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Economic Voting in the Developing Democracy

A Case Study of Voting Behavior in Ghana

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Abstract

Following decolonisation and a transformation towards democracy, voting in African countries has been considered a practice based on ethical alignments and clientelism. This study uses the framework of economic voting, the idea that voters consider the economic performance of an incumbent leader to either punish or reward them, to investigate the vote choice in Ghana. Economic voting theory has previously primarily been applied to a European or American context. The aim of this study is to understand if economic voting theory can be applied in another context by answering the research question: “Can economic voting be observed in an African context?” The study was conducted using quantitative methods analysing data from the Afrobarometer surveys from 2014 and 2017. Logistic regression gave significant results for a model including respondents' self-reported assessments of the current economy, the performance of the incumbent, development of the economy over the past 12 months, closeness to party, age and gender. The results suggest that the economy does have a significance as a predictor of intended vote choice, however it was not observed to be the greatest determinant.

Key words: Ghana, economic voting, logistic regression, vote choice, Afrobarometer.

Words: 9112

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1 Introduction

There seems to be no question - “Yes, there is economic voting in developed democracies” (Duch & Stevenson, 2008, p. 92). Although the debate amongst scholars on how economic voting is to be understood and researched empirically, there is a strong consensus on the existence of economic voting. Simultaneously, elections in newer, developing democracies in Africa have long been considered to be subject to ethnic voting and clientelism. The idea for this study comes from the follow-up question to this claim: what about the not-so-developed democracies? With democracy developing, is it perhaps so that the voting process and evaluations made by voters has developed? This study aims to investigate whether and how the phenomenon of economic voting occurs in new developing democracies. There is extensive research on economic voting which confirms that economic voting occurs and is a persistent phenomenon in democratic elections (Lewis-Beck, 1988). However, a number of studies highlight the lack of research on economic voting in newer democracies that are under development (Stiers et.al., 2020; Wimpy & Whitten, 2017). Wimpy & Whitten point out that in earlier research it is repeatedly assumed that results confirming economic voting cannot be observed in new democracies and/or developing democracies (2017). This assumption, however, does not seem to be supported by research results, but is rather a consequence of an accepted focus on developed democracies such as European countries and the United States. It may be that economic voting does not occur in newer democracies. Investigating and confirming this, however, has intra-scientific relevance for increasing the understanding of economic voting as well as developing democracies. If economic voting then does not occur in newer, developing democracies, the question arises when it no longer occurs and what the connection between democratisation and economic voting looks like. To investigate this, this paper will conduct a case study, looking at Ghana as a critical case for developing democracies. The prevalence of economic voting in Ghana would indicate whether or not economic voting occurs in other, less developed

democracies. If economic voting is not observable amongst the Ghanaian electorate, it is not likely that it is in less developed democracies. To investigate this a quantitative analysis of data from the organisation Afrobarometer's surveys on Ghanaian voters have been performed through logistic regression. The years 2014 and 2017 have been studied to gain insight into the evaluations in relation to objective economic measures. By extending the theoretical framework of economic voting to a new context, using an approach that can allow the analysis to account for contextual differences but that is also used in existing work on Europe and the United States, the hope is that the results can contribute to the understanding of the economic vote in Ghana as it relates to the research field as a whole. Further, the purpose of this study is to expand the understanding of economic voting in an African case, a context that might call for a different interpretation than the European or American ones. The research question is therefore as follows: Can economic voting be observed in an African context?

2 Economic Voting Theory

2.1 Explaining Voting Behaviour

Theories and models explaining voting behaviour are an integral part of academic research regarding elections. There are various models using different explanatory variables as the essential motive for voting. In the following sections central theoretical concepts and divisions within them will be presented and discussed.

2.1.1 The Rational Voter

First, it must be established that much of the literature on vote choice is based on the assumption that voters are rational and self-interested. This idea was generally introduced by Anthony Downs (1957) in his ‘economic theory of democracy’ and draws inspiration from the underlying assumptions in economics (Hibbs, 2006). Both voters and parties are considered to be rational actors. The assumption of rationality is conducive in empirical political research of voting behaviours because it allows for two things: assuming consistency and assuming instrumentality (McGann, 2016).

On one hand, a rational voter has preferences that can be ordered. Regardless of motives, they prefer one candidate or policy over another and a third less than that. Alternatively, they can assess that their preferences are equal. In essence, it means that voters can rank their choices in accordance with their preferences. This in turn means that voters preferences are consistent, which is conducive when modelling voter behaviour (McGann, 2016). On the other hand, a rational voter votes to achieve a certain end. Whether that is to enforce a certain ideology, remove an incumbent party from office or to have a specific policy be executed. Assuming that people vote not simply for the act of voting itself, but treat the vote as an act instrumental to achieving a certain result, motivates the

query of what these desired outcomes might be (McGann, 2016). Although rational choice is not explicitly assumed in all research on voting it is often the underlying assumption and political theories on voting have been influenced by these assumptions.

2.1.2 Ideological vs. Performance

Now, the focus turns to *what* the voter considers, what purpose their vote has. Here, a distinction is made between ideological voting and performance voting. Ideological voting, as the name implies, is when the voter is primarily concerned with maximising the alignment in preferences with the available parties or candidates. With ideological voting, spatial issues are the main concern of voters, that is where in the political space their preferences fit. The *median voter theorem*, popularised by Downs (1957), is one of the earliest examples of a spatial model. An integral distinction is made between spatial and valence models of voting (Stiers, 2022). Performance voting instead concerns the belief that the party's or candidate's ability to execute policy as the principal mechanism. These voters are primarily concerned with so-called 'valence issues' (Stiers, 2022). Valence voters are less concerned with the policy aligning with their own beliefs and more so with which party is considered competent and fit to lead (Stiers, 2022).

2.1.3 Retrospective vs. Prospective

When assessing an incumbent government's performance, voters can do so either by considering how they have performed over the last term in office or by assessing the expected performance in comparison to the alternative candidates (Stiers, 2022; Hibbs, 2006). This is an important distinction when designing voting models because it results in different operationalisations and therefore requires different data. Both retrospective and prospective approaches are common, however it is suggested that retrospective might have more empirical support (Stiers, 2022). Additionally, Hibbs notes that the expectation of future

performance (prospective) must be based on something. It is difficult to model for an expected outcome in an imaginary, completely neutral political space - and the results would arguably not tell us anything about the cases that are being studied. Therefore, Hibbs argues, that prospective performance voting in practice requires some sort of retrospective assessment of the candidates, making a focus on retrospective voting a more robust perspective to model voting for (2006). Further, it is certainly possible that voters in practice employ both perspectives simultaneously when deciding on their vote. However, translating this possibility into theory using statistical analysis is not common in research on economic voting, as creating a model that encapsulates both the prospective and retrospective dimensions has been a challenge to the field. Mainly because of the difficulties in creating a model for the prospective vote similar to those for retrospective (Hibbs, 2006, pp. 22-23). Furthermore, Stiers et al. further suggest that voters tend, at least in the "older" democracies they have studied, not only to judge the incumbent government according to its performance and the state of the economy just before election day, but to make a balanced assessment of the entire mandate - something they speculate could vary in smaller developed democracies (2020).

