

# Democratisation and the Political Economy of Agricultural Policy in Africa

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## Summary

Theories of policy neglect of, or discrimination against, agriculture in Africa include urban bias (Lipton 1977; Bates 1981) and the narrow self-interest of autonomous elites (van de Walle 2001). Whilst structural adjustment removed much of the previous tax burden on African agriculture (Anderson and Masters 2009), the sector also saw declining investment from international development partners and through national budgets (Fan et al. 2009). Whilst there has been some recovery in public investment in agriculture over the past decade, signalled by the 2003 Maputo Declaration (Assembly of the African Union 2003), investment in the infrastructural and institutional public goods needed to support smallholder-led agricultural growth remains disappointing. As a result, the contribution of the agricultural sector to growth and poverty reduction objectives in Africa is widely believed to have been below potential.

In theory, democratisation, which has proceeded unevenly across Africa during the past two decades, should encourage pro-poor agricultural policy, as the majority of voters in many countries remain rural and poor. This paper draws on case studies of recent policy change (attempted and actual) in eight African countries, plus an analysis of the political systems in these countries, to explore the evolving role of competitive electoral politics in agricultural policy making. An important observation is that politicians are as likely to rely on ethnic allegiances and forms of social or political control to secure votes as they are to engage in policy competition. Moreover, the political incentives facing senior policy makers in the agricultural and rural development sphere may be inimical to the development of strong institutions to promote smallholder agricultural growth. Instead the paper finds that it is exogenous factors - macroeconomic dependence on agriculture and, most strikingly, sustained threats to regime survival - that create positive incentives for agricultural investment, even where social or political control is relied on to secure votes. The implications for participants in agricultural policy processes are briefly explored.

### 1. Updating Bates (1981)

The seminal work on the political economy of agricultural policy in Africa was produced by Bates (1981). He sought to explain major common features of agricultural policy then prevailing in Africa – most notably, the high level of taxation imposed upon the sector, combined with targeted support to selected (elite) producers – as well as variations in observed policy across countries.

Writing prior to both structural adjustment and democratisation in Africa, Bates argued that African political elites had been successful in suppressing any genuinely pro-farmer political movements, as had

appeared in the Ghana cocoa belt in the 1950s and as a result of competition within KANU in Kenya in the 1960s. By contrast, they were concerned to keep major urban groups (civil servants and industrial workers) happy, both because any unrest would be “on their doorstep” and because, as part of the post-independence drive for national ownership and import-substituting industrial development, African states had become major employers. Thus, most agricultural activities were heavily taxed, either indirectly (through distorted exchange rate regimes that penalised producers of tradable goods) or directly (most notably through administrative pricing or taxes on export crops). Meanwhile, some governments also distributed subsidised inputs to compensate some agricultural producers. These were generally distributed in such a way as to garner political support amongst well-connected groups in rural areas, along with “wealthy and politically influential members of the urban elite” (p56) who also had access to farmland. Politically, subsidised inputs (plus similarly rationed access to credit) divided progressive farmers from the majority of rural producers. Many of the former chose to become part of the ruling party, so as to gain access to inputs and credit, whilst the latter were left leaderless. Instead of agitating for better agricultural policies and prices, rural leaders competed to bring projects to their areas, as sources of local patronage.

As well as seeking to present the political roots of common anti-agricultural policies, Bates was interested in differences across countries. Factors that he highlighted as contributing to diverse policy outcomes included:

- The extent to which the governing coalition at the time of independence was urban (the majority of countries) or rural (e.g. Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire). There was also some overlap here with ongoing elite engagement in agricultural production: “Where the elite engages in the production of a food item [as in rice in northern Ghana or maize in Kenya], policies are not employed to depress its price” (p43);
- The extent to which farmer organisations had independent origins (as in much of East Africa) or were creations of government (as in West Africa). Farmers in the latter situations were observed to receive a lower share of the relevant world market price;
- The availability of non-agricultural resources, especially minerals, as a source of tax revenue and foreign exchange. Mineral economies were observed to promote more heavily subsidised inputs and to apply less downward pressure on export crop prices;
- Socialist vs capitalist states. In the former, higher numbers of state companies and employees created greater incentives for states (as employers) to maintain low food prices;

- Ironically, the stronger a country's or region's comparative advantage in producing a crop, the more that crop was often taxed, as producers did not tend to exit production.

Bates' basic analysis remains persuasive: the majority of rural producers are poor, with limited education and politically disorganised, and so exert very limited power over African policy makers. However, at least three major and highly pertinent changes have taken place in African economies and politics since the original work: the implementation of structural adjustment programmes, the greater role played by donors in the policy making process and the (re-)introduction of competitive electoral politics. These necessitate an updating of the analysis.

## From Taxation to Lack of Investment

A major achievement of structural adjustment policies was the reduction in policy distortions that negatively affected the agricultural sector (Anderson and Masters 2009). This means that such distortions are no longer the dominant agricultural policy concern that they once were<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, lack of investment in the infrastructural and institutional public goods needed to support smallholder-led agricultural growth remains an issue.

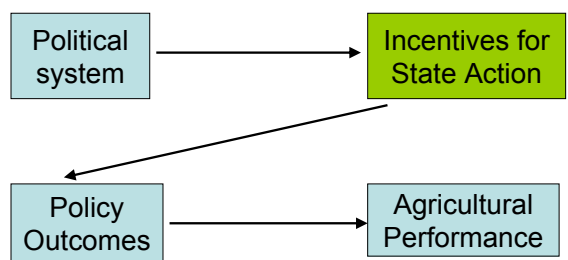
Infrastructure – especially roads, irrigation and communications technology – is vital for smallholder-led agricultural growth because smallholders are geographically dispersed and, in Africa, heavily dependent at present on often low and/or unpredictable rainfall. Commission for Africa 2005 emphasised the importance of infrastructure investment in general. You et al. (2011) argue that major investments in irrigation, both large- and small-scale, are both feasible from a water management perspective and economically promising. Dorward et al. (2004) observe that major investments in rural infrastructure helped create the conditions for adoption of Green Revolution technologies in Asia. Meanwhile, Poulton et al. (2006) and Poulton et al. (2010) discuss the range of support services required by smallholder producers if they are to intensify their production activities. As individual smallholder households transact in small volumes of inputs and outputs, unlike commercial farms they cannot justify going far to access these services. The challenge of providing a range of services close to the farm gate can only be met if strong coordination mechanisms are in place. Depending on the commodity in question, coordination may be achieved through private sector leadership of supply chains, strong farmer organisations or strategic state intervention. In all case, however, there is likely to be an important role – regulation, facilitation or leadership - for capable and motivated state organisations.

Funding is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the investment being discussed here. As observed

by Fan et al. (2009) (p3-4), government spending on agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa hardly increased at all in “2000 international dollars” terms, and fell as a proportion of both agricultural GDP and national budgets, during the 1980s and 1990s, i.e. much of the period since Bates (1981). (It then rebounded somewhat in the first half of the past decade, a trend that we shall return to later). Meanwhile, official development assistance to African agriculture collapsed during the 1990s (World Bank 2007, p41).

However, lack of investment in infrastructural and institutional public goods goes deeper than just a lack of funding and, conversely, rising funding does not necessarily mean that all is well: the nature and quality of investment going into agriculture is also extremely important. As Malawi demonstrates, the 10% budget share target that African heads of state set for themselves in Maputo in 2003 can quite readily be achieved through expensive subsidy programmes without engaging in the public goods investments that are critical for longer-term transformation of the sector<sup>2</sup>. One of the major hypotheses underlying the Future Agricultures Consortium Political Economy of Agricultural Policy in Africa (PEAPA) studies is that the degree of “political will” to support smallholder-led agricultural growth, through effective policy backed by adequate levels of investment, is explained in large part by the incentives faced by policy makers through the domestic political system. These in turn vary considerably from country to country.

