



THE ELEPHANT, UMBRELLA, AND QUARRELLING COCKS: DISAGGREGATING PARTISANSHIP IN GHANA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC

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ABSTRACT

Within the literature on Ghanaian partisanship, a healthy debate has arisen between those viewing Ghana's two dominant parties as cleaved along socioeconomic lines and those suggesting that this cleavage runs along ethnic lines. Using election results, constituency maps, census data, and a survey of voters' 'cognitive shortcuts', this article weighs in with the debate. The findings suggest that ethnicity matters in Ghanaian elections far more than socioeconomic variables. The findings do not, however, lead easily towards the gloomy predictions that often accompany ethnic politics. The relationship between ethnicity and partisanship in Ghana is far more complex. Data presented here suggest that Asante and Ewe voters are likely to vote for the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC), respectively, regardless of the candidates they select. Voters of other ethnic backgrounds, who make up the vast majority of Ghanaian voters, view the dominant parties as representative of Asante and Ewe interests but do not themselves vote as a block and base their evaluations of the 'Asante' and 'Ewe' parties ultimately on things other than ethnicity. It is this latter group of voters that makes Ghanaian elections unpredictable and discourages politicians from turning national votes into zero-sum ethnic census.

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THAT THERE WAS A PATTERN to Ghana's 2004 elections surprised no one. As expected, the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) picked up majority of the votes in the Ashanti region, and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) won in the Volta, Northern, Upper East, and Upper West regions. The 'swing' regions (Eastern, Greater Accra, Central, Western, and

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Brong-Ahafo) went to the election's eventual winner. A familiar rural/urban divide was also palpable. If one isolates the 20 largest urban centres in Ghana from the rest of the country, one finds that the NPP polled on average around 7 percentage points higher in these large urban constituencies than they did in less urban constituencies.¹ The relationship is reversed for the NDC. Nkrumahist parties won a few parliamentary seats in the south-west and far north but did predictably little to dispel the notion of Ghana being a *de facto* two-party state. Recognizing the practical importance of recurring electoral cleavages, when asked about strategic campaigning, a member of the NPP executive committee commented, 'some [constituencies] we just ignore completely because whatever we do we'll lose'.²

Barring a dramatic electoral realignment, scholars, politicians, and pundits alike anticipate similar voting patterns, though not necessarily similar electoral outcomes, to carry on for the foreseeable future. But why, after four elections and a turnover in power, do these predictable voting blocs persist and what causal variables explain them? Answers to these questions tend to fall into one of two categories. One answer points to *socioeconomic* cleavages as the driving force behind Ghanaian electoral alignments. Rhetorically at least, the NPP positions itself as a centre-right party, and the NDC has claimed the centre-left as its ideological territory. In a recent study of core and swing voters, Lindberg and Morrison present evidence that Ghanaian parties are separated by socioeconomic factors, including the rural/urban divide, level of education, occupation status and sector, and income levels.³ The alternative answer points to *sectional* cleavages, most often conceptualized ethnically in the Ghanaian case, as the driving force behind electoral alignments. Although Lentz and Nugent prudently caution against assuming that ethnicities in Ghana are fixed social realities, voting patterns indicate at least some schism along perceived ethnic lines.⁴ In his analysis of Ghana's 2000 elections, Gyimah-Boadi summarizes the popular sentiment that follows each of the Fourth Republic's national elections when he notes that 'the country is polarized along ethnic and regional lines' and suggests 'sustained efforts at national reconciliation and unity'.⁵

This article begins with an exploration of the genesis of the conceptual dichotomy that drives the socioeconomic/sectional partisan cleavage dialogue

1. Ghana's 20 most populous urban centres are described by the 2000 Census as Accra Metropolis, Kumasi Metropolis, Tamale, Takoradi Sub-Metro, Ashaiman, Tema, Obuasi, Sekondi Sub-Metro, Koforidua, Cape Coast, Madina, Wa, Sunyani, Ho, Tema Newtown, Techiman, Bawku, Bolgatanga, Agona Swedru, and Nkawkaw.

2. Interview conducted at NPP headquarters in Kokomlemle, Accra on 12 July 2005. Similar responses were given by other members of the NPP and NDC establishments when queried.

3. S.I. Lindberg and M.K.C. Morrison, 'Exploring voter alignments in Africa: core and swing voters in Ghana', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 43, 4 (2005), pp. 1-22.

4. C. Lentz and P. Nugent (eds), *Ethnicity in Ghana: The limits of invention* (St Martin's Press, New York, NY, 2000).

5. E. Gyimah-Boadi, 'A peaceful turnover in Ghana', *Journal of Democracy* 12, 2 (2001), p. 115.

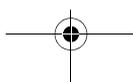
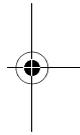
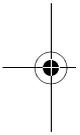


in Ghana and elsewhere. Biases embedded in this dichotomy can turn election analyses of the variety offered here into facile statements on the sustainability of the Ghanaian democratic process, and these blunt conclusions can negatively distort what would otherwise be an empirically interesting case study. After critiquing the socioeconomic/sectional dichotomy, the article turns to a two-tiered examination of politically mobilized cleavages in Ghana's Fourth Republic. First, all four national elections in the Fourth Republic are placed under the analytical microscope. Using constituency maps, census data, and election results, the social bases of the NDC and NPP are illuminated on a macrolevel. In some ways, this examination is just another point for triangulating the anecdotal and survey evidence that has already been reported both in the popular Ghanaian press and in scholarly journals. That some Ghanaian political parties are more popular amongst some members of one ethnic group or another will not seem earth shattering to even a casual observer of Ghanaian politics, neither will the revelation that some parties do better in areas with specific class indicators. In other ways, however, this method offers a systematic approach to evaluating Ghanaian social cleavages that can be applied comparatively both across time and borders. This flexibility and precision is unprecedented. The second level of analysis deals with the 'cognitive shortcuts' of Ghanaian party politics. In other words, what types of information do Ghanaian voters actually take with them into the ballot box? With the help of survey results collected in the wake of the 2004 elections, this section presents a new kind of analysis that goes directly at answering this question. Instead of asking registered voters to distinguish between political parties in an open-ended abstract way, this 'cognitive shortcut' mapping approach asks respondents to differentiate on many specific variables. The article concludes with a brief discussion of what the election analysis and 'cognitive shortcut' survey mean, and conversely do not mean, for the future of Ghanaian democracy.

Socioeconomic and sectional cleavages in African party politics

At the dawn of African independence, scholars interested in studying African politics turned in large part to the study of political parties from a modernization perspective.⁶ 'In the new states of Tropical Africa with

6. See, for example D.E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 1965); J.S. Coleman and C.G. Rosberg (eds), *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa* (University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1964); T. Hodgkin, *African Political Parties* (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, UK, 1961); R.S. Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1964); I. Wallerstein, 'Class, tribe, and party in West African politics' in S.M. Lipset and S. Rokkan (eds), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-national perspectives* (The Free Press, New York, NY, 1967); A.R. Zolberg, *Creating Political Order: The party-states of West Africa* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 1966).





which we are concerned', write Coleman and Rosberg, 'there is an almost complete institutional vacuum at the central, national level'.⁷ Given a context devoid of valued national structures, a focus on societal 'political groups' has natural appeal. Scholars translated this focus into a near-universal recommendation, or perhaps more accurately justification, for single-party states. 'Fear that opposition will produce factionalism, corruption, and separatism', explains Apter, 'is pervasive in modernizing nations'.⁸ To unite the multitude of ethnic groups and get both the rural masses and urban elites onboard the modernization bandwagon, a 'party of solidarity' was thought to be, if not sufficient, at least necessary. This highly centralized power, the theory goes, has the best chance of dragging the masses towards modernity.