2.2 Conceptualising Economic Voting

Having reviewed the general elements and terms in voting theories, the following section will review relevant research regarding specifically the economic vote.

2.2.1 The Economic Vote

The theory of economic voting is interested in how specifically economic factors influence voting behaviour. There is an extensive amount of research confirming that economic factors have a substantial impact on the results of an election (Anderson, 2020). In a broad understanding of the concept of economic voting there are both ideological and performance models focusing on economic factors as significant. Furthermore, economic voting is one of the major themes in the

field of performance voting (Stiers, 2022). Economic voting theory recognizes that other non-economic factors, such as social issues, party identification, leadership characteristics, and campaign dynamics, may also influence voting behaviour. Nevertheless, theories on economic voting argue that economic considerations often dominate during elections, especially when economic issues are salient and directly affect voters' lives (Lewis-Beck, 1998)

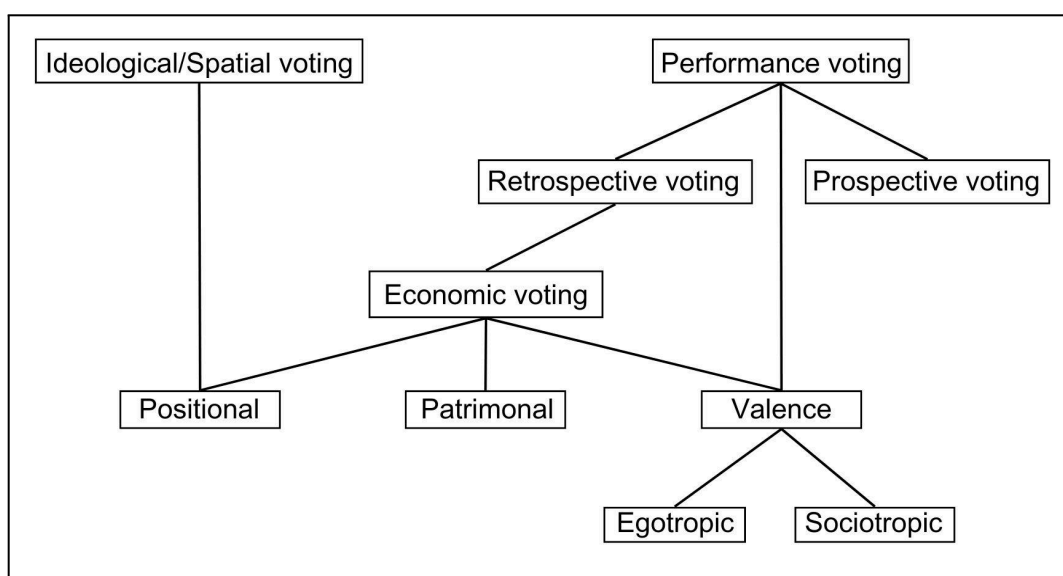
Economic voting can be conceptualised in different ways. Lewis-Beck's & Stegmaier's (2000) presentation of economic voting theory is a significant contribution to the understanding of how economic factors influence voter behaviour in democratic elections. This theory posits that voters tend to evaluate incumbent governments primarily based on economic performance (Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2000). In line with their development, economic voting theories generally focus on the incumbent government and are based on the idea that voters either punish or reward the incumbent government depending on how the government has performed economically during the past term. When the economy is doing well, incumbents are more likely to be rewarded with electoral support. Conversely, during economic downturns, voters are more likely to punish incumbents by voting them out. In their conceptualization of the economic vote it concerns retrospective and performance based voting (Stiers, 2022).

Studying the economic vote operationalised as concerning valence issues has dominated the field, but more recent studies suggest a more complex reality (Quinlan & Okolikj, 2022; Anderson, 2020). *Positional voting* encompasses voting based on economic policy preferences and their accordance with the candidates policy, in essence ideological voting based on economic factors (Stiers 2022). With *patrimonial voting*, the significance of voters' material and financial assets is the focal point (Quinlan & Okolikj, 2022).

As with political theory overall, it is undoubtedly difficult to encapsulate all aspects of reality into a useful framework for analysis. This is also the case for economic voting and how much of the Instead of isolating and analysing one of the aspects (positional, patrimonial or valence) some works on the economic vote have proceeded with a more multidimensional approach. In addition to valence this approach also includes patrimonial and positional variables (Stiers, 2022). Employing this approach, Lewis-Beck et.al. (2013) argue that the three

dimensions respectively are of importance to vote choice, in combination with each other as well as on their own (Stiers, 2022). In figure 1 below the concepts concerning economic voting are visualised to help clarify the connections.

Figure 1. *Conceptual Map of Economic Voting*



Source: Stiers, 2022, p.400.¹

2.2.2 Egotropic vs. Sociotropic

As depicted in the figure above (1) the valence dimension of economic voting itself contains two types. The two types are sociotropic and egotropic (sometimes referred to as egocentric), where the sociotropic means a focus on individuals' perception of the country's economy as a whole and the egotropic individual's perception of their own economic situation in relation to political decisions (Rogers & Tyszler, 2018). Egotropic voting, sometimes referred to as pocketbook voting, entails voters evaluating the political impact on their own financial situation and voting accordingly (Hibbs, 2006, p. 18). According to Hibbs, this is the dimension closest to Downs (1957) understanding of the connections between economy and democracy. The egotropic voter resonates with the original outline

¹Stiers presents a similar outline in her paper which this figure draws inspiration from. Additions have been made in this figure to include all relevant terms discussed in this section and their relation to each other as explained by Stiers and the respective references.

of the rational, self interested voter, as presented previously (2006, p. 18). Contrarily, the sociotropic vote has gained popularity in academic research and is today more commonly used - when studying the influence of economic factors on voting - than the egotropic. The sociotropic vote involves voters evaluating the government's performance based on macroeconomic factors such as growth in gross domestic product (GDP), inflation and unemployment rates (Anderson, 2007). For both types, there are methodological difficulties. For the egotropic vote the challenge lies in establishing an operationalisation on voters perception and evaluation of their own economic situation. Similarly, the sociotropic vote requires its considerations. There are multiple ways to understand a state's economic situation and many measures could be used. Choosing which to include is an important methodological step in exploring the sociotropic note. Further, some studies that steer to use of the egotropic vote argues that the sociotropic vote is dependent on information about the economy, e.g. access to free media and an understanding of basic concepts in economics (Wimpy & Whitten, 2017). Albeit these methodological challenges, each of the types also has its benefits, uncovering different aspects of the economic vote. All in all, it is important to keep the distinction between the sociotropic and egotropic dimension in mind when exploring economic voting.

2.2.3 Analysing the Economic Vote

Another prominent contribution to the field of economic voting is the work of Raymond M. Duch and Randolph T. Stevenson, presenting an extensive examination of how perceptions of economic matters influence the voter and in turn the election results (Duch & Stevenson, 2010). They present a guide on how to understand the variation in the results on economic voting. This by understanding economic voting theory not as an absolute law 'but, rather, a conditional one' (Duch & Stevenson, 2010, p.1).