**Figure 1: Linking the Political System and Agricultural Performance**



## Donors, the Neo-Patrimonial State and the Politics of Structural Adjustment

The second major change since Bates (1981) is the increased role of donors in agricultural policy making in Africa. Bates (1981) paid little attention to the role of donors in policy formulation, but donors undoubtedly assumed a more prominent role during and after structural adjustment. Indeed, both the reduction in agricultural taxation and moves towards democratisation in many African countries may be traced in part to their influence. These examples notwithstanding, the paper still assumes the “primacy of domestic politics” (de Renzio 2006) over agricultural policy making. Donors

are undoubtedly important players interacting with these domestic political forces, but their influence can be overstated. As argued by van de Walle (2001) and Cooksey (2012), local elites have ways of using donor support to buttress their own interests.

van de Walle (2001) popularised the notion of African states as “neo-patrimonial”. Whilst this notion is undoubtedly open to criticism, its central insight is valuable - that within the African state a rational-legal element and a (patronage) political element exist in tension. The rational-legal element encompasses the formal structures and processes of a Weberian-style bureaucracy: systems for decision-making, budgeting and accounting, clear responsibilities associated with particular offices etc. Its policy “logic” begins with the articulation of public policy objectives, on the assumption that there is some definable public interest. In the early years of the twenty-first century these public policy objectives are commonly aligned with the Millennium Development Goals and are articulated in the latest PRSP. Rational-legal logic dictates that laws, policies and budgets are then developed, passed and implemented (principally via the bureaucracy) to achieve these stated objectives, with learning from experience leading to changes in an iterative fashion until the objectives are achieved. This rational-legal logic is promoted by local technocrats within African states and is also what donors subscribe to and the stated basis on which they invest<sup>3</sup>. By contrast, the political element operates according to a different logic: here, the starting question asked by senior politicians is, “what is required to stay in power?”. This may lead to very different “policy in practice” from that contained in public policy documents<sup>4</sup>.

The presence of two different “logics” within the African state, generating different policy sets, creates a range of policy scenarios that are summarized in the simple 2\*2 matrix in Table 1:

The assumption behind Table 1 is that, to even make it to the discussion table, a policy proposal needs the support of either a senior politician(s) or technocrats. In other words, it must make sense in either political or public policy terms. The top left-hand cell of Table 1, where neither of these conditions holds, is thus blank. However, the “primacy of domestic politics” is reflected in the fact that, once at the discussion table, political interests are ultimately assumed to dominate.

Many policy initiatives are proposed by technocrats in pursuit of stated public policy goals. However, if they do not have a clear political logic, they may simply never gain the political “championing” necessary to bring them to the cabinet table, present the necessary legislation to parliament or ensure the sustained implementation of a formally agreed policy. Table 1 describes this as “inertia”, although there could be elements of outright opposition as well (all the more reason why a political champion is needed!). Inertia can be played out in a number of ways. Legislation may never be finalised or presented to Parliament. A ministry, desirous of donor resources flowing through its doors, may authorize new initiatives on a pilot basis, but then never seriously review them or seek to scale them up. New policies might be declared on paper, but never implemented. As a result of the weak performance incentives facing ministries (explained below), we observe that “inertia” is a very common scenario in African policy making – to the considerable frustration of donors!

Cell 2 is the opposite of “inertia”: here there is a political logic for something that technocrats can confidently predict will not contribute to the achievement of stated public policy objectives. However, as political imperatives prevail, technocrats are unable to head off or adequately amend the proposed initiative, and the result in cell 2 is an anti-poor outcome.

Cell 3 is where donors and technocrats, in particular, want to be – agricultural success stories! Efforts to document such success stories (e.g. Haggblade 2004; Spielman and Pandya-Lorch 2009) typically tell the technical side of the story. However, it is suggested here that, alongside the technical story, there often has to be a political story: why was it in the interest of key political figures to champion the intervention in question and create the conditions (legal, policy, budgetary) for its scaling up?

Cell 4 is deliberately kept small and it shares its space with scenario 3. This is intended to capture policy initiatives that are initially promoted by technocrats and gain political backing as they do so. However, as policy development and implementation proceeds, it becomes clear that the interests of technocrats and politicians are at best only partially aligned. Decisions are thus taken that ultimately combine to undermine the pro-poor impact that technocrats had envisaged from the intervention.

**Table 1: Policy Scenarios in a Neo-Patrimonial State**

		Technocratic Support?	
		No	Yes
Political Backing?	No	-	1. Inertia
	Yes	2. Anti-poor policy	3. Success Stories 4. Distorted Policy

In practice, of course, the dividing lines between scenarios 2 and 4 and scenarios 3 and 4 can become blurred. However, policy reform experiences, such as those examined by the PEAPA case studies, can still usefully be interrogated in these terms.

Meanwhile, returning to structural adjustment, the assumption of “primacy of domestic politics” does beg the question as to why African political elites were willing to concede such dramatic reductions in agricultural taxation, given the arguments advanced by Bates (1981) regarding the domestic political determinants of such taxation. We conclude this section by noting a number of arguments that have been advanced to explain this. There may be some truth in all of them, although there are not fully mutually compatible.

Firstly, van de Walle (2001) argued that Bates overstated the power of (urban) interest groups within African societies. One of van de Walle’s main arguments in support of this position was the limited resistance to the reduction in the real value of public sector wages across a range of African countries during the 1990s. van de Walle (2001) thus emphasised the autonomy of African governments from civil society pressures and argued that a very small national elite (typically, only a few thousand people per country) has been able to pursue its own narrow interest, an interest that it could defend even through a protracted economic crisis.

Secondly, whilst recognising that domestic political considerations do generally determine policy outcomes, Binswanger and Deininger (1997) argue that external actors (e.g. international financial institutions and bilateral donors) may exert greater pressure during times of acute fiscal crisis, such as the crises that precipitated structural adjustment reforms. Thirdly, however, Lofchie (1994) argues – with particular reference to Tanzania – that policies of agricultural taxation ultimately hurt even the urban groups that they were supposed to benefit, as reduced production put upward pressure on prices and/or led to scarcity in a context of price controls and foreign exchange shortages. Thus, even urban interest groups were willing to countenance agricultural liberalisation.

Finally, it is likely that popular resistance to the reduction of anti-agricultural taxation was reduced by the fact that world prices for major cereals and many other agricultural commodities were falling or low through much of the structural adjustment era. From an economics perspective, this was perhaps a bad thing, as it meant that the supply response to structural adjustment reforms was more muted than hoped for. However, from a political perspective, it was fortuitous, as it assisted the adoption of key pro-agricultural reforms with few popular (especially urban) protests.

## *Democratisation*

Meanwhile, the main focus of this paper is democratisation and the impacts that this is having, and could have, on “political will” to support smallholder-led

agricultural growth in Africa. In practice most of the discussion is centred on the introduction of competitive elections for national political office, which is only one element of democratisation, albeit an important one. Thus, it is important to recognise at the outset that democratisation encompasses a range of measures designed to make leaders more accountable and responsive to citizens. These include freedom of the press, of speech and of political organisation, which in turn may need to be defended by an independent judiciary<sup>5</sup>. Democratisation is thus a process, rather than a one-off change. Anticipating some of the later arguments and findings of this paper, one of the reasons why democratisation has not so far led to greatly enhanced policy support for smallholder-led agricultural growth in Africa may be that this process is still in many ways in its infancy.

