



LETTRE DE POLITIQUE ECONOMIQUE

DETERMINANTS OF THE CANDIDATE CHOICE IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE : THE CASE OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

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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 candidate choice in Côte d'Ivoire focusing on presidential elections. 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). Concerning the motives for the choice of the candidate, the 3,896 individuals were asked whether they had chosen candidate in 2000 presidential elections according to the government program, ethnic group, religion, party, or other criteria (experience in politics, wealth, honesty, nationalism, good behavior, peace lover, being a civilian, intelligent...). The proportions of the sample are 13.50% for government program, 2.31% for ethnic group, 0.41% for religion, 6.34% for party and 77.44% for other criteria . Given the low percentages of ethnic group, religion and political party, we include ethnic group and religion in the alternative "other criteria" and merge "government program" and "political party" into an alternative called "program and party". The alternative obtained by gathering ethnic group, religion and other criteria is named "individual characteristics of the

candidate". Therefore, the proportions are 19.50% for "program and party" and 80.50% for "individual characteristics of the candidate".

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. Studies on vote choice add to these two classes, variables such as race, candidate characteristics, retrospective evaluations of incumbent performance, national economic conditions (Hetherington, 1999). Unfortunately, we do not have data on such additional variables. Therefore, we use as determinants of the candidate choice, socio-demographic characteristics and attitudes.

Socio-demographic determinants of the candidate choice

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 that age is negatively

and significantly associated with the probability of choosing the candidate according to his individual characteristics. This result suggests that young voters are

more likely to choose candidates according to individual characteristics. On the contrary, the coefficients associated with the dummies representing Koran, secondary and university education levels are positive and significant. Therefore, having such education levels increases the probability of voting according

to individual characteristics of the candidate. While the effect of the Koran education is quite normal, the positive effect of the secondary and university education is counterintuitive. Such an effect may be explained by the fact that the 2000 presidential elections opposed a military to civilian candidates. In

such a context, educated people are more likely to vote for a civilian candidate who is more likely to promote democracy than a military. Finally, the coefficients associated with ethnic group variables are not statistically significant, suggesting that the ethnic origin does not matter for the choice of the candidate.

Attitudinal determinants of the candidate choice

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 and adhesion to political party. We find that the probability of choosing the candidate on the basis of his individual characteris-

tics decreases with satisfaction with democracy, implying that people who are satisfied with democracy have a greater propensity to vote according to the government program and party. Similarly, insecurity is negatively associated with that probability. Therefore people who complained about insecurity during elections are more likely to vote according to the government program. Adhesion to political parties based on ethnic group, money, leader's charisma or other criteria. These results imply that relatively to people who

respond that the adhesion to political parties is based on the government program, respondents who answer that the adhesion is according to ethnic group, money, the leader charisma or other criteria are less likely to choose their candidate on the basis of their characteristics.

On the other hand, the probability of voting according to individual characteristics is high for people satisfied with government.

Conclusion

Using a dataset financed by the European Commission in 2005, we have found that that 19.50% of the voters choose

candidates according to the government program and the political party while 80.50 vote according to the individual

characteristics of the candidate. Relatively to the "program and party" criterion, the probability of choosing the candidate on the

basis of his individual characteristics decreases with age, insecurity, satisfaction with democracy and adhesion based on ethnic group, money, leader's charisma or other criteria. On the other hand, this probability is high for

people having secondary, university or Koran education level and for people satisfied with government.

These results suggest that to win elections, on top of

having a government program, political parties should select candidate according to criteria such as experience in politics, wealth, honesty, nationalism, loving peace.

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La CAPEC a pour mission de produire pour le compte de l'administration publique ivoirienne des travaux scientifiques destinés à éclairer davantage les décisions de politique économique du gouvernement. C'est une structure nationale de réflexion, d'information et de conseil au service de l'Etat et des autres agents économiques.

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