Researching economic voting is a predominantly quantitative pursuit, and the methodology often differs between different studies as scholars aim to develop the methods for empirical analysis to achieve as credible results as possible (Duch

& Stevenson, 2010, p. 27). However, different countries and different elections might call for different approaches to encapsulate their political and economical context. Analysis of the economy's influence on voting has been done both by aggregate-level studies, using macroeconomic data as a indicator for performance and comparing it to election results, as well as individual-level, using survey data of voters *perception* of the economy and the incumbents performance as the independent variable² (Duch & Stevenson, 2010, pp. 25-27). Duch & Stevenson suggest that studies conducted using individual-level data of voters' economic perceptions, are more likely to yield comparable results (2010, pp. 25-27). Although the purpose of Duch & Stevenson's work is explicitly directed at 'advanced democracies' (2010, p.2) the employment of an individual level analysis makes just as much sense for studying a country in another context, such as Ghana.

Furthermore, Duch and Stevenson argue that to understand the economic vote one must also take into account surrounding factors such as how much influence the global economy has on a nation's economy, institutional strength and the *clarity of responsibility* in institutions (Duch & Stevenson, 2010, pp. 25-27). Stiers et al. also note that clarity in how voters can demand responsibility from those in power, i.e. a clarity in who is responsible for which events and results in politics and the economy, can contribute to economic voting being more prevalent (2020).

Finally, it is important to note that the prevailing framework of economic voting is developed for, and by studying, western democracies. Therefore, the results of previous works, and their theoretical implications, might not be indicative of the situation regarding African voters. This study will attempt at applying economic voting theory in an African context, to explore if similar mechanisms are prevalent there. Moving forward, any comparisons to or explanations using previous empirical studies concerning European or American voters should therefore be interpreted with this in mind. However, this also highlights the importance of empirically investigating what economic voting entails in an African context, more specifically in Ghana. The next chapter will

² This distinction is also different from that of the sociotropic vs. egotropic vote. This concerns on what level we study the vote whereas the socio-/egotropic distinction concerns on what level voters perceive the economy's influence.

cover previous literature on voting in African countries, especially the limited literature there is on economic voting and provide some background on Ghana as the critical case.

3 Voting in Ghana

This chapter will cover a review of existing explanations about voting in Ghana as well as a presentation and motivation of Ghana as the case for this study. To conclude, expectations of the economic vote in Ghana will be conveyed.

3.1 Defining Developing Democracy

Seeing that this study aims to investigate whether economic voting can be observed in a developing democracy it is important to understand what developing democracy entails. The terminology associated with ‘democracy’, ‘developing democracy’ or ‘economy’ or ‘country’ might appear a bit unsettled. These delimitations albeit, not central to the purpose of this study, are integral to understanding Ghana as a critical case. To emphasise how Ghana fits into this context a brief review of the different terms is useful.

Developing country is generally considered to be an outdated umbrella term, generally used to group countries that had not yet reached a certain level of democratic and economic development (Barros Leal Farias, 2023). However, this can be viewed as a reductive conceptualisation. Goldin points out that there has been a shift in the discourse around development; from purely focusing on economic growth, towards a more holistic approach also considering social and political factors such as education, citizens life satisfaction, environment and safety (2018). The term *developed country* itself begs the question by what means that country is considered developed. Now it is more common to categorise countries based on different, more specific, factors. For example, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), primarily focused on economic indicators, groups countries by: advanced *economy* and *emerging market and developing economies*, Ghana being a part of the latter (International Monetary Fund, 2023). Moreover, the organisation Freedom House organises countries based on freedom indexes in

the categories *Free*, *Partly Free* and *Not Free*, Ghana being part of the *Free* group (Freedom House, 2024). All in all, reducing a country's situation in terms of *developing* or *developed* does not give useful information about its current state. Rather, conceptualising it as a spectrum on which the development in economy as well as democratic parameters (or any other factor for that matter) can be observed.

There are of course a myriad of metrics that could be used to look at development in a country. For this study, economic and democratic factors are of interest because the research question concerns the influence of the economy and the function and quality of democratic institutions and acts. Dodsworth & Ramshaw point out that the process of democratisation and that of a growing economy are not necessarily linked, and that there has existed an idea that democracy can stand in the way of economic growth. However, they conclude that there is more recent evidence that democratisation indirectly benefits economic growth (2021, pp. 126-127). However, for this study, a distinction is to be made between developing democracy and developing economy to highlight that development is not to be reduced to economic growth. In this study, *developing democracy* is conceptualised as a country that previously did not live up to the criteria of a democracy but over time is improving. There are of course different conceptualisations of *democracy* in itself and although not central to this paper's analysis, what is meant here is a more maximalist definition of democracy such as that of Robert Dahl (see Dahl, 1971 for further explanation). *Developing economy* can also be operationally defined in different ways. In this context it is a narrow definition that is referred to where it is specifically more traditional economic measures that are of interest. GDP per capita is a common measure of economic growth (Goldin, 2018). A country which has seen an improved growth and stability in economic measures from a previous situation of less economic prosperity is by this definition considered developing. However, it is important to remember that this does not necessarily imply an overall positive development, and that what is a positive development overall is based on a standard that is not unquestionably universal.

Essentially, there is a difference between democratic development and economic development. The significance of this notion will be evident when reviewing Ghana as a critical case in the following section.

3.2 Ghana as A Critical Case

Choosing Ghana as a critical case for studying the economic vote in a developing democracy is based on two premises: it has seen relatively stable economic and democratic development since independence (1) it is a unitary state with presidential elections (2) (Fage et.al., 2024).

Since the connection between economic and democratic development is contested, picking a case that has both democratic development and economic growth aids in answering the research question. The assumptions behind this is that a case with, for example high economic growth but very constrained or non-existent democratic functions, such as press freedom, access to vote and the opportunity for political opposition, might not yield any data that is useful or trustworthy. On the other hand, with a case with better democratic functions which are not performing economically, the concern is that the influence of economic fluctuations might not be observable for the electorate and therefore limiting the possibility of statistically observing the presence or absence of economic voting. Therefore, this study uses Ghana as a critical case because it is a developing democracy but also a developing economy.

The notion behind the second premise is that a smaller unitary state allows for less regional divisions than a bigger, federal one, such as Nigeria. Moreover, choosing a federal state would possibly make it more difficult to differentiate between the influence of federal and national economic policy and performance.

All this considered, Ghana has been selected as a critical case for investigating economic voting in a developing democracy. It would of course be interesting to study more countries but given the limitations to this study and available resources, looking at Ghana is a step in the direction of understanding if the economic vote might be present in other, previously disregarded countries as well.

