,21	,202	,23	1,22	,18	,22	1,196
Ethnic group=0	0 ^b	.	.	0 ^b	.	.	0 ^b	.	.	0 ^b	.	.
Evaluation of economy				,052	,01	1,05***	,054	,011	1,06***	,05	,01	1,055***
Institutional Trust				,084	,01	1,09***	,088	,011	1,1***	,09	,01	1,092***
Institutional Performance				,170	,02	1,18***	,168	,02	1,18***	,17	,02	1,183***
Corruption				-,019	,01	,98***	-,021	,01	,98***	-,02	,01	,979***
<i>Individual intra-level interaction</i>												
Evaluation of economy*race=1							-,006	,015	,99	-,001	,02	,994
Evaluation of economy*race=0							0 ^b	.	.	0 ^b	.	.
Institutional Trust*race=1							-,015	,01	,98	-,02	,01	,985
Institutional Trust*race=0							0 ^b	.	.	0 ^b	.	.
Institutional Performance*race=1							,008	,03	1,01	,01	,03	1,008
Institutional Performance*race=0							0 ^b	.	.	0 ^b	.	.
Corruption*race=1							,009	,012	1,01	,01	,012	1,009
Corruption*race=0							0 ^b	.	.	0 ^b	.	.
<i>Individual-country level interaction</i>												
Ethnic division*race=1										-,08	,04	,922*
Ethnic division*race=0										-,05	,03	,951
Level of unemployment*race=1										-,04	,02	,965*
Level of unemployment*race=0										-,01	,015	,996
Level of democracy*race = 1										2,23	1,6	9,323

Level of democracy*race = 0				,649	1,1	1,913
<i>Intercept (Country)</i>	<i>1,896</i>	<i>2,081</i>	<i>2,072</i>		<i>2,211</i>	
<i>Residual</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>		<i>1</i>	
<i>AIC</i>	<i>183858,644</i>	<i>105114,499</i>	<i>105113,645</i>		<i>105254,322</i>	
<i>BIC</i>	<i>183875,786</i>	<i>105130,479</i>	<i>105129,624</i>		<i>105270,301</i>	
<i>N</i>	<i>26.629 individuals – 32 countries</i>					

Distribution of probability: Binomial; Link function: Logit; ^a Objective: vote for governing party; ^b This coefficient is set to zero because it is redundant.

*** < 0.01; ** $p < .005$; * $p < 0.05$

Table 5. Multilevel analysis ^a. Ethnic vote in Africa 2005-2019

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	S.E.	Exp (B)	B	S.E.	Exp (B)	B.	S.E.	Exp (B)	B.	S.E.	Exp (B)
Intersection	-,719	,22	,487***	-,473	,15	,623**	-,476	,15	,621**	-,642	,13	,53***
<i>Individual level</i>												
Ethnic group=1	,101	,05	1,107*	,092	,04	1,097*	,095	,04	1,099*	,150	,04	1,2***
Ethnic group=0	,045	,04	1,046	0 ^b	.	.	0 ^b	.	.	0 ^b	.	.
Evaluation of Economy				,011	,002	1,011***	,013	,002	1,013***	,011	,01	1,01***
Institutional Trust				,015	,002	1,015***	,016	,002	1,016***	,015	,01	1,02***
Institutional Performance				,030	,005	1,030***	,028	,004	1,028***	,028	,01	1,03***
Corruption				-,002	,001	,998	-,003	,001	,997*	-,004	,01	,10*
<i>Individual intra-level interaction</i>												
Evaluation of Economy*race=1							-,005	,003	,996	-,006	,01	,10
Evaluation of Economy*race=0							0 ^b	.	.	0 ^b	.	.
Institutional Trust*ace=1							-,006	,002	,994*	-,005	,01	,10*
Institutional Trust*race=0							0 ^b	.	.	0 ^b	.	.
Institutional Performance*race=1							,007	,006	1,007	,007	,01	1,01
Institutional Performance*race=0							0 ^b	.	.	0 ^b	.	.
Corruption*race=1							,003	,002	1,003	,005	,002	1,01*
Corruption*race=0							0 ^b	.	.	0 ^b	.	.
<i>Individual-country level interaction</i>												
Ethnic division*race =1										-,041	,02	,96*
Ethnic division*race =0										,009	,02	1,01
Level of unemployment*race =1										-,008	,01	,99**
Level of unemployment*race =0										,002	,01	1,0
Level of democracy*race =1										-,077	,15	,93

Level of democracy* <i>race</i> =0				,313	,09	1,4***
<i>Intercept (Country)</i>	,164	,178	,173		,239	
<i>Intercept (Country*Year)</i>	,365	0,000002 ^b	0,000003 ^b		,000003 ^b	
<i>Residual</i>	1	1	1		1	
<i>Akaike Information Criterion (AIC)</i>	400865,563	60929,591	60984,843		61058,014	
<i>Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC)</i>	400912,614	60967,117	61022,368		61095,536	
<i>N</i>		142.121 individuals; 18 countries; 5 waves				

Distribution of probability: Binomial; Link function: Logit; ^a Objective: vote for governing party; ^b This coefficient is set to zero because it is redundant. *All models time-controlled.*

*** < 0.01; ** *p* < .005; **p* < 0.05

¹ On the interaction between leadership approval and economic evaluation, and their joint effects on a change in party support, see MacKuen *et al.* (1989) or Abramson and Ostrom (1991). The former argue that presidential approval and economic evaluations do affect party support, whereas the latter argue that economic evaluations hardly produce any effect on party support, while presidential approval has no effect at all.