The reason for thinking that democratisation could contribute to reversing decades of policy neglect of agriculture is as follows: as politicians are forced to compete for votes in regular elections, the pressure increases for them to give voters what they want and/or need in exchange for their votes. In most African countries, the majority of the population is still rural and poor, outweighing the combined numbers of urban dwellers and rural elites who benefited from the policies described by Bates (1981). This poor, rural majority would be well served by policy and investment to support smallholder-led growth, either because they themselves directly engage in agricultural production and/or because they supply labour to other smallholder households or engage in non-farm activities, the demand for which comes in large part from agricultural incomes, or spend large proportions of their income on food purchase, so benefit from lowered food prices.

As noted by Bates and Block 2009 (p6), there was a “striking shift towards political competition” in Africa in the 1990s and early 2000s. Bates and Block (2009) use the World Bank’s Agricultural Distortions database to show that, whereas under autocratic rule a higher share of population living in rural areas is associated with greater taxation of agriculture, under competitive electoral politics<sup>6</sup> the degree of taxation reduces as the share of population living in rural areas increases. This suggests that democratisation may already have begun to strengthen political incentives for policy support to smallholder agriculture in Africa, even if the dependent variable is taxation rather than the investment in public goods highlighted above. Note, however, that this basic result could be observed *either* because competitive electoral politics encourages governments to pay more attention to the interests of the majority rural population *or* because a common third factor was more influential in some countries than others in pushing both for reform of agricultural pricing policies and for electoral reform. Possible candidates for this common third factor include donor pressure and domestic dissatisfaction arising from the economic stagnation that proceeded from excessive taxation of agriculture.



Critically, the argument that democratisation may strengthen political incentives for policy support to smallholder agriculture in Africa assumes that politicians primarily exchange policies for votes. Drawing on existing literature and the PEAPA country case studies, the paper argues that this assumption does not hold in most of Africa. It reviews arguments as to why programmatic political parties have generally not yet emerged and looks at how votes are, instead, gathered in rural Africa. The case studies suggest that policy is rarely the dominant approach to gathering votes.

Nevertheless, political competition is increasing voters' expectations of getting something in exchange for their vote. Given the continued prevalence of clientelistic relationships within African political systems, the argument advanced is that increasing political competition often leads to increasing clientelistic transfers, something that agriculture is well suited to. This is consistent with the increased budgets going to agriculture in 2000-05, observed by Fan et al. (2009), and the commitment by African leaders at Maputo in 2003 to raise the share of national budgets allocated to agriculture to 10% within five years. However, it suggests that progress towards the implementation of the "sound policies for agricultural and rural development" that were supposed to provide the framework for the increased expenditure (Assembly of the African Union 2003, p1) may be rather slower. Instead, increases in expenditure may well be achieved through increased transfers (e.g. subsidies of one form or another), rather than investment in the infrastructural and institutional public goods that are needed to support smallholder-led growth. This argument is consistent with the observations of Joughin and Kjaer (2010) for the case of Uganda and of Kjaer and Therkildsen (2011) reviewing this and three other recent case studies undertaken for the Elites, Production and Poverty programme.

Whilst weak demand for good policy emanating from democratising political systems is bad news, it should be noted that Asian agricultural growth during the Green Revolution period was rarely driven by electoral demand. Instead, the incentives leading political elites to support broad-based agricultural intensification included:

- existential threats to regime survival, sometimes from a combination of external (e.g. spread of Communism in neighbouring countries) and internal (Communist sympathy) sources (Campos and Root 1996);
- rural disquiet if agriculture was neglected too badly, especially where this tipped over into famine (see, for example, Gulati et al. 2005 on the political drivers of the introduction of household responsibility reforms in China);
- national rivalry.

Moore (1998) explains why rivalry has been a much less potent force for development in post-independence Africa than in, say, Asia. However, the PEAPA case studies

do include examples of existential threats and potential rural disquiet (Rwanda, Ethiopia) driving policy makers to invest in agriculture. Hence, as with Bates (1981), the paper concludes by arguing that variations around its observed central tendency are well explained by a political economy framework.

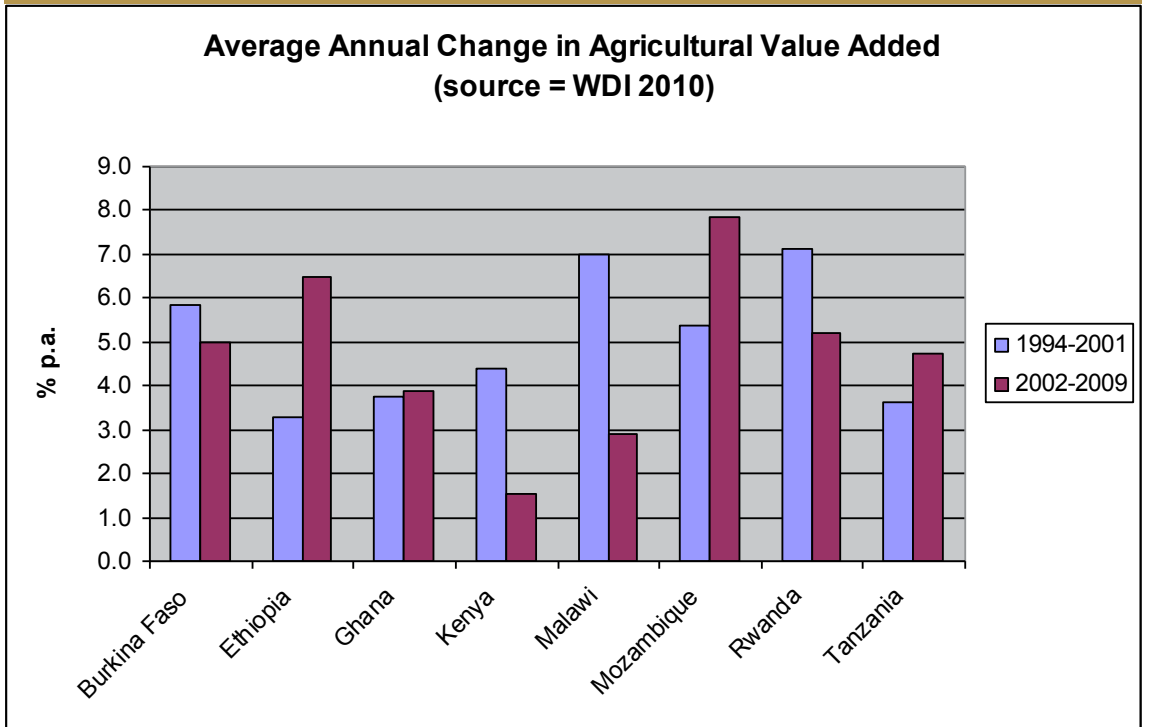
## 2. Country Case Studies

This paper draws on case studies of recent policy change (attempted and actual) in eight African countries, plus an analysis of the political systems in these countries. The countries in question are Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda and Tanzania. These countries were chosen for study in some cases due to historic connections to Future Agricultures Consortium, but more generally because they represented a diverse range of political systems (with varying degrees of political liberalization and competition, dominance of ruling party, inter-ethnic competition), histories and traditions (Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone, degree of past socialist influence), geography (population density, agro-ecological diversity) and economic diversification.

Selecting indicators to compare agricultural performance is fraught with difficulties. However, Figures 2 and 3 provide two such measures, drawn from World Development Indicators data for 2010. Figure 2 shows that several of the case study countries have performed relatively well (above population growth rates) in terms of growth of agricultural value added in recent years. From this figure Burkina, Mozambique and Rwanda would appear to be the most consistent performers, with Ethiopia doing particularly well in the past decade. However, there are some important caveats:

- In both Mozambique and Rwanda, the 1994-2001 figures incorporate recovery from conflict. Meanwhile, in Mozambique's case, the 2002-09 figures largely reflect good performance in export crops, with sugar in particular dominated by large-scale farms (see Figure 3). By contrast, as explained by Booth and Golooba-Mutebi (2012), serious attention was only paid to agricultural development in Rwanda following two years of poor harvests in 2003 and 2004. If only the years 2005-09 are considered, then the growth of agricultural value added in Rwanda rises to 6.2% p.a.
- In the case of Kenya, the average figure for 2002-09 is dragged down by the conflict in 2008, whilst the Malawi figure is dragged down the drought of 2005. If only 2006-09 is considered (i.e. since the introduction of the input subsidy and excluding the drought), then growth of agricultural value added in Malawi rises to 7.9% p.a.