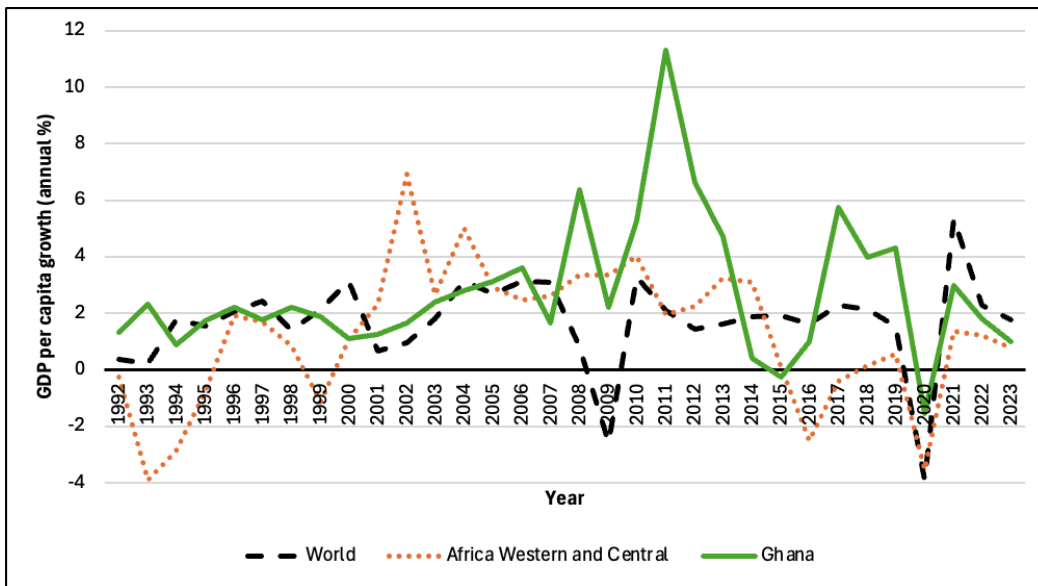
3.3 Political and Economic Background

3.3.1 Overview

In 1957 several kingdoms, previously exploited by the Portuguese, Swedish, Danish and eventually under British colonial rule unified as Ghana on the 6th of March. In 1960, Ghana transitioned from a constitutional monarchy to a presidential republic through a constitutional referendum (Fage et.al., 2024). After a period of rule under different military governments the country adopted a multiparty system in 1992 after the ruler at the time, Jerry John Rawlings who had ruled since 1981, allowed for opposition in elections (Osei & Malang, 2018, p. 411). Since then Ghana has effectively been a two-party system with the two biggest parties being the National Democratic Congress, a party which Rawling himself started in 1992 and New Patriotic Party, the main opposition party (Osei & Malang, 2018, p. 411). There are other small opposition parties but none that has ever received a significant amount of votes (Stoecker, 2022, p. 4). There is universal suffrage from the age of 18 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2023).

Today Ghana is a unitary presidential republic and elects a president as head of state every four years. The president is elected by majority in one single constituency (Brierley & Oforu, 2024). The parliament is unicameral and also elected on a four-year basis. From 1992 and onwards, regular, competitive elections have taken place and in 2000 the New Patriotic Party gained the majority of the votes, making it the election that resulted in a change of government (Fage et. al., 2024).

Figure 2. Growth in GDP per capita for Ghana (annual %)



Source: International Monetary Fund, 2024.

The figure above (Fig. 2) illustrates the growth in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in Ghana, compared to the world and region in which Ghana is situated: western and central Africa. Apart from 2015 and 2020 Ghana has seen growth in GDP per capita every year since 1992. For studying economic growth it seemed suitable to look into one year before which the country had experienced a decline in economic growth and one year before which the growth in GDP per capita had increased. When picking these years the available data was also considered to make sure a comparable analysis and analysing using the same model and variables was possible. Hence, 2014 and 2017 was chosen.

3.3.2 2014

In 2014 the incumbent was President John Mahama who represented the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The party also held a relative majority in parliament. The most recent election in 2014 was the national election held in December 2012 where Mahama was elected president (McKenna, 2024a). As presented in the graph in the previous section the economy had seen a significant

decline in growth rate and between 2011 and 2014 the growth in GDP per capita had dropped more than 10 percentage points. In addition, inflation rates had been rising since 2012 and in 2014 the inflation rate (annual percent change, based on consumer price index) was at 15.5% (International Monetary Fund, 2024).

3.3.3 2017

In 2017 the country had recently seen a turnover in government as Nana Akufo-Addo representing New Patriotic Party (NPP) had been elected president in the year prior, 2016 (McKenna, 2024b). The economy had seen an upsurge and had gone from an annual growth rate of GDP per capita of -0,2% in 2015 to 5,7% in 2017. The inflation rate had also decreased after peaking at 17,5% in 2016 it dropped to 12,2% in 2017 (International Monetary Fund, 2024).

3.4 The African Voter

Now that the theoretical framework of economic voting has been presented and the choice of case motivated and conceptualised in context with other cases, it is relevant to review previous research on voting in Ghana and what the existing explanations are.

3.4.1 Ethnic Voting & Clientelism

As presented in chapter two there are multiple theoretical perspectives on voting behaviour. One perspective that has been prevalent in political studies on voting in African countries is that ethnic affiliation and clientelism is the dominant factor (Andrews & Ingman, 2009, p. 3-4). Clientelism refers to politicians or parties giving resources or providing services to voters in order to earn their partisanship (Lindberg, 2003, pp. 122-123). Lindberg explains clientelism as “an institutionalized behaviour signifying willingness to take care of ‘your people’,

namely the constituents” (2003, p.124). Horowitz (1985) held ethnic divisions and clientelism sustaining it as the main determinant for election outcomes. However, more recent studies suggest a more nuanced approach to ethnic voting. In a study of Ghanaian voters motivations, Lindberg and Morrison (2008) concluded that the Ghanaian voter mostly considered performance retrospectively and that ethnic affiliation and clientelism had a low impact on voting behaviour. Further, they acknowledged that clientelism appeared to coincide with political competition for votes (Lindberg & Morrison, 2008, pp. 121-122). On the other hand, Brierley and Ofori (2024) argues that ethnic and cultural ties indirectly can influence vote choice. Their study, on the influence of chiefs’ (a traditional spiritual and cultural leader) endorsements, conclude that chiefs can affect voter behaviour, especially for undecided voters (Brierley & Ofori, 2024, pp. 1726-1727). Adams and Agomor points out that the plurality of theories is not synonymous with conflict between perspectives, but rather indicates that voting behaviour is complex and that no single theory can provide the full picture (2015, p. 367). Furthermore, they conclude that ethnicity does play a substantial role, but more so in terms of parties effectively communicating policy that considers needs rather than a direct link to a politician's own ethnic ties (p. 378). Owusu-Mensah and Akeliwira (2022) also conclude that African voters do consider policy, evaluate the parties’ politics upon deciding how to vote, and support that the purely ethnic vote is a dated conception (pp. 28-29).

3.4.2 What to Expect From Economic Voting in Ghana?

Much of previous literature reviewed have included some sort of economic measurement as a control variable and given some indications on economic voting in Ghana. However, the literature focusing on Ghana and economic voting specifically is sparse. Andrews and Ingman (2009), mentioned above, performed a study of voting behaviour on seven free³ African countries including Ghana. In Ghana retrospective economic voting was significant. However, when taking the other countries into account they concluded that retrospective voting based on the

³ Andrews and Ingman (2009) refers to Freedom House International’s categorisation.

president's performance regarding corruption was a stronger indicator than the economy (Andrews and Ingman, 2009, p.24).