The assumption underlying these early theories is that political party disputes can be organized along either *Gemeinschaft* (community) social cleavage lines or *Gesellschaft* (society) social cleavage lines.⁹ Describing the nexus of community-based social cleavages and political parties as 'a general politization of primordial ties', Zolberg lists ethnicity and region as the primary concern for Africanist scholars.¹⁰ In anticipation of Biafran-like consequences resulting from these *Gemeinschaft* parties, scholars accepted as the lesser of two evils the fact that 'most political roads carried the polity to an authoritarian destination'.¹¹ *Gesellschaft* parties, Sklar differentiates, 'instead of being based on neighbourhood, geographical proximity, or blood relationship . . . [are] based on interest'.¹² Unlike the *Gemeinschaft* cleavages with their zero-sum connotations, these *Gesellschaft* cleavages are considered both reflective of what goes on in Western democracies and pleasantly negotiable.

These theoretical propositions, now going on half a century old in the case of independent Africa, survived not only the downfall of countless fledgling electoral regimes but also decades of single-party and military rule. Today, legislative instruments such as Ghana's article 55 in the Fourth Republic's constitution explicitly proscribe parties 'based on ethnic, religious, regional or other sectional divisions' to encourage parties that conform to the *Gesellschaft* mode. Yet, over the course of all these decades, the 'slippery and not very consistent' nature of sectional identities has been proven time and again such that the primordial 'fixity' implicit in

7. Coleman and Rosberg, *Political Parties*, pp. 1-2.

8. Apter, *Politics of Modernization*, p. 193.

9. M. Duverger, *Political Parties* (John Wiley and Sons, New York, NY, 1954), pp. 124-5.

10. Zolberg, *Creating Political Order*, p. 22.

11. C. Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism* (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, WI, 1976), p. 520.

12. R.L. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an emergent African nation* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1963), p. 474.





such legislative instruments as article 55 seems a tad old-fashioned.¹³ Categories of ethnic and linguistic groups are used in much of the remainder of the text with a full knowledge that these categories are not fixed. The assumption is that they do impact Ghanaian politics significantly enough that they cannot be ignored even though recognizing these categories as independent variables does some conceptual violence to fluid terms. Recognizing that ethnic and linguistic identities are, or at least can be under the right circumstances, malleable must also free one from the *Gesellschaft* (good)/*Gemeinschaft* (bad) false dichotomy. Identities, even those based on ethnicity, have demonstrated themselves flexible enough in the past so that it is not at all safe to assume that ethnic politics of one variant or another must always manifest itself in a zero-sum, and likely bloody, conflict.

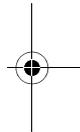
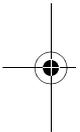
Elections in the Fourth Republic

Mapping the votes: As soon as it became clear that Kufuor and the NPP had won the December 2004 polls, hawkers took to the streets of Accra selling commemorative electoral maps. Cartoon elephants were positioned over constituencies won by the NPP, cartoon umbrellas over those won by the NDC, and cartoon cocks and palm trees over those few constituencies won by the Nkrumahist Convention People's Party (CPP) and People's National Convention (PNC), respectively. These decorative souvenirs were an attempt to duplicate on a popular level what Nugent has done on the pages of academic journals.¹⁴ Maps of this variety give their readers a rough understanding of where one party is strong and another is weak. The areas of the map with a lot of elephants, for instance, are chalked up as NPP territory, whereas the areas heavily shaded by umbrellas are thought to be where the NDC reigns. The parsimonious presentation points to many straightforward hypotheses: the NPP is an Asante party and the NDC is an Ewe party; the NPP is a southern party and the NDC is a northern party; and the NPP is a city party and the NDC is a country party.

Although these electoral depictions are useful when it comes to hypothesis generation, they present partisan social cleavages as unrealistically sharp lines where in actuality they are much more nuanced. NDC support does not stop at the Jaman North border only to be replaced by NPP support on the Jaman South side of the boundary. Although the NDC claimed the

13. P. Nugent, 'Ethnicity as an explanatory factor in the Ghana 2000 elections', *African Issues* 29, 1/2 (2001), p. 6.

14. P. Nugent, 'Living in the past: urban, rural and ethnic themes in the 1992 and 1996 elections in Ghana', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 37, 2 (1999), pp. 287-319; 'Winners, losers and also rans: money, moral authority and voting patterns in the Ghana 2000 election', *African Affairs* 100 (2001), pp. 405-28.





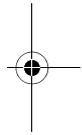
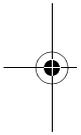
parliamentary seat for Jaman North and the NPP claimed the seat for Jaman 170
 South, in both constituencies, opposition candidates took more than
 40 percent of the vote. Figures 1 (NDC) and 2 (NPP) illustrate some of this
 gradation using presidential results for the 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004 elec-
 tions.¹⁵ When a particular constituency's support for a given party is nearing
 100 percent, that constituency is shaded nearly black. When a particular 175
 constituency's support for a given party is nearing 0 percent, that constitu-
 ency is left virtually white. Most constituencies, however, appear as shades of
 grey, sometimes darker and sometimes lighter depending on the level of
 support a given party's presidential candidate received in the area.

It is clear from these maps that the epicentre of NPP support is Kumasi, 180
 and the epicentre of NDC support is the southern portion of the Volta
 region. These two areas are nearly black in the NPP and NDC maps,
 respectively, for each of the Fourth Republic's four presidential elections.¹⁶
 This gives at least tentative support to a rather modest version of the ethn- 185
 icity hypothesis. Even if one assumes that Asantes form the core of NPP
 support because their traditional capital is in Kumasi and Ewes form the
 core of NDC support because their traditional area is in the southern por-
 tion of Volta region, however, one must still account for the more than
 70 percent of Ghanaians who did not self-identify themselves with either
 ethnic group in the last census. The more ambitious ethnic hypothesis, that 190
 pitting Akans versus non-Akans, does not fare nearly so well.¹⁷ Whereas
 winner-take-all maps depict the entire Volta region and the three northern
 regions (Northern, Upper East, and Upper West) as a relatively solid and
 stable NDC bloc, the proportional maps show increasing parity between 195
 the two major parties in the three northern regions and what are perhaps
 the signs of a growing parity in northern parts of the Volta region as well.
 Similarly, the so-called Akan regions (Ashanti, Brong-Ahafo, Central,
 Eastern, and Western), with Kumasi and its environs being the notable
 exception, are a mixed bag of greys in elections won by both the NDC and
 NPP. One can witness the sea change in the Akan-speaking regions that 200
 led to the turnover of power from the NDC to the NPP in 2000, but nei-
 ther before nor after can the area be characterized as an absolute runaway

15. Presidential elections are used because they yield one more data point than parliamentary elections as a result of the 1992 parliamentary election boycott. Because split ticket voting is a relatively rare phenomenon, presidential results and parliamentary results roughly mimic each other.

16. The fact that these two sets of maps are near-negative images of each other is the result of poor showings by Nkrumahists and other minor party candidates. A similar set of maps could have been made for the Nkrumahists and minor parties, but the maps would have looked very close to blank.