Figure 2: Annual Change in Agricultural Value Added, 1994-2009



Note: Data for Burkina Faso and Tanzania only extend to 2006

Figure 3: Cereals Production Growth 1999/2001-2006/08, % p.a.

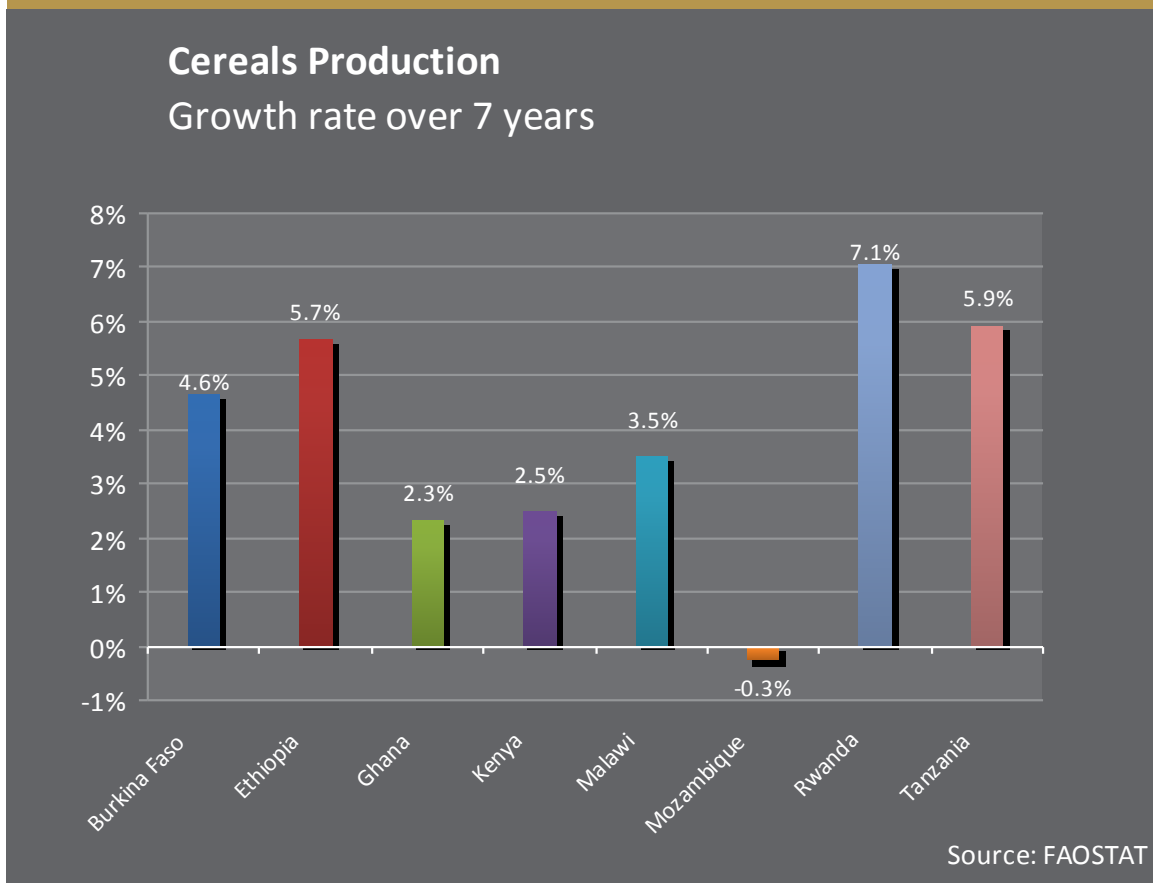


Figure 3 usefully complements Figure 2. Burkina, Ethiopia and Rwanda are (again) shown to have been strong performers in food production terms in recent years, as is Tanzania, where the southern highlands maize production story deserves more investigation. The growth in maize production in Malawi under the fertilizer subsidy programme is again understated by the choice of years. What the figures do show is how much of the growth of agricultural value added in Mozambique has been due to export crops. This may also be true for Ghana (cocoa), although root crops are also important in Ghana.

Table 2 presents available evidence on rural poverty in the case study countries. Many of the figures are quite dated, but the table nevertheless represents a useful counterpart to the figures on agricultural growth. The table suggests processes of rural poverty reduction in Rwanda, Malawi (perhaps of a surprising magnitude given the dates?), Ghana, Ethiopia and (much more modestly) Kenya, but stagnation in Burkina, Tanzania and Mozambique.

The Rwanda figures represent a striking change from the first half of the 2000s, when poverty (national and rural) hardly fell. In Ghana the story has been one of sustained poverty reduction since the 1990s, but with the benefits heavily concentrated in the south and centre of the country. Poverty rates in the three northernmost regions, where livelihoods are the most dependent on food crop production, have fallen very little (Ghana Statistical Service 2007).

Lack of progress with rural poverty reduction in Mozambique and Tanzania is striking, given the high levels of macroeconomic growth enjoyed by both countries, and would appear to reflect relative neglect of the rural sector by policy makers in both countries. This is all the more striking given the widely recognized agricultural potential of both countries, but perhaps especially Mozambique (World Bank 2009). It should

also be remembered, however, that African data are often of poor quality: Pauw and Thurlow (2011) conclude that official agricultural growth and poverty reduction statistics in Tanzania are incompatible - either agricultural production growth has been less than claimed or there has been more rural poverty reduction than is indicated by the figures below.

Figure 4 shows data on the share of national budget devoted to agricultural and rural development, as per the Maputo Declaration target, even if this is an imperfect indicator of public goods investment in support of smallholder agricultural growth as discussed above. The high budget shares in Burkina and Ethiopia are (again) noteworthy, but these may be contrasted with the very low share in Rwanda. As explained by Booth and Golooba-Mutebi (2012), the share of the budget devoted to agriculture in Rwanda has been growing rapidly since 2007. The Malawi figure of 12.2% in 2007 is explained in large part by the cost of the input subsidy scheme, which increased even further in 2008-9, but has since declined again.

Demographically, in 2009 more than 70% of the population lived in rural areas in all case study countries except Ghana (49%) and Mozambique (62%). In both of these countries the share of the rural population had fallen by more than 10% since 1990 (see Appendix). Population density varies dramatically from Mozambique (29 persons per km<sup>2</sup> in 2008) and Tanzania (48 persons per km<sup>2</sup>) to Malawi (158 persons per km<sup>2</sup>) and Rwanda (394 persons per km<sup>2</sup>). In the remaining four countries, a noteworthy feature is the variation in population density across regions (for example, between highlands and semi-arid lands in Kenya and Ethiopia). Rwanda is also an outlier in the sample in terms of (low) ethnic diversity, as captured by the so-called ethno-linguistic fractionalization index, which "measures the probability that two randomly drawn individuals from the overall population belong to different ethnic groups" (Bossert et al. 2005, p1). At the other end of the spectrum, Tanzania