The academic interest in elections in Africa in general seems to have grown and Ghana is a country included in many of the studies reviewed. Scholars such as Lindberg and Morrison (2008) seem to agree that Ghana is a good place to start when investigating the functioning of democratic institutions in African countries. Although economic voting specifically has received less focus theoretically, there are a few masters theses studying on economic voting in Ghana. Antwi (2018) includes multiple variables in his structured interview study on voting behaviour in Ghana and argues that the personality of the candidate seems to be more influential on vote choice than economic voting and that economic voting possibly only was a determining variable for a minority of voters (pp. 110-11, 119-120). However, there is only one question on economy and the study is limited. He also notes that the candidates might conceal their economic evaluations in other attitudes and views such as that towards a party or candidate or reversely evaluate a party's economic policy more so based on party alliance than the economic performance itself (Boateng Antwi, pp.117-118,119-120).

Conversely, Primus (2015) in his masters thesis on economic voting, focusing on the egotropic vote, in Ghana in three elections, finds evidence of economic perceptions being prevalent (pp.66-68). His results support the emerging notion that African voters are not making their vote choice exclusively based on ethnic affiliations but are evaluative voters who consider government performance and the economic effects. He also notes that access to information on elections does not seem to be a hindrance in forming and sociotropic perception of economic performance (Primus, 2015, pp.66-68).

All in all, there is reason to believe that economic performance does have an influence on vote choice in Ghana. However, considering voting is a complex decision involving multiple considerations, and that retrieving voters true motivations is difficult methodologically it might be challenging to distinguish a significant result.

4 Methodology

4.1 Material

Due to the delimitations to this study in terms of time and resources, retrieving first hand sources on Ghanians' economic evaluations and vote choice was not feasible. Instead survey data from the Afrobarometer surveys has been used. Survey data from interviews makes individual level analysis possible, as opposed to analysing macroeconomic aggregates for the country and comparing them to election results. The reasoning behind using a survey is that this data can also say something about the motivations of voters. Additionally, as presented previously, previous research suggests that individual level analysis is a good way to produce comparable results on economic voting. Afrobarometer is a non-profit organisation funded by, amongst others Sweden and the U.S. to conduct surveys and research on economy, politics and democratic development in African countries (Afrobarometer, 2024). There are surveys for Ghana from 1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019 and 2022. The survey data from the two years of interest - 2014 (round 6) and 2017 (round 7) - was downloaded from their website along with the corresponding codebooks. In the dataset each case represents an individual respondent that has been interviewed by one of Afrobarometers interviewers. The sample in the survey is randomised and stratified based on regions to create a nationally representative sample. When interviewing the interviewers were instructed that every other respondent should be male and every other be female (Isbell, 2015, p. 2; Penar, 2018, p.2). Hence, the gender distribution is almost equal in both samples. To analyse the material IBMs Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used.

4.2 Data

4.2.1 Variables

For the respective years, some of the survey questions differ, or new have been added. To be able to have comparable results from the two years, only data from variables present in both years surveys have been used. To make it more suitable for the analysis at hand, the data was cleaned and recoded. The table below shows the variables used in analysis, how they were recoded and which principles were applied for removing cases.

Table 1. Presentation of Variables and Recoded Values

	Question	Variable 2014 new (old)	Variable 2017 new (old)	Original	Recoded	Measure
Dependent	<i>Vote for which party?</i>	DEPvoteincumbent (Q99)	DEPvoteincumbent (Q99)	260-268, 9995, 9997-9999.	1, 0, system missing.	Nominal
Independent	<i>Handling managing the economy</i>	govmanageecon (Q66A)	govmanageecon (Q56A)	1-4, -1, 8, 9.	1-4, system missing.	Ordinal
	<i>Country's present economic condition</i>	preseconcond (Q4A)	preseconcond (Q4A)	1-5, -1, 8, 9.	1-5, system missing	Ordinal
	<i>Country's economic condition compared to 12 months ago</i>	twelveeconcond (Q6)	twelveeconcond (Q6)	1-5, -1, 8, 9.	1-5, system missing	Ordinal
	<i>Close to which party?</i>	closetoincumbent (Q90B)	closetoincumbent (Q88B)	260-268, 9995, 9997-9999.	1,0, system missing.	Nominal
	<i>Age</i>	age (Q1)	age (Q1)	18-110, -1, 998, 999	18-110, system missing	Scale
	<i>Gender of respondent^a</i>	gender (Q101)	gender (Q101)	1,2.	1,0.	Nominal

^aFor both years this question was answered by the interviewer after the interview.

Source: Isbell, 2015; Penar, 2018.

4.2.1.1 Dependent

To perform a quantitative analysis on potential economic motivations a dependent variable that defines vote choice was necessary. For this the coded responses for the following survey question was used (Q99 in both years' surveys):

“If presidential elections were held tomorrow, which party’s candidate would you vote for?” (Isbell, 2015, p. 55; Penar, 2018, p.56).

For this variable the respondent could either give the name of a party which was then coded given its separate code 260-268. There were also codings for “*Other*” (9995), “*Would not vote*” (9997), “*Refused to answer*” (9998), “*Do not know*” (9999), and one for missing values (-1). This was then recoded into a new binary variable where answers saying they would vote for the incumbent in the respective years (NDC for 2014 and NPP for 2017) was turned into 1 and all other parties into 0. NDC was 261 and NPP 262. Only missing values and those who refused to answer were coded as missing. Because the study is interested in whether the incumbent is punished or rewarded, only voting for or not voting for (regardless of which other party a respondent would vote for instead) is interesting here. The ones who refused to answer can however not be coded into 0. The reasoning behind this is that these respondents have not expressed an intent to vote for either the incumbent or anyone else. Therefore there is no way to tell in which category to code them. Due to this reasoning, after recoding, the cases with missing values were sorted out from the data set. Making the inclusion criteria for cases that the respondent has not refused to answer the intended vote choice. In summary, the dependent is a binary measure for self reported intended vote choice.

4.2.1.2 Independent

Further, independent variables on the respondents perception and evaluation of the economy was necessary. Here three survey questions were considered and turned

into variables *govmanageecon*, *preseconcond* and *twelveeconcond*. One asking respondents to evaluate One about the current economic conditions in the country. And, to investigate how far back the evaluations stretch, if present, one question about the economic conditions compared to those twelve months ago. The questions were formulated as follows:

govmanageecon:

“Now let’s speak about the performance of the present government of this country. How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven’t you heard enough to say: Managing the economy?”(Isbell, 2015, p.37).

preseconcond:

“In general, how would you describe: The present economic condition of this country?” (Isbell, 2015, p.9).

twelveeconcond:

“Looking back, how do you rate economic conditions in this country compared to twelve months ago?” (Isbell, 2015, p.9).

(See Appendix 1 for a list of all the original interview questions with original codes for responses). The first question directly asks respondents how well they think the incumbent government (as the president is the leader of) is managing the economy. This provides an operationalisation of approval for incumbents economic policy and performance. The second of the independent variables *preseconcond* indicates the respondents evaluation of the current economic conditions. This was considered relevant to include, both to provide a variable which reflects the respondents evaluation of the economy disconnected from the perception of an incumbent’s management. To further investigate how far back the retrospective dimension reaches, *twelveeconcond* was included. The variable reports respondents’ evaluation of the economy compared to 12 months ago. If it has gotten better or not.