17. Akan is an ethnolinguistic grouping that includes the Asante, Fante, and Akuapem as well as several other smaller ethnolinguistic groups. There is no evidence that this construct has ever represented a unified political bloc although Price has noted that the category is becoming more and more widely recognized and may begin to be considered a product of 'super-tribalization'. R.M. Price, 'The pattern of ethnicity in Ghana: a research note', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 11, 3 (1973), p. 472.



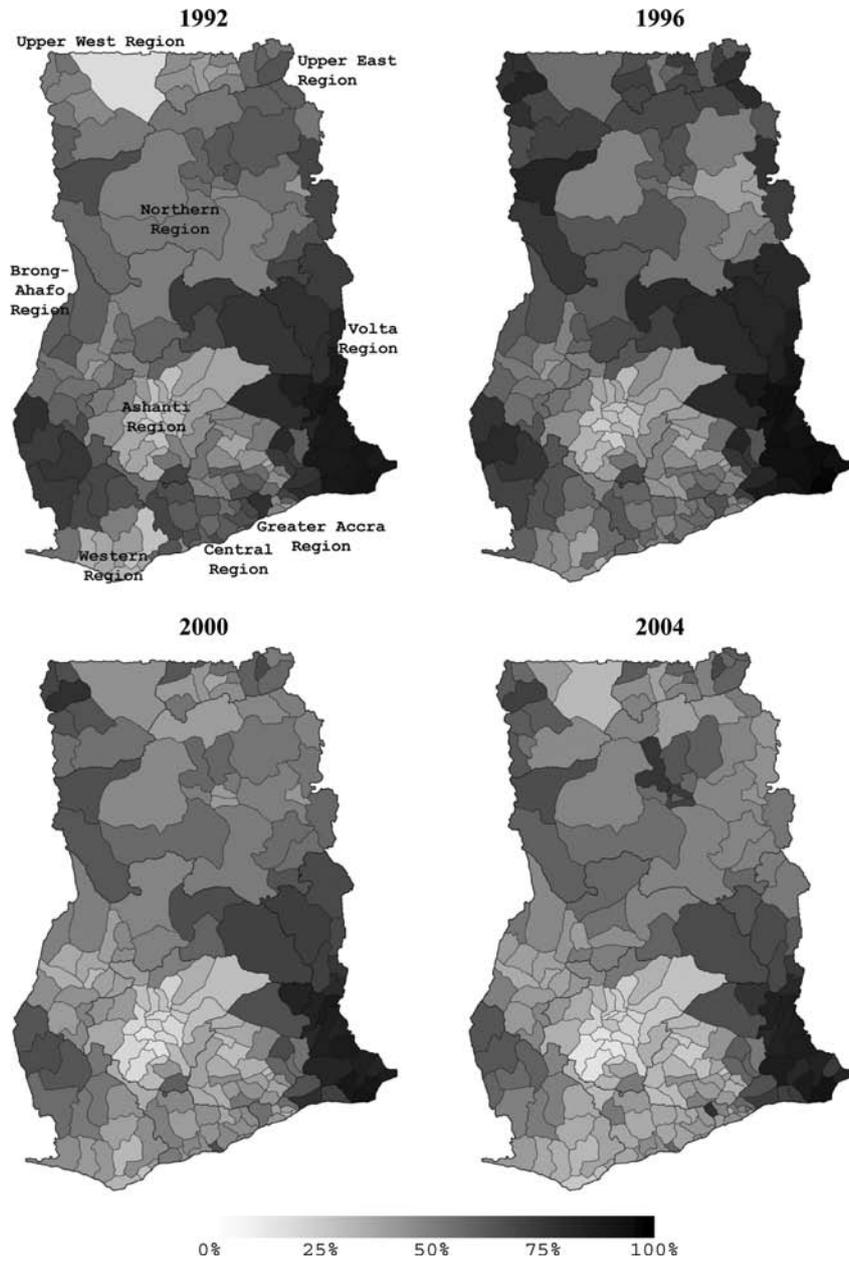


Figure 1. National Democratic Congress percentage of presidential votes.

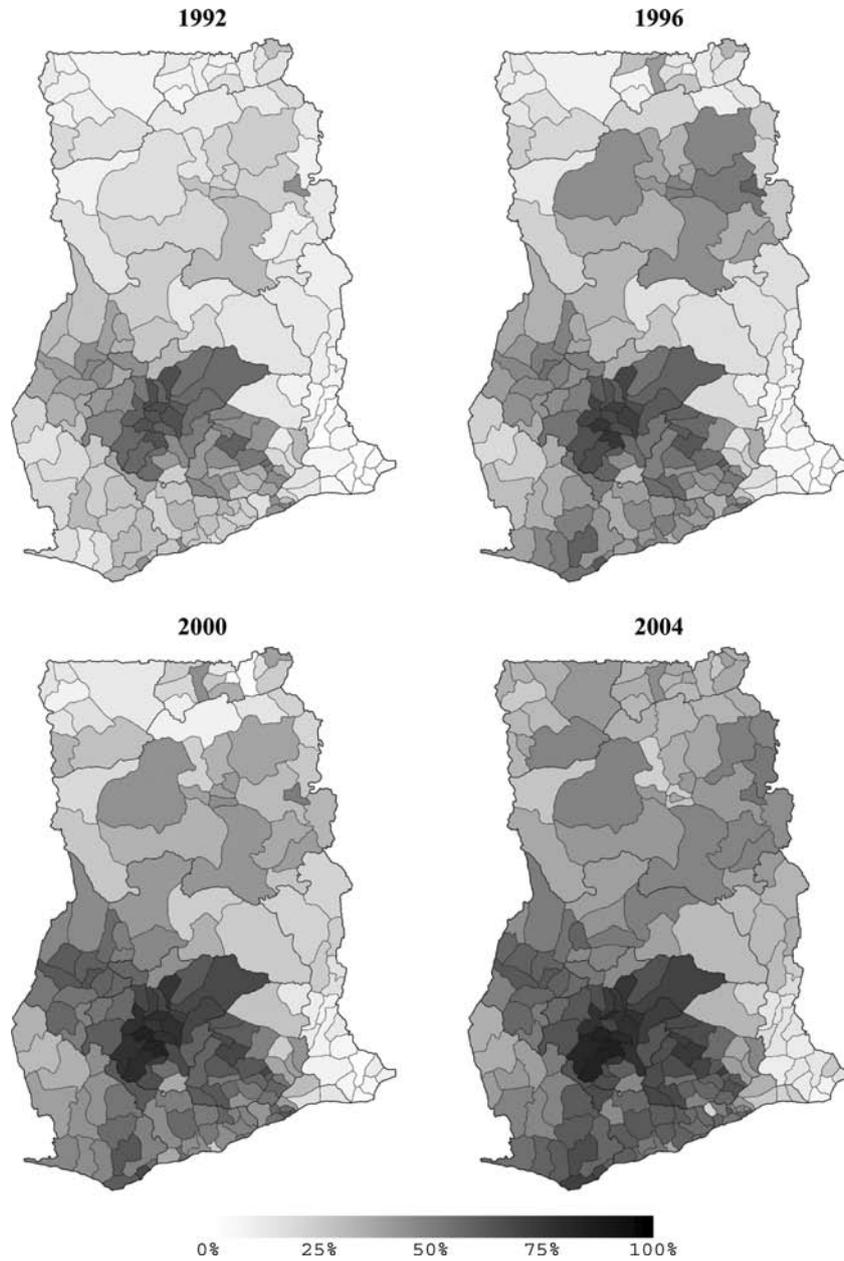
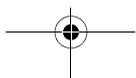