² There is mixed evidence with regard to the strength of ethnicity as a vote predictor, to such an extent that sometimes there are contradicting results from the same scenario. For instance, in Ghana, Fridy (2007) reached opposite completely different conclusion to that of Lindberg and Morrison (2008). Similarly, Posner and Simon (2002) found ethnicity to be of relevance when explaining voting in Zambia, whereas Erdmann (2007) reached contrary conclusions.

³ Bratton *et al.* 2012 being an exception. Besides, their analysis is focused on a single year, omitting the evolution over the years. Country level variables in a certain year only analyse the variation of that variable from one country to another (between-countries differences) but not the changes of that variable itself over time (between-country-years).

⁴ Specifically, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, eSwatini, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe

⁵ Schmidt-Catran and Fairbrother (2016) present five different possible model combinations that they name A, B, C, D and E, and the limitations of each. We follow model D, which “recognizes that respondents from the same country are more similar than respondents from different countries as it recognizes that respondents observed in the same country in the same year have more in common than respondents observed in the same country but in a different year” (p. 25).

⁶ Although is common to incorporate also GDP growth, we have decided not to, as both variables together could very possibly produce homoscedasticity.

⁷ As they note in their analysis, “it is worth noting that there is a large jump in the level of ethno-linguistic fractionalization between the first and second round of the Afrobarometer, suggesting that the recording of ‘home language’ may have become more precise in the second and third round” (p. 5). Due to this, we have decided to use the variable of round 7 – the most detailed measurement – and keep it wave-constant as a country-level variable. They also use an index of ethnic polarisation (*Kappa index* developed by Hout, Brooks and Manza, 1995). We have decided not to include the latter, because this index – as they state – “captures the level of ‘ethnic voting’ - the importance of ethnicity in determining party support levels” (p. 1). Basically, this is an indicator that measures the “extent to which support for a given party varies between a country’s ethnic groups” (p. 7), which is our research questions. Hence, it would be a tautology to attempt to explain ethnic voting with an indicator of ethnic voting. Besides, it would be necessary to know not only the level of polarization but also the number of poles (ethnic, religion, class, ideology...).

⁸ What Ferree (2004) refers to as *straight policy framework*.

⁹ Eifert and colleagues (2010) argue that the closer the election, the stronger the effect of ethnicity. Survey conducted in 2018. Countries selected are eSwatini, Gabon, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Sierra Leone, Togo and Zimbabwe.

¹⁰ Bratton (*et al.* 2012) being the only exception we have found.

¹¹ Countries: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, eSwatini, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

¹² The Intra-Class Correlation (ICC) describes the proportion of variance that lies between units – countries in 2019 survey in this case ($\sigma^2_{Between}$) relative to the total variance (i.e. $\sigma^2_{Between} + \sigma^2_{Within}$). The variance of a logistic distribution with scale factor 1.0 is 3.29 ($\pi^2/3$) (see Hedecker, 2007). The ICC is estimated as follows:

$\rho = \sigma^2_{Between} / (\sigma^2_{Between} + 3.29\sigma^2_{Within})$. For 2019 data, ICC is $2.419 / (2.419 + 3.29) = 0.42371694$. For 2014-2019 data is as follows: level 3 (country): $\rho = \sigma^2_{country} / (\sigma^2_{country} + \sigma^2_{country-year} + 3.29) = 0.3634577603143$ and for level 2 (country-year): $\rho = \sigma^2_{country-year} / (\sigma^2_{country} + \sigma^2_{country-year} + 3.29) = 0.138517936632626$

¹³ To mention but a couple of examples, in Guinea, for instance, ethnic tension remains between the opposition, whose leader is Cellou Dalein Diallo, supported by the Fulani ethnic group, and the newly re-elected President Alpha Condé, mainly supported by the Malinké ethnic group, or the historical tensions between Shona and Ndebele in Zimbabwe.

¹⁴ Although the *Afrobarometer* includes earlier data since 2000, and for some countries even earlier (i.e. for South Africa, since the mid-90s) the availability of comparable items, including vote not party support, with a minimum of 18 countries, starts in the 2004 wave. The countries included are Benin, Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

¹⁵ Mugabe's supporters yelled at their opponents, "Your vote is your bullet".

¹⁶ If voters wanted food, they had to show their voting card, which indicated whether they belonged to the ruling ZANU or the opposition MDC. In this latter case, they could access food, but first had to give their identity card to government officials, who they would retain it until after the elections, meaning they were unable to vote. In short, the only way to get access to food was to surrender your right to vote. (Reuters, June 8, 2008).

¹⁷ By 2008, inflation in Zimbabwe had officially passed 100,000%, in a context of lack of supplies and basic goods (*The Guardian*, February 22, 2008).

¹⁸ The former is an estimator of prediction error and thereby relative quality of statistical models for a given set of data. Given a collection of models for the data, AIC estimates the quality of each model, relative to each of the other models. The latter is a criterion for model selection among a finite set of models. In both cases, the model with the lowest BIC/AIC and largest decrease between models is preferred.

¹⁹ On opposition party support in Africa see Kotzè and García Rivero, (2008)