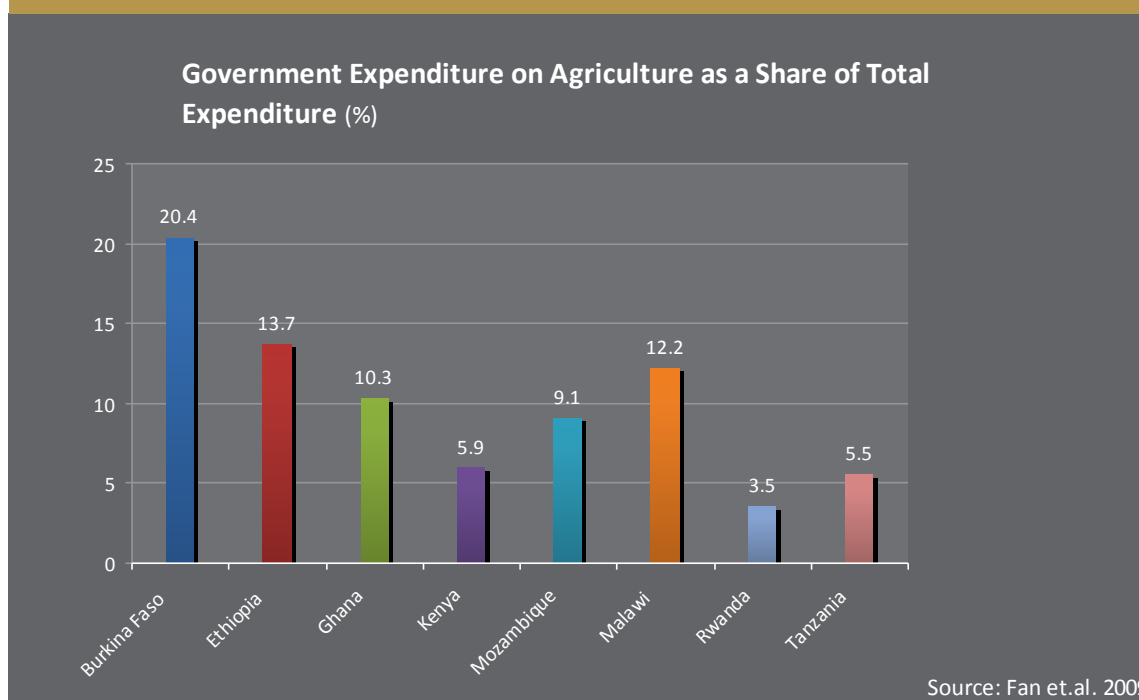
**Table 2: Share of Rural Population Living Below (National) Rural Poverty Line**

Country	Year	Rural Poverty Headcount (%)	Year	Rural Poverty Headcount (%)
Burkina Faso	2003	52.3%	2009	50.7%
Ethiopia	1999	45.4%	2004	39.3%
Ghana	1998	49.6%	2006	39.2%
Kenya	1997	52.9%	2005	49.1%
Malawi	1998	66.5%	2004	55.9%
Mozambique	2002	55.3%	2008	56.9%
Rwanda	2005/06	61.9%	2010/11	48.7%
Tanzania	2000	38.6%	2007	37.4%

Source: World Bank African Development Indicators (2011) except Burkina Faso = *Ministere de l'Economie et des Finances* 2011, Rwanda = *National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda* 2012



Figure 4: Agricultural Budget Share



Notes: Data are for the following years: Burkina=2006, Ethiopia=2005, Ghana=2008, Kenya=2006, Mozambique=2004, Malawi=2007, Rwanda=2007, Tanzania=2005

and Kenya appear the most ethnically diverse nations in the sample.

Finally, there is relatively little variation across the countries in scores for public sector management and institutional quality, as judged by the World Bank's Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) ratings. In 2011 the average CPIA score for public sector management and institutional quality ranged from 3.7 for Burkina and Ghana to 3.3 for Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi and Tanzania. The average scores across 78 countries eligible to receive International Development Association loans ranged from 4.0 to 2.2, such that all eight case study countries were in the top half of the list (albeit still with only modest scores!). The question that this paper, therefore, seeks to answer is why some governments and states are more committed to supporting smallholder agricultural growth than others, despite similar state capacity and governance quality.

### 3. Choosing a President

A key assumption of political economy analysis is that "mandate" is important to observed policy. In the general model presented by Drazen (2008), the core group of people whose support a leader relies upon in order to obtain or maintain power are called the selectorate. In exchange for their support, the leader offers the selectorate a range of (primarily but not exclusively economic) benefits, delivered through state interventions that can range from formal policy to ad hoc (and perhaps illegal) transfers and reallocations of property rights (Khan 2005). Historically, the selectorate in much of Africa has been quite narrow. Bates (1981)

emphasised the importance of urban interests and the rural elite, but (as noted above) van de Walle (2001) of these groups. Democratisation attempts to widen the selectorate, such that the collective voice of individual citizens counts for more. For reasons to be discussed (including social relations and deference, lack of education and awareness, poverty leading to economic dependence), that voice is not yet as strong as it could be. Nevertheless, most African leaders and their governing coalitions now have to submit themselves to an electoral contest every 4-5 years. Whilst some manipulation of the electoral process remains possible (and is indeed common), they still have to offer something to voters in return for their support.

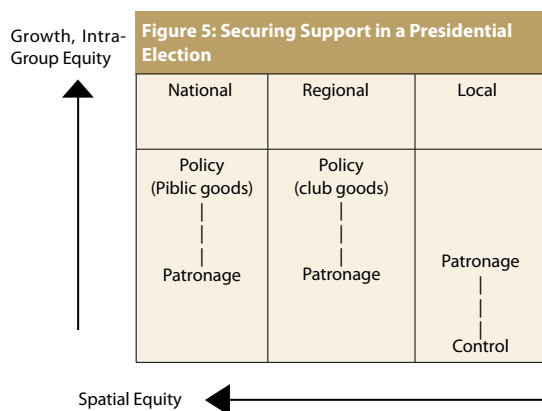
According to van de Walle (2001), a striking feature of many African political systems is the extent to which political power is centralized around the person of the president. Active presidential support for a policy initiative is the ultimate manifestation of "political will" for it. This section thus considers how presidents are chosen within African political systems.

One distinction to be made is between countries where the outcome of the presidential election itself is rarely in doubt, such that the primary selection process within the ruling party is the "real" contest, and those where the public election itself is the real contest. Within the PEAPA countries, Burkina, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania<sup>7</sup> and perhaps also Mozambique may be considered as falling into the former category. In these cases, a difficulty for analysts may lie in observing the basis on which choice of presidential candidate is made, as the debates occur "behind closed doors" within the party. However, some debates become public. One can also

ask who the power brokers within the ruling party are and where their interests lie. Thus Cooksey (2012) notes struggles within the CCM leadership, with “a minority faction concerned that growing political corruption will weaken the economy and strengthen the hand of opposition parties” (p24).

Moreover, in an era of democratisation, even a dominant ruling party still has to formally reassert its dominance through regular “multi-party” elections. Whilst some such governments rely on legal restrictions on competition and repression of the opposition, even apparently dominant parties also rely on mechanisms for securing support that are similar to those observed in countries with more competitive presidential elections.

Leaving aside legal restrictions on competition and repression of the opposition, the mechanisms for securing support in a presidential election can be summarized as follows:



The columns of Figure 5 suggest that elections can be fought in at least three ways:

- On the basis of national issues
- By forming alliances of regional voting blocs, in which case different “offers” can be made to each bloc
- By making a multiplicity of local promises – often on the campaign trail – or otherwise securing votes through local control measures.

In turn, as indicated within the columns, a number of mechanisms can be used to deliver on either regional or local-based strategies. In practice, campaigns are likely to be fought using a combination of the three approaches shown in Figure 5. The following sections consider each in turn.

## *(Constraints to the Emergence of) Policy-Based Competition*

To look presidential, a candidate should have at least one major policy proposition that appeals to a broad spectrum of the population. However, various arguments are advanced as to why, in many African countries, recourse to ethnic identity (hence often regional alliances, given ethnic fractionalisation) is seen as a more “efficient” way of mobilizing votes than policy-based appeals.