Figure 2. New Patriotic Party percentage of presidential votes.





for either party. In addition, this sea change cannot be differentiated visually from the simultaneous growing popularity of NPP presidential candidates in predominately non-Akan areas of the country. 205

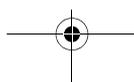
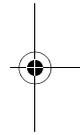
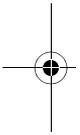
Socioeconomic indicators' hypotheses run into similarly vast areas of grey. This result is not completely unexpected, as class and privilege indicators are not as apt as ethnolinguistic cleavages to be geographically concentrated. It is not uncommon, for instance, to witness destitute panhandlers in a city like Accra walking alongside the Mercedes of wealthy entrepreneurs on their way to work or to see *burgher* mansions in various states of construction all across the hinterlands.¹⁸ Most Ghanaians can, nonetheless, point easily to regions of the country which are more or less economically marginalized and undeveloped. Despite the deleterious effects of economic reform programmes on urban workers in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Ghanaian cities continue to lure rural dwellers with their relatively easier access to the fruits of development and prosperity. Cities in Ghana are growing in relation to rural areas, because countless rural dwellers act on the belief that their earning potential, even with the risks of high unemployment, is greater in the cities than in the countryside.¹⁹ In addition to the urban and rural distinction, there is a perceived and actual gap between the country's North and South dating back to the colonial period when the British purposively kept the northern population uneducated so that they would remain a cheap source of labour in the South.²⁰ Today, the percentage of individuals achieving a level of education above primary school hovers in the low teens in the three regions that once constituted the Gold Coast's Northern Territories (Northern, Upper East, and Upper West). In none of the other seven regions does this percentage drop below 30.²¹ A perfunctory glance at the maps depicting election results, however, does not provide clear evidence that either of these socioeconomic cleavages is politicized. Although Sekondi-Takoradi and Cape Coast do look in the maps to be more inclined to vote NPP than the surrounding areas, Accra and Kumasi do not appear noticeably different from surrounding constituencies, and Tamale appears to be working against the grain of the Northern region by becoming more and more an NDC base of support with each election. As far as a North/South difference, no distinction readily presents itself especially in the most recent election. 210 215 220 225 230 235

18. 'Burgher' is a term used to describe wealthy Ghanaians living abroad who commission large and often ostentatious mansions.

19. M. Bawumia, 'Understanding the rural-urban voting patterns in the 1992 Ghanaian presidential election: a closer look at the distributional impact of Ghana's structural adjustment programme', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 36, 1 (1998), pp. 47-70.

20. R.G. Thomas. 'Education in northern Ghana, 1906-1940: a study in colonial paradox', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 7, 3 (1975), pp. 427-67.

21. Ghana Statistical Service, *2000 Population and Housing Census: Summary report of final results* (GSS, Accra, Ghana, 2002).



*Table 1. New Patriotic Party Regression*

	<i>Coefficient (standard error)</i>
Constant	0.293*** (0.029)
Akan speakers	0.530*** (0.044)
Urban dwellers	0.089 (0.069)
Highly educated	-0.085 (0.191)
Developed toilet facilities	-0.078 (0.079)

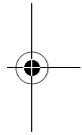
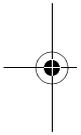
* $p < 0.1$.** $p < 0.05$.*** $p < 0.01$.

Analysing the votes with the help of census data: The nuanced election maps reveal the NDC's dominance in southern Volta region and the NPP's dominance around Kumasi. Although this finding is far from trailblazing, the magnitude of support, or lack thereof, in these areas when juxtaposed with the remainder of the country is striking. For the remaining political cleavage hypotheses, the maps are more equivocal. What the naked eye cannot pickup, however, may be detected with the help of regression analysis that teases out the effects of demographic characteristics on each of the dominant party's vote totals. Published data from the 2000 national census was released at the regional level ($N = 10$) that offers relatively few cases to test a hypothesis. Given the limitations of this presentation of the data for this project, several potentially interesting demographic variables were obtained at the district level ($N = 110$) from the Ghana Statistical Services. Because these census data are presented at the district level to perform the following regressions, constituency-level election results were first merged into district-level election results. In both the 200- and 230-constituency configurations, this is a fairly simple operation, as no constituency falls into more than a single district.²²

Table 1 summarizes a regression model using the NPP's percentage of the presidential vote in 2004 in a given district as the dependent variable. Independent variables in the model include percentage of Akan speakers²³

22. The 2000 Census recorded data using the 110-district configuration. These districts range in size from Kadjebi in the Volta region with a recorded population just shy of 50,000 to Accra Metropolitan District with a recorded population of over 1.6 million. The median district population is approximately 130,000. Although 28 districts have been added over the ensuing years, for the purposes of analysis, the 110-district configuration is utilized here.

23. Ideally, two regressions could have been run, one with Akan speakers and one with ethnic Asantes as potential explanatory variables. Unfortunately, at the district level, the available data only report language families and not individual languages. Given the previously described electoral maps, one could reasonably expect that the effect of Asante speakers in a district (who are concentrated in the Ashanti region) is greater than that of Akan speakers (who predominate in Brong-Ahafo region, Western region, Central region, and western portions of Eastern region as well).





(to test the ethnicity cleavage hypothesis) and percentage of residents in a given district who live in urban areas, who have obtained at least a middle school (JSS) education and who have ready access to a water closet, pit latrine, and/or a KVIP (all class indicators to test the socioeconomic cleavage hypothesis). Only the percentage of Akan speakers in a district is statistically significant at the 99 percent confidence level. Holding the three aforementioned socioeconomic indicators constant, for every 1 percent increase in Akan speakers in a district, the NPP's presidential candidate gained on average slightly more than 0.5 percent of the vote in 2004. When the percentage of Akan speakers in a district is held constant, none of the socioeconomic indicators in the model are significant at even 90 percent confidence level. Because of the potential for interaction between the three socioeconomic indicators, six more regressions were run: three with each of the socioeconomic indicators predicting the NPP presidential candidate's share of the vote alone, and three regressions predicting the NPP vote with Akan speakers included and one of the socioeconomic indicators. Alone, each of the socioeconomic indicators was highly significant (99 percent confidence level) in predicting the NPP presidential candidate's percentage of the vote. The regressions also yield positive coefficients as the socioeconomic hypothesis would predict. When paired with the percentage of Akan speakers in a district, however, only developed toilet facilities appear significant and that with a very small negative coefficient (-0.092) and a confidence level of only 90 percent. In all three of these latter cases, the effect of Akan speakers hovered around 0.5 with a 99 percent confidence level. These findings suggest robustly that it is the presence of members of an ethnolinguistic group, namely Akans, that is driving NPP vote totals upwards and not the existence of the aforementioned socioeconomic variables.