Additionally, variables for age and gender were included to understand the makeup of the sample. As the survey was not conducted with anyone under 18 the variable *age* could take values from 18 and up. For *gender* female or male were the possible options. Important to note is that this is the only variable not based on the respondents answers, but the interviewers (Isbell, 2015, p. 2; Penar, 2018, p. 2).

To understand how the economy influences the reported vote choice compared to other factors, a variable accounting for closeness to party was included. For *closetoincumbent*, the respondents self-reported closeness to the current incumbent party was coded as 1 and closeness with other parties as 0. This variable was included as opposed to including dummy variables for membership in groups based on for example ethnicity, religion and/or political alignment. This because including such variables would have meant that the researcher would have to infer which memberships meant that one might feel closer to the incumbent. To avoid the researcher having to evaluate the *closetoincumbent* variable was used. This allowed for respondents self-reported “biases” or alignments to be accounted for. The survey question was as follows:

The respondents were first asked:

“Do you feel close to any particular political party?” (Isbell, 2015, p.52).

And then:

closetoincumbent:

“Which party is that?”(Isbell, 2015, p.52).

All in all, six independent variables were prepared that are to operationalise evaluations of economic performance. These variables were the same across both of the two studied years.

4.2.2 Afrobarometer Survey 2014

In the survey data from 2014 the sample size was originally 2400. After cleaning the data based on the inclusion criteria of revealing intended vote choice the sample size was 1731.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics Afrobarometer 2014*

	Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Mode	Std. Dev.
Dependent	<i>DEPvoteincumbent</i>	1731	0.00	1.00	0.3206	0.00	0.46685
Independent	<i>govmanagecon</i>	1700	1.00	4.00	1.8094	1.00	0.92517
	<i>preseconcond</i>	1714	1.00	5.00	1.7684	1.00	1.16152
	<i>twelveeconcond</i>	1708	1.00	5.00	2.4836	2.00	1.22905
	<i>closetoincumbent</i>	1701	0.00	1.00	0.3051	0.00	0.46059
	<i>age</i>	1710	18.00	105.00	37.7936	32.00	14.9936
	<i>gender</i>	1731	0.00	1.00	0.5043	1.00	0.50013
Valid N		1617					

In the table above, the total of valid cases for each variable is displayed in the *N* column. Taken together this means that the total number of cases for which data on all the variables was valid and complete was 1617. Therefore 1617 cases were included in the analysis. In the minimum and maximum columns the lowest and highest observed values are reported. Note, here that the youngest respondent was 18 years old and the oldest 105. However, the mean age was 37.8 and the age most frequently observed (mode) was 32. This is considered good, because it indicates that the data reflects Ghana's overall population, which is young according to Ghana Statistical Service (2023). When reviewing these statistics as well as the following it is important to remember that the incumbent differs between the two years. In the data above voting for the incumbent (1.00 for

DEPvoteincumbent) as well as feeling close to incumbent (1.00 for *closetoincumbent*) means expressed vote intent for and expressed closeness towards NDC. After initial statistical testing, 16 of these cases had a Z-residual over/below 2.5/-2.5. This indicates that these cases are not well explained by the model and that the model predicted the cases to have the opposite value for the dependent than observed (Pallant, 2020, p.186) . As advised by Pallant, these cases have been removed and are not part of the final sample size (2020, p.186).

4.2.3 Afrobarometer Survey 2017

For the survey from 2017 the sample size was originally also 2400. In this sample, 1885 gave a valid answer to the question the dependent variable is based on. Out of these the total number of valid cases were 1722, hence 1722 were included in the analysis for 2017.

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics Afrobarometer 2017*

	Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Mode	Std. Dev.
Dependent	<i>DEPvoteincumbent</i>	1885	0.00	1.00	0.6233	1.00	0.48468
Independent	<i>govmanageecon</i>	1789	1.00	4.00	2.7661	3.00	0.86141
	<i>preseconcond</i>	1859	1.00	5.00	2.6276	4.00	1.35272
	<i>twelveeconcond</i>	1853	1.00	5.00	2.9671	4.00	1.09596
	<i>closetoincumbent</i>	1873	0.00	1.00	0.4356	0.00	0.49596
	<i>age</i>	1884	18.00	96.00	37.4051	30.00	15.10426
	<i>gender</i>	1885	0.00	1.00	0.5041	1.00	0.50012
Valid N		1722					

Reviewing the table above one can note that the maximum value observed for *age* is lower than for 2014. However, the mean age is about the same and the mode is still in the lower half (30.00) consistent with the previous observation about the reflection of the population of Ghana. For this sample, 22 of cases that had a Z-residual over 2.5 (or below -2.5) have been eliminated.

4.3 Statistical Analysis

Considering the amount and type of data a quantitative analysis seemed like the most suitable option. According to Pallant, bivariate logistic regressions are generally well suited for analysis of a dichotomous dependent variable and independent variables with mixed types of measures, like the one available in the chosen data (2020, p.175). To test the suitability of the model Omnibus test for model coefficients as well as the Hosmer and Lemeshow test were conducted for the model for both years for goodness of fit. The chosen method for statistical analysis was a bivariate logistic regression as the dependent variable used was dichotomous.

4.4 Methodological Considerations

When reviewing the results, readers are advised to keep in mind that the analysis is based on data from interviews with respondents. Considering that the data used was not primarily collected by the author, but by Afrobarometers team, there is the possibility for problems in the interview process that the author might not be aware of. Conducting a quantitative analysis of operationalised interviews also means that nuances in answers might fall outside of the data and therefore can not be included in the analysis. Lantz points out that there are methodological problems to be aware of when analysing survey data (2011, p. 118). Firstly, when conducting a survey the data collection is dependent on which respondents which to participate. This means that the sample might be skewed towards people who have strong opinions, leaving out other potential respondents (Lantz, 2011, s.118).

Moreover, it is important to note that the results are concerned with the survey of a small sample of the whole population for years 2014 and 2017 and one should therefore be careful not to over-generalise the results to say something definitive about another time or part of the population (Lantz, 2011, s.118). It is difficult to design a study on voting in a controlled environment. Using a survey is an attempt at allowing for as controlled variables as possible. The trade off for this is that the data is based on the respondents subjective view and that it is concealed whether the respondent is being truthful. In addition, it could be argued that voters themselves might not know their true motivation to voting and it should be noted that the data does in no way reflect results of actual elections. However, for the data available and the delimitations to this study conducting a quantitative analysis of survey data was deemed most appropriate.

5 Results

For both years a bivariate logistic regression was performed. To analyse the effect of the presented independent variables on the odds that the respondents would self-report a vote intent for the incumbent during the analysed period, direct bivariate logistic regression was carried out. This resulted in a model with six independent variables: the respondents assessment of (1) how well the incumbent manages the economy, (2) the country's present economic conditions, (3) the country's economic conditions compared to 12 months ago and (4) their closeness to the incumbents party as well as (5) age and (6) gender. The results will be reported and reviewed in the following sections, looking at one year at a time.