Keefer and Vlaicu (2008) and other works from the same “stable” (e.g. World Bank 2007, chapter 4) emphasise credibility problems in new democracies, such as most of the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. Semi-literate voters with limited access to information about policy issues are poorly placed to assess the credibility of promises made by campaigning politicians. Thus many politicians make extravagant promises that they cannot or will not fulfill. In this context, it is hard (costly) for a “serious” candidate to persuade voters that their promises – whilst perhaps superficially less attractive than the alternatives – are, in fact, credible (i.e. both reasonable and likely to be fulfilled). This constrains the emergence of the types of programmatic political parties assumed under simple models of democracy.

However, Keefer and Vlaicu (2008) argue that making appeals through local intermediaries can increase the credibility of promises. There are two elements to this. On the one hand, intermediaries (local patrons) are known by the local electorate, so a promise conveyed through them is more likely to be believed. On the other hand, to maintain their own credibility locally, local patrons are only likely to act as political intermediaries if they gain some assurance from the national political figure that promises will actually be fulfilled. Reliance on local intermediaries, however, distorts policy making away from provision of national-level public goods towards provision of benefits targeted to particular regions of localities.

According to Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007), one of the main challenges in developing an effective programmatic party is to get party representatives to speak credibly with one voice when the policy preference rankings of party members and officials are all slightly different. This is partly a challenge of asserting party discipline, but it also requires that the party develop an ideology that is strong enough to guide internal discussions across a range of issues in a coherent way. Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007) thus talk of the “ideology work” (p9) needed to establish programmatic political parties.

A third variation on the theme of establishing credibility focuses on the low capacity of the African states that parties know they will inherit if they assume power. This makes it unwise to promise much, especially on a national scale, if you expect voters to hold you accountable for what you promise, as the state may well not have the capability of delivering on anything but the most modest (or localized) of promises.

Arguments about the credibility of promises focus on problems on the “supply side” of programmatic politics. By contrast, Khan (2005) argues that the real constraint to the formation of programmatic political parties in low income economies lies on the “demand side” and is rooted in the basic economic structure of these countries. He argues that, in “mature” democracies such as those found in many OECD countries:

- Processes of industrialization have generated large groups with common economic (“class”) interests, e.g. entrepreneurs, salaried workers
- The public budget is large relative to GDP, so political struggles meaningfully focus on how the budget is raised and utilized, issues that have major distributional implications.

By contrast, in low income economies that are dominated (in workforce terms) by smallholder agriculture and informal sector business/trading activity:

- Smallholder producers are poor and dispersed, often contending with very different agro-ecological conditions, and have little awareness of their common economic interests
- Informal sector workers are also not organized and moreover compete fiercely with one another for small margins – not a conducive environment for collective political action
- The tax base is narrow and the public budget modest relative to GDP. Hence, political struggles are as likely to focus on the (re-) distribution of property rights<sup>8</sup> as on the distribution of the budget.

These conditions make it difficult for politicians to mobilize large numbers of voters through appeals made primarily on the basis of (national) policy. To illustrate this point, it is useful to consider potential policies that could have widespread national appeal for a presidential election campaign in a (stylized) Sub-Saharan African context. Given limited industrialization, the list is quite short: (free) universal primary education, followed in due course by universal secondary education, free primary health care ... (Note the prominence of these issues in presidential election campaigns in many African countries since the mid-1990s). Below we return to the point that, in most African countries, few agricultural policies would have the desired national appeal.

Within the PEAPA study, the one country that has more than one established political party with a recognized ideological basis is Ghana<sup>9</sup>. However, even here, there is an ongoing debate as to whether or not political competition can be described as programmatic (Lindberg and Morrison 2005; World Bank 2007). The PEAPA Ghana country study (forthcoming) notes the importance of the 1992 constitution both in embedding the position of the two established parties and in forcing them (through

a requirement that a winning presidential candidate secure at least 50%+1 of all votes cast) to appeal beyond their core support bases to win power. Combined with the historical roots of the parties in ideological debates and their degree of party discipline, this can be seen as “supplying” many of the requirements for programmatic politics. Arguably, however, as per Khan (2005), the “demand side” is still weak, with the result both that separate appeals can be made to distinct (often regional) voting groups and that there remains considerable reliance on clientelistic purchase of votes at local level.

Afrobarometer data is now being used to explore the determinants of voting behaviour across Africa. Bratton et al. (2011) use data from Afrobarometer survey round 3 (2005) from 16 countries, including five of the PEAPA case study countries (Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania), to explore voting intentions in a forthcoming presidential election. They find that “An individual who belongs to the same ethnic group as the incumbent president ... is far more likely to express an intention to vote for the ruling party” (p9-10), whereas groups who perceive ethnic discrimination are likely to vote against. However, ethnicity is not the only determinant of voting intentions. Voters who perceive that a government has managed the economy well and who evaluate future economic conditions in the country positively are also more likely to vote for the ruling party. Bratton et al. (2011) also find evidence of partisanship in the form of people who express closeness to the ruling party and an intention to vote for it, despite assessing the president’s past performance poorly. Given the advantages of incumbency within African elections, they suggest that some of these people are likely motivated by the desire to back the winner, so as not to exclude themselves from future patronage flows.

Meanwhile, Bratton and Kimenyi (2008) undertake a similar analysis for Kenya, based on a survey just prior to the hotly contested 2007 election. A striking finding here is that, in a logistic regression analysis, dummies for the eight largest ethnic groups alone can explain “more than half of the variance (r square = .514) in the intended presidential vote” (p8). However, voter assessment of the first term of President Kibaki was also found to affect voting intentions, with those expressing overall approval of presidential performance or approval specifically of policies affecting living standards, school fees and corruption more likely to say that they would vote for re-election.

Whilst the arguments of Khan (2005) suggest that the emergence of truly programmatic political parties could take decades in parts of Africa, these Afrobarometer results do at least indicate that most governments have to be seen to perform in some way if they are to retain power. Unfortunately, Afrobarometer surveys do not yet contain questions specifically about agricultural policies. Meanwhile, Bratton et al. (2011) found that, when other effects were controlled for, the likelihood of a rural voter voting for a ruling party was 6 percentage points higher than that of an urban voter. This suggests that rural voters tend to be relatively undemanding of those in power.

## *Mobilising Support on a Regional Basis*

As already seen, ethnic allegiances and authority structures are widely seen as an efficient way of mobilizing voting support across Africa. Thus, it is common for senior representatives of a particular ethnic group to be included within a campaigning (and, ultimately, governing) coalition in order that they in turn “bring in” the votes of people from their group or region.

However, the dotted line in the “regional” column of Figure 5 indicates that regional leaders may use a variety of means to “bring in” these votes. In turn, the different approaches can have very different implications for agricultural policy, growth and equity within the region concerned.

We note at least three main ways in which regional leaders can secure the votes of their ethnic group or region, although it can readily be seen that there are blurred boundaries between these:

- championing investment in public goods within their region, e.g. road infrastructure, research into crops or livestock that are prominent within the local economy
- procuring “club goods” or transfers for people within their region, e.g. fertilizer subsidies, investment in irrigation infrastructure, leading to subsidized access to irrigation services. Kitchelt and Wilkinson (2007) note that club goods are a “grey area” between programmatic politics and clientelism. They will tend to be indicative of clientelistic politics where their distribution within the region is characterized by high degrees of administrative discretion (hence, subject to manipulation for political ends) and of programmatic politics where there are clear (and enforced) rules for who gets what and why.
- disbursement of patronage to modest numbers of individuals within the region, some or all of whom then use their influence to “bring in” the votes of the wider population. The ability of these individuals to do this may in turn depend on social deference (within hierarchical social structures) or on other control mechanisms that are discussed further below and perhaps also on their ability to disburse further (small) quantities of patronage to others further down the chain.