Table 2 summarizes a regression using the NDC's percentage of the presidential vote in 2004 in a given district as the dependent variable and hypothesized NDC-leaning ethnic identities and socioeconomic indicators as the independent variables. Because it has been hypothesized that the NDC is an Ewe and/or a Northern party, two ethnolinguistic identifiers are included in the model instead of one. Although Ewe speakers are a census category like Akan speakers, Northerners are neither an officially recognized language category nor a fixed geographic identity but rather a shorthand cultural category used widely in Ghana to convey 'northern-ness' with its associated denotation (belonging to one of many ethnolinguistic groups 'originating' from one of Ghana's three northern regions) and connotations (backwardness and a residual culture difference from 'the south').²⁴ Because the perceptions are that the NDC is most popular

24. Census categories merged to create the variable 'Speakers of Northern Languages' include Gurma, Mole-Dagbon, Grusi, and Mande-Busanga. The regression was run once with the Guan language category included and once with it excluded, because the language

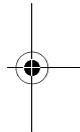
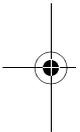


Table 2. National Democratic Congress Regression

	<i>Coefficient (standard error)</i>
Constant	0.061 (0.115)
Ewe speakers	0.675*** (0.056)
Speakers of northern languages	0.127* (0.072)
Rural dwellers	-0.055 (0.077)
Less educated	0.443* (0.235)
Undeveloped toilet facilities	0.035 (0.084)

* $p < 0.1$.

** $p < 0.05$.

*** $p < 0.01$.

amongst the lower classes, the socioeconomic indicators included in this model are the mirror image of those included in the NPP model: percentage of residents in a given district who live in rural areas who have not obtained at least a middle school education and have no regular access to a water closet, pit latrine, and/or a KVIP. In this model, only the percentage of Ewe speakers in a district appears significant at the 99 percent confidence level. The model suggests that for every percentage increase in Ewe speakers, the NDC presidential candidate gains approximately 0.66 percentage of the vote. Additional regression analysis reveals that, as with the NPP regression, the two insignificant socioeconomic variables (percentage of rural dwellers and those without access to developed toilet facilities) become significant with coefficients in the expected direction when ethnic variables are left uncontrolled. Percentages of speakers of Northern languages and those with less than a middle school education are only significant at the 90 percent confidence interval, but their coefficients are positive as the ethnic and class hypotheses predict. This result for the speakers of Northern languages variable is a bit problematic because of the category's inherent definitional difficulties and relatively small coefficient (see footnote 25 for a more thorough discussion on the subject). The results for lesser education cannot be so easily dismissed and deserve closer inspection. Are we looking at the fruits of the NDC's relatively recent efforts to define

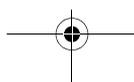
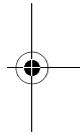
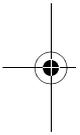
family is divided nearly in half with Gonja spoken mainly in the North but also a diverse array of languages spoken across the South. The results of these two regressions were similar in all areas save 'Speakers of Northern Languages'. The regression appearing in Table 2 summarizes the results with Guan speakers included in the 'Speakers of Northern Languages' group. Results for the regression with Guan speakers withheld from this group are as follows: Constant, 0.048 (0.118); Ewe speakers, 0.674*** (0.057); speakers of Northern languages, 0.094 (0.073); rural dwellers, -0.062 (0.078); less educated, 0.479** (0.239), and undeveloped toilet facilities, 0.058 (0.083). When compared with the Table 2, these results suggest that districts with large percentages of Guan speakers lean heavily towards the NDC. The results also suggest that a lot of Northern (non-Gonja) language speakers in a district yield an NDC surplus of less than 10 percent, when all the other mentioned variables are controlled.



itself strongly with the international movement for social democracy? Or is this effect the result of the uneducated masses hanging on to the political party with direct ties to the previous authoritarian regime? Answers to these questions are not forthcoming without access to longer time-series data. 320

Because there have been four presidential elections in the Fourth Republic and there is no reason to suspect that the 2000 census data are grossly off target with regard to the years 1992, 1996, and especially 2000, comparisons of this sort are possible. The models represented in Tables 1 and 2 were run for each of the elections in the Fourth Republic. Across elections, there was little dissimilarity. For the NPP, the percentage of Akan speakers in a district remains highly significant across time. Like in 2004, for every 1 percent increase in Akan speakers in a district, the NPP's presidential candidate gained on average slightly more than 0.5 percent of the vote in 1996 and 2000. In the 1992 election, a 1 percent increase in Akan speakers gave the NPP on average closer to 0.33 percentage point increase. The percentage of Ewe speakers was a similarly consistent predictor of NDC success. In 1992, 1996, and 2000 when all other variables in the model were held constant, a 1 percent increase in Ewe speakers led on average to between 0.66 and 0.5 percent increase in the NDC vote tally. For every other variable in the NPP and NDC models, there was at least one year of statistical insignificance and most were insignificant over the course of all four elections. Low education continued to show promise as a potential predictor of NDC support for the 1992 and 2000 elections but was statistically insignificant in 1996 giving no indications as to whether the correlation is the result of authoritarian leanings of the uneducated, demonstrative of the appeal of the NDC's social democratic message, or simply spurious. The variable for speakers of Northern languages varied widely from election to election as a predictor of NDC support, suggesting that the ethnolinguistic groups that make up this category are often at cross-purposes and very much politically 'in play'. An interesting result not anticipated with the 2004 regressions is the impact of a district's percentage of urban dwellers on NPP support. In 2004, the relationship between the NPP and percentage of urban dwellers was not significant when controlling for Akan speakers. In 1992, 1996, and 2000, the relationship is significant to the tune of between a 0.2 and 0.25 percentage rise in NPP support for every 1 percent increase in the percentage of urban dwellers in a district. 325
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Although this analysis does not foreclose on the possibility of class-based cleavages forming in Ghana, it certainly does not advance the socioeconomic hypothesis in any clear and consistent sense. The ethnic hypothesis, on the contrary, finds a great deal of support in the regression analysis and cannot be rejected. Election maps illustrate high levels of support for the NPP in traditional Asante areas and high levels of support for the NDC in traditional Ewe areas. The regression analysis suggests that a district's 355
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‘Akan-ness’ or ‘Ewe-ness’ matters a lot for predictive purposes even when the socioeconomic characteristics of a district are controlled for. Knowing absolutely nothing about which party’s presidential candidate receives the most votes nationally or the socioeconomic characteristics of particular districts, one can reasonably predict based on the evidence presented here that the NPP presidential candidate would win a hypothetical district populated only by Asante speakers and the NDC presidential candidate would win a hypothetical district populated only by Ewe speakers. Given the fact that the NDC ran candidates of different ethnolinguistic backgrounds in 1992 and 1996 (Jerry Rawlings, an Ewe speaker) and in 2000 and 2004 (John E.A. Mills, a Fante speaker), one can conclude that the party’s appeal amongst Ewe speakers is not dependent on its flag bearer’s ethnic identity. The NPP will have to run a non-Akan flag bearer before there will be evidence either for or against a similar conclusion. It is interesting to note, however, that the election where the percentage of Akan speakers in a district mattered the least for the NPP was in the only election in which their flag bearer was Akan but not a self-identified Asante.²⁵

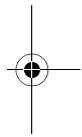
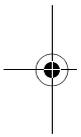
The meaning of electoral choice in Ghana: cognitive shortcuts

Maps and census data allow one to determine the constituencies that Ghana’s two dominant parties draw upon to form their respective bases. The above analysis suggests that despite politicians’ ideological appeals to the masses in widely covered public speeches and glossy manifestos, it is ethnic identities that better predict the popularity of one party over another. Although these findings will be interesting for those seeking to better describe the politically mobilized cleavages in Ghanaian society, there is an approach that allows one to get at the way citizens understand their election-day choices more directly by studying the ‘cognitive shortcuts’ Ghanaians use to differentiate between their party options.²⁶ Whereas the preceding picture of political cleavages is presented as static manifestations of electoral choice, with each map and regression capturing a single election, these ‘cognitive shortcut’ maps can be used to better understand the weight given to ‘thoughts that precede a choice’ and drive fluctuations in the 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004 election results.²⁷ Greater knowledge about the ‘cognitive shortcut’ maps of Ghanaian voters can also be used by politicians, pundits, and media commentators in Ghana who have a vested interest in altering or preserving the status quo in favour of one party or another. Such a map

25. Professor A. Adu Boahen, who ran for President under the NPP flag in 1992, would be classified ethnolinguistically as an Akyem.