5.1 Analysis for 2014

Firstly, the analysis of frequencies for the data set showed that 32% of the respondents included had answered that they would vote for the incumbent. And 81% percent said they thought the present economy to be *bad* (2) or *very bad* (1). 50% reported that they thought the incumbents to be managing the economy *very badly* (1).

Moreover, for the sample from 2014, the model in full proved statistically significant, $\chi^2(6, N = 1617) = 1014.78$, $p < 0.001$. This suggests that the model, all variables taken together, was successful in distinguishing the respondents who reported they would vote for the incumbent from those who would not. The model could be used to predict 87% of the variation in the dependent variable. Individually, three of the variables made an addition to the model that was statistically significant, that is has a p-value that is < 0.05 .

Table 4. Logistic Regression Predicting Likelihood of Voting for Incumbent 2014

	B	SE	Wald	df	p	Odds Ratio	CI for 95% Odds Ratio	
							Lower	Upper
<i>How well does incumbent manage the economy?</i>	1.037	0.097	115.228	1	<0.001	2.821	2.335	3.410
<i>Present economic conditions</i>	0.279	0.072	15.171	1	<0.001	1.322	1.149	1.522
<i>Economic conditions compared to 12 months ago?</i>	0.046	0.070	.444	1	0.505	1.048	0.914	1.201
<i>Closeness to incumbent (1)</i>	3.432	0.171	402.252	1	<0.001	30.935	22.121	43.262
<i>Age</i>	0.003	0.005	.219	1	0.640	1.003	0.992	1.013
<i>Gender (1)</i>	0.212	0.164	1.662	1	0.197	1.236	0.896	1.705
<i>Constant</i>	-4.960	0.347	204.519		<0.001	0.007		

For age (*age*), gender (*gender*) and the comparison with the economic situation 12 months ago (*twelveeconcond*), uniquely significant results are not observable. A respondent reporting that they feel close to the incumbent's party (*closetoincumbent*), proved to be the strongest predictor for voting for said incumbent, with an odds ratio of 30.935. This means that the odds that a respondent who feels close to the incumbent would also report vote intent for the incumbent is 30.9 times bigger than for a respondent who did not report closeness to incumbent, controlling for the other factors in the model. *The CI for 95% Odds Ratio* reports the confidence interval for the odds ratio, meaning that we can be sure the odds ratio actually has a value between the *lower* and *upper*, for significance at a 5%-level. Moreover, the respondents evaluation of the incumbent's management of the economy was also significant and has an odds

ratio of 2.8. At the same time, the correlation coefficient between *govmanageecon* and *closetoincumbent* was calculated to 0.171, which would suggest a very weak relationship between the two variables. The variable for present economic conditions (*preseconcond*) was also statistically significant, however had a lower odds ratio at 1.322.

5.2 Analysis for 2017

In the survey from 2017, 62% of the respondents from the final valid sample reported an intent to vote for the incumbent. 53% of the respondents expressed that they thought the current condition of the economy to *be bad* (2) or *very bad* (1). 68% of the respondents thought the incumbent government was managing the economy *fairly well* (3) or *very well* (4).

For the sample from 2017 the same model, including all variables, also proved statistically significant with values for chi-square as follows: χ^2 (6, $N = 1617$) = 1003.593 , $p < 0.001$. The model could successfully predict 82% of the variation in the dependent variable.

Table 5. Logistic Regression Predicting Likelihood of Voting for Incumbent 2017

	B	SE	Wald	df	p	Odds Ratio	CI for 95% Odds Ratio	
							Lower	Upper
<i>How well does incumbent manage the economy?</i>	1.104	0.097	130.060	1	<0.001	3.016	2.495	3.646
<i>Present economic conditions</i>	0.173	0.058	9.087	1	0.003	1.189	1.063	1.331
<i>Economic conditions compared to 12 months ago?</i>	0.188	0.069	7.528	1	0.006	1.207	1.055	1.381
<i>Closeness to incumbent (1)</i>	3.688	0.214	297.427	1	<0.001	39.976	26.288	60.792
<i>Age</i>	0.009	0.005	3.615	1	0.057	1.009	1.000	1.019
<i>Gender (1)</i>	0.053	0.140	.143	1	0.705	1.055	0.801	1.389
<i>Constant</i>	-4.841	0.382	160.316		<0.001	0.008		

Here all variables except *age* and *gender* proved to have unique statistical significance (p-value <0.05). However, for this year *age* was more had a higher p-value and would be significant on a 10%-level. Note that for this data sample the variable for perception of economic conditions compared to twelve months ago, *twelveeconcond*, have statistical significance which it did not have for the data sample from 2014.

Again, the highest observed odds ratio is 39.976 for the respondents reported closeness to the incumbent (*closetoincumbent*). Similarly, the second highest odds ratio is for how well the respondent thinks the government is managing the economy (*govmanageecon*). This odds ratio is at 3.016 which, given that the B-value is positive, means that a respondent who reported one step more positive towards the government's management of the economy is 3.016 times more likely to report a vote intent for the incumbent than a respondent who

did not, other factors in the model controlled for. The correlation between *closetoincumbent* and *govmanageecon* was observed at 0.201. The variable for evaluation of the present economic conditions (*preseconcond*) was statistically significant, although less than in 2014 and also with a lower odds ratio at 1.189.

5.3 Summary

The model proved statistically significant for both 2014's and 2017's data samples. This suggests that the model is capable of distinguishing the respondents who reported a vote intent for the incumbent. For both years perceived closeness to the incumbent's party and evaluation of the incumbent's management of the economy was the biggest predictors of the respondents vote intent. For both years the correlation between the two predictors was low indicating that closeness to the incumbent does not necessarily mean a respondent thought that the incumbent was managing the economy well. For both years the full model produced more correct predictions of the variance in the dependent variable than chance. This, taken together with the unique significance of the variables for economic perception suggests that the respondents economic evaluation did have an effect on the self-reported vote intent during both 2014 and 2017.

6 Discussion

Reviewing the results of the data analysis a few observations are interesting in regards to the presence of economic voting in Ghana.

The first thing that becomes evident when reviewing the results in light of the information on the economic situation in Ghana in the studies years is that the respondents seem to react to the economy. For 2014, where the economic growth rate had been in decline 81% of the respondents thought the present condition of the economy to be bad or very bad compared to 53% in 2017. Moreover, in 2014 more than 50% of respondents were negative towards the incumbent's management of the economy compared to 2017, where 68% were positive towards the management of the economy. The perception of the economy was more positive when the growth was greater and more negative when the economic growth was declining. This suggests that the respondents actually observed the economic development on a socio-trophic level. Looking at the dependent variable, 32% of the respondents in 2014 expressed an intent to vote for the incumbent, if elections were held tomorrow. In comparison, in 2017 62% of the respondents expressed similar intent for that time. Although this difference can of course be due to other factors, not included in the analysis, it is a notable difference between the two years for which the economic conditions were also different.