A key element in the argument of Bates (1981) was that, whilst urban-oriented governments pursued policies that taxed the agricultural sector, they were able to “buy off” members of the rural elite through targeted subsidy and credit programmes. This robbed the rural majority of powerful leaders who could argue

their case in government circles. This argument broadly fits with the second bullet (in its more clientelistic variant) above. By contrast, Nicolas van de Walle has argued that African leaders often disburse very little in the way of rents to the wider population, focusing on payments to individuals (the third bullet). Thus, van de Walle (2001) argued that “political authority in Africa is based on the giving and granting of favors, in an endless series of dyadic exchanges that go from the village level to the highest reaches of the central state” (p51). His insistence on the continued importance of prebendalism in Africa (van de Walle 2007) is also consistent with this.

Although referring to an earlier era (and strategies for state building rather than winning competitive elections), the impressive work of Boone (2003) leads us to expect considerable variation across groups within a given country in terms of how much the general citizenry expect to receive from their leaders in exchange for their support. Where social groups are strongly hierarchical, few material benefits may need to reach the average group member for leaders to retain their positions. In more “democratic” social groups, the average group member may expect more tangible rewards for their ongoing support.

Anecdotally, in Kenya some Kikuyu argue that one of the reasons that they have historically done well from post-independence government policy is that Kikuyu are very demanding of their leaders. If a particular leader is not seen to deliver benefits to those s/he leads, then they will take whatever opportunity they can to replace him/her. By contrast, Luos are portrayed as following their political leaders with almost unquestioning loyalty. Of the major ethnic groupings in Kenya, Luos have arguably gained least from post-independence government policy. In Ghana World Bank 2007 argues that one of the reasons for reasonable performance on poverty reduction is that traditional leaderships are held accountable by both their subjects and higher political authorities (through the House of Chiefs). However, others, including Boone (2003), observe regional differences in this, with Akan groups in the south in general being much more demanding of their leaders than tribes in the north, which has so far largely been by-passed by poverty reduction trends.

One might thus hypothesise a relationship between regional policy outcomes on the one hand and both education levels (hence awareness of political processes) and population density on the other. Binswanger and Deininger (1997) suggest that civil society association and information exchange is easier in areas of higher population density, and that higher population density is thus likely to be associated with greater accountability of leaders to their supporters. However, whilst this would fit the stylized facts just presented for Ghana and central Kenya, it does not obviously fit the western Kenyan case. Local cultural differences cannot entirely be explained by measurable indicators such as education and population density.

Meanwhile, existing quantitative studies have tended to focus on the impact of a president coming from a

particular area. Thus, drawing on (1992) data on rates of taxation of five major cash crops across 30 African countries and capitalizing on the regional specificity of many of these crops, Kasara (2007) argues that “farmers in the president’s home area face *higher* tax rates than those outside of it” (p160). Because members of a particular ethnic group are pleased to have their “own man” in power, they may demand *less* in the way of policy prioritisation in return for their support, whereas other groups may require greater inducement to support him. By contrast, drawing on the more recent Distortions to Agricultural Incentives database<sup>10</sup>, Bates and Block (2009) find that, whilst cash crops have generally been heavily taxed by African governments, the effect is reversed where the President comes from a major cash cropping region. They accept that wealthy regions, which are often associated with major cash crops (or mineral deposits), “may offer targets for those seeking resources to distribute to the poorer portions of the nation” (p6). However, Presidents from these regions are able to resist such pressures for redistributive taxation.

The other side of the phenomenon examined by Kasara (2007) is the phenomenon of swing voters, groups that are not closely allied to any of the main political parties or groupings in a country and whose preferences within a particular election may thus exert a decisive influence over the outcome. Because of their importance to the overall outcome of elections, swing voters may be able to extract more policy (or other) concessions from governments than voters in these governments’ support heartlands<sup>11</sup>.

In somewhat different political contexts both Ghana (Central Region) and Kenya (the Luhya and groups in Eastern Province) have groups that are widely recognized as swing voters. However, in these two examples, developmental outcomes have been very different. Whilst leaders in Central Region in Ghana are seen to have used their traditional “swing” status (their allegiance going a long way to explaining different election outcomes in 2000, 2004 and 2008) to extract policy concessions that have benefited their region, there is a debate within Kenya as to why leaders in Eastern Province have not done this. One “conspiracy” theory is that influential Kikuyu politicians have blocked investments, most notably for road and irrigation development, that would benefit the region, because they know that horticultural and other products from Eastern would then undermine the market position of produce from Central Province in the Nairobi market. A competing theory is that local leaders in Eastern Province have done so well from their influence over repeated food aid distributions to the region (using this both to amass wealth and to consolidate their political power) that they have not acted as effective champions for their regions in the national policy arena.

Within the PEAPA case studies, the clearest example of power being obtained/maintained through the assembling of regional coalitions is Kenya. This can result in supportive policy for major crops grown within particular regions (the first bullet above), but

generates few incentives for investment in national public goods such as agricultural extension. Thus, when President Kibaki came to power at the end of 2002, it was considered important to be seen early on to be supporting agriculture, so as to differentiate the new government from the later years of the Moi regime, when agriculture was neglected. A team of consultants was thus tasked with developing a Strategy for Revitalising Agriculture, which was unveiled by the President in 2004. The big themes of the strategy were twofold:

- firstly, removing the state from direct involvement in agricultural activities, so as to increase the space for the private sector to flourish (this was to be done, inter alia, through a dramatic rationalization of agriculture-related legislation, which provided for numerous redundant parastatal enterprises and also opportunities for state interventionism)
- secondly, focusing state efforts on enhanced provision of public goods, such as research and extension.

In practice, and despite strong initial donor support for the strategy, little progress has been made on any of its main elements since 2004. As an example, at least three major donor projects piloted alternative approaches to improving extension performance, but no effort was made to evaluate and compare them, so as to decide the way forward for the national extension system as a whole. Meanwhile, much effort was absorbed in simply trying to coordinate across agriculture and rural development ministries, which proliferated from three in 2003 to ten in 2009 in a bid to sustain increasingly complex governing coalitions (Future Agricultures Consortium 2010).

Whilst little progress was made in the delivery of national public goods, however, swift action was taken to revitalize individual commodity sectors. An excellent example of this is the government’s re-acquisition and re-capitalisation of so-called new Kenya Cooperative Creameries, injecting additional intermediate demand into the milk market in competition with two private processors and bringing widespread benefits to producers in Central Province, the President’s home area (Atieno and Kanyinga 2008, Kenya case study forthcoming). This intervention was firmly in a Kenyan tradition of state intervention in regionally-focused commodity chains, but *inconsistent* with the emphasis of the Strategy for Revitalising Agriculture on reducing direct state involvement in the agriculture sector and focusing instead on provision of public goods<sup>12</sup>.

In Burkina Faso, the major cotton producing zones in the south-west of the country are home to groups other than the main Mossi ethnic group (although plenty of Mossi have also moved there to grow cotton). Traditional authorities are weaker in this part of the country than in the Mossi areas, such that broad-based benefits have to be delivered in exchange for political support. This,



along with the importance of cotton to the Burkina macro-economy, is believed to have contributed to the relatively favourable policy that has made cotton in Burkina a widely recognized success story (Kaminski et al. 2009; Loada (2012)).

In Mozambique, the core support for the Frelimo government has tended to be based in the south of the country (around Maputo) and in the far north, with the central and northern regions, which have the highest agricultural potential, supporting the opposition Renamo. For much of the period since 1994 the approach of the Frelimo government to the agricultural sector can be described as “selected neglect”, contributing to the generally poor performance of the sector and limited progress in rural poverty reduction despite consistent macro-economic growth (do Rosário 2012). However, a counter-example is provided by the rehabilitation of the sugar sector, which over time has allowed Frelimo to make some inroads into a part of the country traditionally loyal to Renamo (Kjaer and Therkildsen 2011), whilst at the same time providing accumulation opportunities for members of the ruling elite.