26. S. Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and persuasion in presidential campaigns* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 1991).

27. A. Lupia, M. McCubbins, and S. Popkin (eds.), *Elements of Reason: Cognition, choice, and the bounds of rationality* (Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, 2000), p. 1.





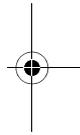
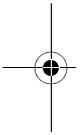
demonstrates not necessarily the empirical social bases of political parties but rather the perceptions that must be maintained or manipulated to effect electoral outcomes. Although voters may change their ethnic and socioeconomic identities over time, it is far more likely that they are changing their evaluations of the party's ethnic and socioeconomic characteristics. 400

Survey methodology: The survey administered between January and May 2005 in three of Ghana's 230 constituencies was designed to capture the character of Ghanaian political parties as understood by the voters. It does so not by asking respondents to stake out a mutually exclusive position on whether Ghanaian parties are separated along class or ethnic lines but rather by allowing respondents to map out their understanding of political cleavages in their country in a formal and specific manner. In each of the three selected constituencies, 200 surveys were randomly administered to registered voters.²⁸ The 600 total respondents were asked several batteries of questions that follow the same general formula. 'Do you think NPP support is stronger in some regions than in others?' reads a prototypical question. If the respondent answered this question yes, they were asked 'Which region of the country do you think supports the NPP the most?' Following this question set, the same two questions were asked again with NDC substituting for NPP. A similar format was used to query registered voters on other potential cleavage lines including ethnicity, population density, class, and education. 405 410 415

So that this relatively small-*N* survey would have some validity on a national scale, a most different system design was selected. The selection of these three constituencies (Odododiodio, Bantama, and Nabdam) was intended to give the sample as diverse a population as possible given the project's limitations.²⁹ Odododiodio encompasses the Jamestown and 420

28. To select the 200 survey respondents a multi-tiered randomization approach was followed. First, Ghana Statistical Services provided 20 randomly generated enumeration maps situated in each constituency. These maps were used in the 2000 Census and contain between 100 and 500 households. When the survey team arrived at a particular enumeration area, a predetermined walk pattern was used to select survey households. Ten survey households were selected from each enumeration area. Once at the household, an adult was asked for the first names of all the registered voters in the household. Each of these individuals was assigned a number. Then someone in the household would select a number out of a bag to determine the interviewee. If that person was available and agreed to be interviewed, the interview would follow. If the selected person was unavailable, one return trip would be made to the house at a more convenient time. If either the potential interviewee refused to be interviewed or was absent on the follow-up visit, the household immediately to the right of his/her house would be substituted and the household-level randomization procedures would be revisited. Surveys were administered in English, Asante Twi, Ga, and Nabit depending on the respondent's preference.

29. For the merits of this design, see A. Przeworski and H. Teune, *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry* (Wiley-Interscience, New York, NY, 1970). Although it is impossible to select three constituencies that are completely representative of a country comprised of 230 constituencies, the logic behind the most different system design suggests that if one carefully chooses cases for study based on their differences on many important variables (in this case ethnic composition, partisan leanings, income levels, urban/rural composition, and geography) and obtains similar results (in this case survey results), the relationship measured is far more robust and generalizable than results from a single or similar locations.





Usshertown sections of Accra also known as ‘Old Accra’. Traditionally, the area is Ga speaking although Accra’s booming population has diversified the area ethnically to the point that non-Ga speakers now make up about a third of the constituency’s population. Fishing and petty trade are the dominant industries in the economically marginalized urban constituency. Elections are always very close in Odododiodio, and both the NPP and NDC have won the area’s parliamentary seat in contested races.³⁰ Bantama is located in the Ashanti region’s capital, Kumasi. The constituency is home to the Asante royal mausoleum and includes the spot where Okomfo Anokye summoned the golden stool from the heavens. Economically, the constituency can best be described as a middle-class mixed-use urban area. Bantama, in both its pre- and postredistricting forms, has voted massively for the NPP in each of the Fourth Republic’s contested elections winning it a reputation as the NPP’s ‘World Bank’ of votes. On the road connecting Bolgatanga to Bawku in Ghana’s far northeast, one finds Nabdham constituency. The constituency has been described as ‘ethnically homogenous, extremely impoverished and entirely rural’.³¹ Nabit is the dialect spoken by virtually every one of the constituency’s voters who occupy themselves economically with millet farming during the short rainy season and illicit game hunting and gold mining during the long dry season. Nabdham constituency has regularly voted NDC although both the NPP and third-party candidates, most notably those representing the PNC, have made respectable showings in past elections. If responses to the survey questions are similar in these three disparate constituencies, it is a fairly safe assumption that one can say something about Ghanaian voters writ large.

Cognitive mapping: Some of the results of this three-constituency survey are displayed in Tables 3–7. These cross-tabulations map respondent’s ability to differentiate between the NPP and NDC when it comes to several socioeconomic and sectional indicators. If voters see the significant differences between the two parties as primarily socioeconomic, one would expect socioeconomic cleavages to predominate and a purposive-rational *Gemeinshaft* understanding of the connections between parties and society in Ghana to have taken hold. Conversely, if voters see the significant differences between the two parties as primarily sectional, one would expect ethnic cleavages to predominate and *Gesellschaft* communities to be the best explanation for partisan identification. To determine where individual respondents are positioned on this scale, they were asked whether the NPP

30. In contested regular elections, the winning candidate for MP in Odododiodio earned 50 (1996), 51 (2000), and 52 (2004) percent of the vote. The by-election in 2005 earned the NDC candidate an unusually large share of the vote (58 percent).

31. D.A. Smith, ‘Elections in Bawku Central and Nabdham constituencies’ in J.R.A. Ayee (ed.), *Deepening Democracy in Ghana*, p. 181.

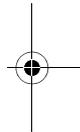
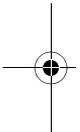




Table 3. Cross-Tabulations for Class Between the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC) (Survey Responses Given as Percentages)

	<i>Bantama</i>	<i>Nabdam</i>	<i>Odododiodio</i>
NPP			
Low income	8.0	1.0	6.0
Middle income	10.5	1.5	10.0
High income	7.5	10.5	48.5
No difference	74.0	87.0	35.5
NDC			
Low income	12.0	11.0	35.0
Middle income	6.5	1.0	15.5
High income	9.5	1.5	7.5
No difference	72.0	86.5	42.0

NPP, $\chi^2 = 162.4$ ($df = 6$), $p = 0.000$; NDC, $\chi^2 = 108.2$ ($df = 6$), $p = 0.000$.