Furthermore, the variable for the respondents assessment of the current economic conditions compared to 12 months ago did not contribute substantially to the model predicting the variance in the dependent variable. For 2017 the variable was significant but the perception of current economic conditions was more significant. For 2014 the variable was not significant. This suggests that the respondents considered the current economic conditions and management of the economy more than the conditions previously when making the decision to vote. However, more data and further analysis would be necessary to further understand the precise mechanisms of the economic vote of the respondents.

Another finding is that the variable for respondents's evaluation of the incumbent's management of the economy was more significant and a better predictor than the evaluation of present economic conditions. A possible explanation for this could lie in that of *clarity of responsibility*. As argued by Stiers (2020) and Duch and Stevenson (2010) the economic vote can be influenced by how clear the responsibility for the economy is for the voters. A voter who believed the present economic conditions to be bad but also at the same thought that the incumbent did a good job at managing the economy might do so because they believe that someone else is responsible for what is making the economy bad. Arguably, that could be a previous government that the voter considers to have created the current conditions, or another current factor that influences development of the economy apart from the incumbent. The results can not however, aid in understanding the motivations in this.

Considering that the variable for governments management of economy has unique significance and for both years have a low correlation with closeness to incumbent government, it can be argued that some of the respondents have expressed intent to vote for the incumbent that is based not on closeness but on evaluations of the management of the economy. This suggests that respondents do consider the valence dimension, although it also supports that perception of economy might not be the main determinant of vote intent.

The model did explain much of the variance for the dependent variables for the two years, however the results differed and there was a difference in the significance of variables between the two years, making some variables significant, such as *twelveeconcond*, for one year and not the other. This could indicate that the model is not fully as robust as would be desirable.

Moreover, it is important to note that the analysis concerned data from two specific years and the results should be interpreted accordingly. Although they give an indication, one should be careful with making any generalisations from these years. The results also concern voters' reported intent to vote and do not reflect actual election results. Nevertheless, there is evidence that supports that there is more to voting in Ghana than ethnic voting and clientelism. Additionally, the data provides indications that voters in Ghana do evaluate not only the performance, but also specifically the economic performance of their incumbent.

As previously mentioned, there is great complexity to vote choice and as hypothesised evaluations of economic management is not the main nor the sole predictor of vote choice. However, the results of this analysis suggest that there is some degree of economic voting happening in Ghana.

Based on these results, there is reason to investigate more, previously disregarded countries in economic voting research. Although this study does not concern other countries than Ghana, the fact that economic evaluations can be observed amongst the electorate in a developing democracy in Africa suggests that there is reason for conducting further research on other countries. It would also have been interesting to include more variables for access to information and trust in government and the political system to gain a fuller understanding of the voting mechanisms. For further research, studying a larger part of the electorate with data collection aimed at the economic vote would certainly be interesting and most probably produce more definitive results. Would it have been feasible to conduct a survey, for example, instead of using a secondary source of data, that would certainly allow for a better understanding of the data, the voters perception and in turn a more precise interpretation of the results.

All this considered, the results of the conducted data analysis suggests that the respondents surveyed in 2014 and 2017 do assess economic performance. The results however, should however be interpreted with caution and they can not be generalised to a broader context. The aim of this study was to use Ghana as a case for investigating if there is reason to believe that the economic vote is prevalent in an African context. Viewing Ghana as a case “on the threshold” in terms of democratic development and economic growth means that the indications presented could be considered motivation to investigate the economic vote further. Examining the relationship between other institutional factors such as trust in the electoral system, access to information and the political parties’ marketing, through future research would perhaps add to the understanding.

7 Conclusion

This study set out to investigate whether economic voting could be observed in an African context. To do this economic voting theory was presented and Ghana was identified as a fitting case for investigating this. After reviewing economic voting theory and its different aspects, previously mostly applied on cases with a long standing, stable level of democracy, previous research on the vote in Ghana was reviewed. The previous literature suggested that although Ghana is part of a region where voting has been considered to be partisan based on ethnicity and influenced by clientelism - there seem to be other factors at play in vote choice for the Ghanaian electorate. The analysis therefore set out to investigate if the economic vote could be one of these factors. Through quantitative analysis using logistic regression, survey data from the Afrobarometer survey for years 2014 and 2017 were studied. The statistical analysis concluded in statistically significant results that indicated that economic evaluations were a part of the Ghanaian voter's considerations when deciding whom to vote for. Although not by far the greatest predictor, evaluation of the incumbent's management of the country's economy was shown to be a smaller predictor for the respondents self-reported vote choice. Moreover, the variance in assessment of the economic conditions and the incumbent management of the economy between 2014 and 2017 indicated that voters do evaluate the economic performance. Answering the initial research question: *can economic voting be observed in an African context?*, the answer is that the sample of Ghanaian voters seem to evaluate economy and government performance on economy, providing insight into what might be observable in other African countries. All in all, this suggests that continued research on economic voting in African countries is worthwhile and can aid in understanding voting choices for voters in developing democracies.

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Appendix 1

Afrobarometer survey questions used in the analysis for 2014/2017 are listed below. Unless otherwise stated, the questions were the same for both years. The questions are taken from the codebooks for the corresponding years compiled by Isbell (2015) and Penar (2018).

Q1.

Question: How old are you?

Value Labels: 1-110, 9998=Refused to answer, 9999=Don't know, -1=Missing.

Q4A.

Question: In general, how would you describe: The present economic condition of this country?

Values: : 1=Very bad, 2=Fairly bad, 3=Neither good nor bad, 4=Fairly good, 5=Very good, 9=Don't know, 98=Refused to answer, -1=Missing.

Q6.

Question: Looking back, how do you rate economic conditions in this country compared to twelve months ago?

Values: 1=Much worse, 2=Worse, 3=Same, 4=Better, 5=Much better, 9=Don't know, 98=Refused to answer, -1=Missing.

Q66A/Q56A.

Question: Now let's speak about the performance of the present government of this country. How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Managing the economy?

Values: 1=Very badly, 2=Fairly badly, 3=Fairly well, 4=Very well, 8=Refused, 9=Don't know/Haven't heard enough, -1=Missing.

Q90B/Q88B.

Question: (Q90A/Q88A: Do you feel close to any particular political party?)

Which party is that?

Values: 260=Convention People's Party (CPP), 261=National Democratic Congress (NDC), 262=New Patriotic Party (NPP), 263=People's National Convention (PNC), 264=Progressive People's Party (PPP), 265=Democratic People's Party (DPP), 266=Great Consolidated Popular Party (GCPP), 267=National Democratic Party (NDP), 268=All People's Party (APC), 9995=Other, 9997=Not applicable, 9998=Refused, 9999=Don't know, -1=Missing.

Q99.

Question: If a presidential election were held tomorrow, which party's candidate would you vote for?

Values: 260=Convention People's Party (CPP), 261=National Democratic Congress (NDC), 262=New Patriotic Party (NPP), 263=People's National Convention (PNC), 264=Progressive People's Party (PPP), 265=Democratic People's Party (DPP), 266=Great Consolidated Popular Party (GCPP), 267=National Democratic Party (NDP), 268=All People's Party (APC), 9995=Other, 9997=Not applicable, 9998=Refused, 9999=Don't know, -1=Missing.

Q101.

Question: : Respondent's gender (answered by interviewer)

Values: 1= Male, 2 = Female.