



# LETTRE DE POLITIQUE ECONOMIQUE

## DETERMINANTS OF VOTING IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE : THE CASE OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

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*BALLO Zié*

### Introduction

Further to the wave of democratization during the 1990s, elections have become common in low-income countries. They are even viewed as a pacific and democratic mechanism of conflicts and political crisis resolution in Africa. For example, elections were among the main objectives of the political transition initiated in the Democratic Republic of Congo (RDC) following the inter-Congolese talks in South Africa in 2002 and 2003 as a mean to end the civil war. The objective was the same in Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Burundi. However, in many countries such as Togo, RDC, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe and

Côte d'Ivoire, the electoral competition has produced serious levels of violence. Such a relationship between elections and violence has been confirmed by empirical studies. Collier and Rohner (2008) find that, below per capita income of \$2,750, democracy significantly increases proneness to civil war and various other manifestations of violence. Collier and Vicente (2008) explain the surprising results of democracy by focusing on how elections have been conducted. Precisely, they point out that numerous recent African elections aroused widespread international accusations that parties/candidates had resorted

to miscounting of votes, bribery, and/or intimidation. Then, they investigate the causes and consequences of such illegitimate strategies using a field experiment on the Nigerian general election of 2007. They establish that voter intimidation is effective in reducing voter turnout and that violence was systematically associated with non-incumbent groups. They also suggest that incumbents have a comparative advantage in alternative strategies, vote buying and ballot fraud. They explain the use of violence by a weak candidate by the fact that it strengthens his post-election position. Together the results obtained by Collier and

Vicente (2008) suggest that to lower parties/candidates incentives to resort to illegitimate strategies, it is important to help them increasing their voting share.

This can be achieved through the knowledge of the correlates of the decision to participate in elections and of the candidate choice.

This Economic Policy Letter (LPE) studies correlates of the decision to vote in Côte d'Ivoire where it has been decided to organize transparent

elections with no exclusion of candidates in order to end the civil war that broke out in September 2002. To identify such correlates, we use a survey conducted in the District of Abidjan in 2005 by the Ivorian Center of Social and Economic Research (CIRES). A total of 6,545 individuals were interviewed. 5,496 of these individuals are Ivoirians and 1,049 are non Ivoirians. 3,896 of the 5,496 Ivoirians were at least 18 years old (ie, the voting age) in 2000 (ie, the year of the last presidential elections). 68.22% of the 3,896 Ivoirians said that they voted to at least one

election during the last five years. 63.89% voted in presidential elections, 60.09% in municipal elections, 58.01% in parliamentary elections and 48.09% in regional elections.

Following Verba and Nie (1972), studies on the determinants of the different forms of political participation (voting, campaign activity, communal activity, demonstrations...) distinguish two classes of determinants: socio-demographic characteristics and attitudes.

### Socio-demographic determinants of voting

Socio-demographic characteristics generally include variables such as education, age, income, profession and sex. We add the ethnic group variables (*Akan*, *Krou*, Southern Mandé, Northern Mandé and *Gurr*) and drop the income, since we do not have data on this variable. We find an inverted U-shaped relationship of age on the propensity to vote, implying that individuals who do not vote are more

likely to be young or old. Similarly, sex affects positively and significantly the propensity to vote, suggesting that men are more likely to vote. Having a primary, secondary or university standard significantly increases the probability of voting while having a Koranic standard has no effect. Compared to the unemployed, workers are more likely to vote, students are less likely to vote but Retired people are not

more likely to vote. The probability of voting is significantly higher for Krou and Mandé du sud than for the Gurr group. But, the propensity to vote is the same for the Gurr, Mandé du nord and Akan ethnic group. The significant effect of Krou and Mandé du sud on the probability of voting may be explained by the fact that the main candidates for the 2000 presidential elections were from these two ethnic groups.

## Attitudinal determinants of voting

Attitudes are psychological characteristics that could affect political participation. They are captured by various qualitative variables such as political trust or alienation; trust in parliament, trust in politicians and satisfaction with democracy; abilities; sense of civic duty party identification and political interest. We use as attitudes, opinions on five variables: democracy, state, politics, insecurity during elections, adhesion to political party and the possession of the Ivorian identity card.

*Democracy, State and politics* are positively associated with voting like in Grönlund and

Setälä (2007). Therefore people who are interested in politics or satisfied with democracy or State have a greater propensity to cast an election ballot. Insecurity is negatively and significantly associated with the probability of voting. This effect of insecurity is in line with Collier and Vicente (2008) findings that violence is effective in reducing voter turnout. Therefore, fighting against violence during elections can motivate people to participate in election. Respondents who report that adhesion to political parties is based on the ethnic group, religion, money or leader's charisma are more likely to vote than those who said that

adhesion rely upon the government program. Moreover, respondents who have no opinion on the adhesion to political parties have a greater propensity to vote. These results suggest that the government program does not play a significant role in the decision to participate in elections. Finally, the coefficient associated with the variable capturing the possession of the Ivorian identity card is not statistically significant; implying that having this card is a necessary but not sufficient condition for participating in elections. Therefore, there is a need for mobilizing people who fill the precondition of voting.

## Conclusion

We have found that the probability of voting varies across ethnic groups and significantly increases with education levels, interest in politics, satisfaction with democracy and satisfaction with government but decreases with insecurity during elections. Moreover, we have found that there is an inverted U-shaped relationship between age and the probability of voting. This prob-

ability is high for men compared to women and for workers and retirees compared to the unemployed but it is low for students. Moreover, respondents who have no opinion on adhesion criteria or report that adhesion to political parties is based on the ethnic group, religion, money or leader's charisma are more likely to vote than those who said that adhesion rely upon the government

program.

These results suggest that to mobilize people to vote, one must pay attention to young and old voters and women and strengthen security during elections. The incumbent government should also promote democracy and protect citizens without any discrimination.

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Adresse : 08 BP 1295 ABIDJAN 08  
Tél. : 22 44 41 24  
Fax : 22 48 51 68  
E.mail : capec@afnet.net  
Situation géographique :  
Boulevard Latrille, près du Lycée  
Classique d'Abidjan

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Aké G. M. N'GBO  
Directeur de la CAPEC