Table 4. Cross-Tabulations for Population Density Between the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC) (Survey Responses Given as Percentages)

	<i>Bantama</i>	<i>Nabdam</i>	<i>Odododiodio</i>
NPP			
Urban	20.5	25.5	27.0
Rural	5.5	2.5	25.0
No difference	74.0	72.0	48.0
NDC			
Urban	3.5	2.0	22.5
Rural	13.5	34.5	28.5
No difference	83.0	63.5	49.0

NPP, $\chi^2 = 69.1$ ($df = 4$), $p = 0.000$; NDC, $\chi^2 = 92.2$ ($df = 4$), $p = 0.000$.

and NDC were more popular amongst certain class groups, rural or urban voters, well-educated or uneducated, certain ethnic groups, and regions of the country. When respondents identified a difference in support on a variable, that difference was recorded. When they did not identify a difference, their response was marked 'no difference'. Because the purpose of the survey is to draw distinctions, respondents who identified the same categorical variable for both the NPP and NDC, for instance, labelling both parties most popular amongst low-income voters, these responses were reclassified as 'no difference' for the purposes of analysis. Surveys that have asked respondents more directly to identify the differences between the parties in Ghana have been inundated with 'no difference' or the perhaps less

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Table 5. Cross-Tabulations for Education Between the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC) (Survey Responses Given as Percentages)

	<i>Bantama</i>	<i>Nabdam</i>	<i>Ododiodio</i>
NPP			
Well educated	36.5	16.5	48.5
Uneducated	9.5	1.5	12.0
No difference	54.0	82.0	39.5
NDC			
Well educated	5.5	1.5	10.5
Uneducated	27.0	20.0	46.0
No difference	67.5	78.5	43.5

NPP, $\chi^2 = 78.5$ ($df = 4$), $p = 0.000$; NDC, $\chi^2 = 57.6$ ($df = 4$), $p = 0.000$.

Table 6. Cross-Tabulations for Ethnicity Between the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC) (Survey Responses Given as Percentages)

	<i>Bantama</i>	<i>Nabdam</i>	<i>Ododiodio</i>
NPP			
Akan	89.0	45.5	95.0
Ewe	–	–	–
Ga	9.5	–	1.5
Northern	–	0.5	0.5
No difference	10.5	54.0	3.0
NDC			
Akan	1.0	–	–
Ewe	70.0	33.0	71.5
Ga	0.5	0.5	22.0
Northern	19.0	11.0	1.0
No difference	9.5	55.5	5.5

NPP, $\chi^2 = 177.5$ ($df = 6$), $p = 0.000$; NDC, $\chi^2 = 310.3$ ($df = 10$), $p = 0.000$.

illuminating ‘my party stands for development and honesty’ responses.³² The abstract and multifaceted nature of this type of question provides researchers with observations most notable for their dearth of content. By 475

32. The exact format and wording of this type of question varies. In the 2000 University of Ghana post-election survey, respondents were asked whether it mattered to them what party is in power (2.18) and then asked why they like their preferred party (2.38–2.41). Afrobarometer addresses the question more tangentially by asking respondents to evaluate their president and parliamentarian on many specific criteria. J.R.A. Ayee (ed.), *Deepening Democracy in Ghana: Politics of the 2000 elections* (Freedom Publications, Accra, Ghana, 2001) and <http://www.afrobarometer.org>.



Table 7. Cross-Tabulations for Region Between the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC) (Survey Responses Given as Percentages)

	<i>Bantama</i>	<i>Nabdam</i>	<i>Ododiodio</i>
NPP			
Ashanti	89.5	30.5	77.0
Brong-Ahafo	1.0	–	–
Central	2.5	–	2.0
Eastern	–	–	1.5
Greater Accra	–	–	0.5
Northern	–	–	–
Upper East	–	–	–
Upper West	–	–	–
Volta	–	–	–
Western	–	–	0.5
The South	–	6.5	7.0
The North	–	–	–
No difference	7.0	63.0	11.5
NDC			
Ashanti	1.5	–	–
Brong-Ahafo	–	–	–
Central	–	–	0.5
Eastern	0.5	–	–
Greater Accra	1.5	1.0	17.5
Northern	4.5	2.0	1.5
Upper East	0.5	2.0	–
Upper West	0.5	–	–
Volta	62.5	15.0	61.0
Western	0.5	–	–
The South	–	–	1.0
The North	18.0	19.0	9.5
No difference	10.0	61.0	9.0

NPP, $\chi^2 = 233.6$ ($df = 14$), $p = 0.000$; NDC, $\chi^2 = 282.8$ ($df = 22$), $p = 0.000$.

challenging respondents forthrightly to label a single party on a single variable, this survey elicits more thoughtful answers that provide the basis for a rough picture of the bundle of information voters take into polling stations and draw upon when deciding where to place their thumbprint.

If one isolates the modal categories in these cross-tabulations, the results are as predicted by the competing hypotheses. Across three disparate constituencies, the NPP appears to be predominately pegged the party of upper class well-educated urban Akan-speakers from the Ashanti region, and the NDC appears to be the party of lower class uneducated rural Ewe speakers. Although few Ghanaians fit either of these stereotypes exactly, they provide a point of reference for voters. If one identifies more closely



with the NPP stereotype, for instance, one would more likely be identified as an individual who supports the NPP than the NDC. 'Ideology is important by every party', a postsurvey focus group participant in Nabdham constituency complained, 'but most of the electorate are illiterates and even those who are literate they are not literate enough to know the differences between these ideologies'.³³ In a context where the ideological constructs of political discourse have not worked their way down to the masses (fewer than 3 percent of survey respondents could accurately identify the NPP as the market-oriented party and the NDC as the social democratic party), these party stereotypes serve as alternative delimiters separating party A from party B; they are the 'cognitive shortcuts' of Ghanaian politics.

Stopping at this point of the analysis, however, does not allow one to rank 'cognitive shortcuts'. To accomplish this task, one has to look at the magnitude of these modal categories in relation to each other. Analysis of this sort reveals a real divergence between the socioeconomic indicators' hypothesis and the ethnic hypothesis of voting behaviour. Whereas 'no difference' responses proliferate in Tables 3–5, they are relatively rare in Tables 6 and 7. The average 'no difference' response rate across constituencies for the three 'socioeconomic' tables was just shy of 0.66, whereas the average for the two 'sectional' tables was around one-fourth. Additionally, the second most popular category choices in Tables 3–5 are much closer to the most popular category choices than those represented in Tables 6 and 7. On average, the second most popular categorical response for Tables 3–5 is less than 20 percentage points less popular than the modal category. This number increases to more than 50 percent for Tables 6 and 7. Put succinctly, as tools for distinguishing between the two dominant parties, ethnicity and region appear to be both much more widespread and much more universally understood than any of the sampled socioeconomic demographic indicators. More than 70 percent of respondents identified the NPP as most popular amongst Akan speakers in the Ashanti region, and nearly 60 percent identified the NDC as most popular amongst Ewe speakers. Across the three constituencies surveyed, far more voters are taking this ethnocentric information about the parties behind the polling station security screens than anything resembling socioeconomic distinctions.

Before concluding, a note on the differences between constituencies is in order because there are a few differences, and some of these differences could significantly affect one's analysis of the data. As one moves literally away from Accra, the percentage of 'no difference' responses goes up. Although the data do not yield a ready explanation for this discrepancy, the

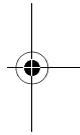
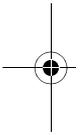
33. To seek clarification on some of the 'cognitive shortcut' survey results, an 8- to 10-person focus group was held in each of the surveyed constituencies.



results are not completely unexpected. Moving from Ododiodio to Bantama to Nabdam, one is not only moving from Accra northwards. One is also moving from a relatively well-educated urban area to a relatively uneducated rural area and from an area where nation-level political information is easily accessible to a region where the flow of mass media is more restricted. Just because there are so many ‘no difference’ responses in Nabdam does not mean that these differences do not play a role at election time. Of the 160 respondents from Nabdam who listed their education level as ‘none’, 94 claimed not to know whether or not one ethnic group supported the NPP more than others. Of the 28 respondents who had at least made it to middle school, only three claimed not to know and the remaining 25 identified the NPP as a party most popular amongst Akan speakers. Whether these well-educated respondents will spread their ‘cognitive shortcuts’ to their relatively less-educated neighbours over time is uncertain. What does seem to be evident in these findings, however, is that the queues for the presented ‘cognitive shortcuts’ are contained in the national political discourse and those with greater access to this discourse are likely to be more in tune with the modal perceptions of political parties. Although Ghanaian politicians have for the most part stayed away from blatant ethnic appeals and hammered home instead illustrious ideologies or more frequently positions on local development, somehow they are subtly conveying a different message to voters.

Conclusions

During a focus group in Bantama, participants were asked whether they think ‘tribalism’ is a problem in Ghanaian politics. The immediate answer was a resounding ‘no’. An older gentleman explained that he had lived in Nigeria for seven years, and tribalism was a problem there. He told a story about the markets there, where sellers from the country’s north would give lower prices to buyers from the north than those from the south. This, he explained, was not a problem in Ghana. Then he paused for a moment and said he did not really want to mention it but felt it was important to the discussion. Ewes, he argued, do tend to vote as a bloc, and when they are in positions of power they like to promote fellow Ewes. From the gentleman’s preface and the crowd’s tacit approval, it was apparent that this opinion was widely held but a little embarrassing, at least when presented to an outsider. Akans, he continued, are so dispersed around Ghana that they do not act like that. About half-an-hour later, the focus group participants were asked why residents of Bantama vote for the NPP in such high numbers even in comparison with other constituencies in Kumasi and the Ashanti region. ‘The pure Asantes’, the same older gentleman responded without hesitation this time, ‘that is Bantama’.

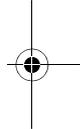
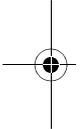




So what is one to make of Ghana with its apparently thriving democratic institutions and its apparently equally thriving ethnic divisions? The aforementioned gentleman from Bantama is far from an outlier. Conversation after conversation on the topic of ethnicity and politics in Ghana reveals that not only are ethnolinguistic divisions an important factor in Ghanaian politics, but almost everyone understands this social fact as a dirty little secret to be suppressed. The electoral maps, regression analysis, and survey data presented above are really only confirmations of what most participants and observers of Ghanaian elections have long believed anecdotally. And Ghanaians do not need to read Horowitz's warnings about 'democracy in divided societies' to know that the existent social cleavages are potentially dangerous to democracy.³⁴ Ghana is book-ended by Côte d'Ivoire, a country embroiled in an on-again-off-again sectional conflict, and Togo, a country whose most recent elections were marred by violence perpetrated along regional lines. Rarely a week goes by that the *Daily Graphic* does not run a story about a priest, politician, businessman, or traditional authority urging the public to steer clear of tribalism. Sometimes, the implication of these statements is that some opponent has been misusing ethnic sentiments for personal gain, but often, the speeches appear to be rolling off a conveyer belt of speeches influential Ghanaians must make in their lifetime.

But just as the data presented here can be read as a cautionary tale, so can it be read as a real success story. Ethnicity matters a lot at election time in Ghana. The maps and regression analysis presented above suggest that ethnicity is an extremely significant although not deciding factor in Ghanaian elections. Unless dramatic political events cause a complete realignment, it is hard to imagine a scenario where the NPP will capture the majority of votes in Ewe-dominant constituencies of the southern Volta region or the NDC will capture the majority of votes in Asante-dominant constituencies in the Ashanti region. Even acknowledging this ethnopolitical status quo, however, there is room for alternation in power. Combined self-described ethnic Ewes and ethnic Asantes make up less than 30 percent of the Ghanaian electorate. Evidence presented here suggests that much of the remaining 70 percent of the electorate are more varied and flexible in their support. Both the maps and regression analysis demonstrate that the majority of constituencies and districts move in relative unison slightly towards the NDC in the elections they won and slightly towards the NPP in elections they won. Much has been made of Akan voters moving towards the NPP in 2000 and remaining there in 2004. Yet, there are several constituencies not in

34. D.L. Horowitz, 'Democracy in divided societies: the challenge of ethnic conflict', *Journal of Democracy* 4, 4 (1993), pp. 18–38.



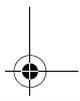
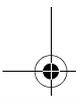
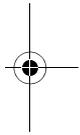
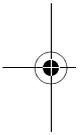


the Brong-Ahafo, Western, Central, or Eastern regions in these elections that show in the constituency maps to have lurched towards the NPP by similar margins. And the fact that the variable Akan-speaking did not show more explanatory power in 2000 than it did in 1996 triangulates with the maps. The NPP won in 2000 because the vast majority of constituencies moved in their direction and not because they successfully pulled more non-Asante Akan speakers into a broader ethnolinguistic coalition.

So why has not Ghana been engulfed in a sectional dispute along the lines of its neighbours in Côte d'Ivoire? Such a fate was certainly on the minds of all the churches who held prayer vigils on the eve of Election Day 2004 and all the local celebrities who took to the airwaves in the weeks before the election to urge their countrymen to abide peacefully by the election results no matter what the outcome. Nugent offers as a potential explanation the fact that 'at a time when ethnicity was being used as a cudgel across the border in Côte d'Ivoire, it is to the credit of Ghanaian politicians that they did not resort to ethnic smears although they sometimes accused their opponents of playing dirty'.³⁵ When taken together, the election analysis and 'cognitive shortcuts' survey point to a more structurally oriented solution. In a country where the vast majority of the voting population does not ethnically self-define itself in a way similar to the two dominant political parties, going 'tribalistic' could very well stir up the base while simultaneously costing one an election. Although the majority of voters view the NPP as an Asante party and the NDC as an Ewe party, it is in both of these parties' interests to run as far away from these labels as possible.³⁶ Then, when it comes time to vote, the non-Asante and non-Ewe who will ultimately decide an election will not be able to vote against 'those Asante' or 'those Ewe' tribalists. If, as is suggested here, most Ghanaian voters will go to the polls in 2008 and decide whether or not they like the job the Asante party did over the past eight years, this is a far cry from understanding the elections as a zero-sum ethnic census. In the vast grey areas of the Ghanaian electoral map, voters see Ghana's two dominant parties as ethnically tinged, but they vote, not out of a sense of *Gemeinschaft*, but based on personal evaluations that may or may not resemble those traditionally reserved for societies cleaved along *Gesellschaft* lines.

35. Nugent, 'Ethnicity', p. 4.

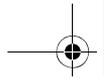
36. David Brown has made the argument that labelling Ewes 'tribalists' has in the past worked well for Akan candidates. 'Who are the tribalists? Social pluralism and political ideology in Ghana', *African Affairs* 81, 322 (1982), pp. 37-69.



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