## *Securing Support at Local Level*

At village level in most African countries either traditional authorities or state-cum-party structures wield considerable authority and influence. The latter tend to be strongest where a post-independence government made a particular effort to challenge traditional authorities in the name of state building – either abolishing traditional authorities (and replacing them with a state organ) or constructing a parallel state apparatus to challenge their power. In the PEAPA countries, for example, traditional authorities remain strong in Burkina and Malawi, but were abolished and replaced by state-cum-party structures in Ethiopia and Tanzania. As already noted, a more even balance of power was struck in Ghana.

Local chiefs may exercise influence over populations within their areas through any of the following means (state officials tend to be limited to the first two):

- control over land access
- responsibility for distribution of external assistance (including fertiliser vouchers, choosing sites for NGOs to work in etc)
- presiding over traditional courts
- deference and/or fear (spirit mediums for contacting ancestors).

Often local chieftaincies are hereditary positions, but especially under multi-party politics, major efforts have been made by governments to secure chiefs’ loyalty, especially in areas where the government in question has not traditionally enjoyed support. One step up, where a chief is known to support an opposition party, resources may be steered away from that village. In Malawi, chiefs are now paid by the government and given (built) good

houses. In return they are expected to use their influence to garner voting support for the government, using the carrots and sticks listed above (Chinsinga 2012). Suspected/known opposition supporters may find it hard to gain (additional) land or may be excluded from external assistance that is brought to the village or area. Opposition mobilisers may be denied the right to hold rallies in the village of a pro-government chief. Similarly, in Mozambique reforms instituted over the past decade have sought, inter alia, to ‘co-opt’ traditional authorities (historically strongly supportive of Renamo) by assigning them public roles such as revenue collection and forestry management.

Baldwin (2011) observes that, of the 19 countries within the 2008/09 Afrobarometer round 4 surveys, six passed legislation strengthening the powers of traditional authorities over land allocation. This reversed a post-independence trend to reduce the powers of traditional authorities. Baldwin (2011) hypothesises that the governments concerned decided to devolve powers to traditional authorities for political gain, related to the need to form and/or maintain multi-ethnic coalitions for the purpose of winning elections. Existing literature (such as Kasara 2007 and Boone 2003) indicates that there is no need to empower chiefs from the President or Prime Minister’s own ethnic group and no point in empowering chiefs of groups closely aligned with the opposition; hence chiefs from non-aligned groups are most likely to be favoured. Similarly, if the aim is to win votes, governments are most likely to look to empower chiefs of large and hierarchically organized groups. In regression analysis explaining the proportion of respondents who state that chiefs are primarily responsible for allocating land, the variable “Large Hierarchy without Political Alignment” is indeed found to be positive and significant, lending support to Baldwin 2011’s arguments that governments have sought to selectively empower chiefs in pursuit of electoral advantage.

Where traditional authorities were replaced by state-cum-party structures, state and party were supposed to be separated with the advent of multi-party politics. However, this has not always happened. Thus, it is reported that the village chairman in most villages of Tanzania remains a supporter of CCM and continues to exert influence over (for example) all decisions on land allocation in the village.

## *Expected Impacts of Democratisation and the Role of Agricultural Policy*

Few expect democratisation to overturn existing social and political relationships in the short-medium term. However, many do expect it to gradually alter the balance of power within these relationships, with the result that a greater share of resources and benefits within the economy eventually accrues to average rural voters. Thus, van de Walle (2007) expects prebendalism to gradually give way to other forms of patronage characterized by a somewhat wider distribution of rents, as democratization continues. Similarly, Kasara (2007)

argues that ethno-regional dynamics are likely to change with deepening democracy, weakening or reversing the central effect that she identifies (farmers in the president's home area facing *higher* tax rates than those outside of it). Competitive elections present voters with more options, making it more difficult for a president to count on the support of his region if he offers few material benefits to the average voter (as opposed to political intermediaries) in return<sup>13</sup>.

One may think of democratization gradually redistributing resources from an initial, highly centralized distribution, *towards* millions of dispersed rural households, i.e. an overall "centrifugal" effect. However, as already noted, there are plenty of political intermediaries along this chain from president to citizen and each of these may seek to retain an increased share of available resources, thereby reducing the share ultimately received by rural households<sup>14</sup>. Thus, for example, in Tanzania district-level elites are perceived to be claiming an increasing share of the rents from central government programmes (agriculture and other) in exchange for their role in delivering votes for CCM at election time (Cooksey 2012).

The PEAPA country case studies suggest that wider distribution of resources to rural populations is unlikely to be the first response of an urban-based elite to greater political competition. Conversely, pro-smallholder agricultural policy may even be a last resort, if other options are not working. The Malawi fertilizer subsidy introduced in 2005 provides a striking example of a policy generating broad-based, poverty-reducing benefits to many rural households (Dorward and Chirwa 2011). In terms of the distinction drawn by Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007 regarding delivery of club goods, some attempt was made to establish rule-based allocation of the fertilizer vouchers, even though there was considerable local variation in how rules were applied (Dorward and Chirwa 2011) and recommendations to tighten up the targeting criteria went unheeded over time. Grand patronage has almost certainly featured, too, although, in the early years at least, its extent was contained. The political story of this achievement is revealing, however. President Mutharika launched the subsidy programme having fallen out, in early 2005, with the UDF party that brought him to power. This forced him to seek parliamentary support from previously opposition MPs, but, more importantly, to find a way of making a broad-based appeal to voters before the 2009 election (Chinsinga 2007; 2012). This had to be done through bold policy, as he started without a party machinery at his disposal. At the same time as championing the fertilizer subsidy, however, he also courted traditional chiefs, as noted above. The subsidy programme is widely credited with securing Mutharika a landslide victory in the 2009 election. However, with his position secure, a two-term limit on his tenure as president and with social control mechanisms in place at local level, the quality of policy making has taken a dramatic turn for the worse following that election. Thus, far from signaling a decisive shift towards programmatic politics or even a Malawian "developmental state", the subsidy programme could be seen as an opportunistic policy move by a leader

without reliable alternative mechanisms for securing votes – a "window of opportunity" for pro-poor policy (Chinsinga 2012).

Nevertheless, given the number of people who derive some of their livelihood from agriculture (directly or indirectly) in Africa, one might expect the agricultural sector to gain increased prominence in national politics and policy making as a result of the "centrifugal" forces released by democratization. As already noted, this may well be one of the reasons why African Heads of State, assembled in Maputo in July 2003, declared their commitment "to adopt sound policies for agricultural and rural development, and ... to allocating at least 10% of national budgetary resources for their implementation within five years" (Assembly of the African Union 2003, p1) – the limited progress in achieving this commitment in subsequent years (Fan et al. 2009) notwithstanding.

However, given the obstacles to moving to programmatic politics focused on appeals to national electorates, one should perhaps *not* expect a strong emphasis on the provision of public goods to support agricultural growth. This is reinforced by issues specific to the classic national agricultural public goods, investment in research and extension. Whilst some governments in recent years have seen improved extension performance as a way of signaling to rural voters that they can deliver, Future Agricultures Consortium (2009a) argues that five-year political cycles tend only to encourage short-term measures to improve performance (a bit more money, some top-down incentives to increase effort), rather than the more difficult, systemic reforms that would be necessary to generate sustained improvements in service coverage, quality and accountability. Investment in research suffers from the same problem, exacerbated by the fact that the outcomes of research effort cannot be confidently predicted in advance.

Rather, following Figure 5, one *should* perhaps expect a renewed interest in the provision of club goods and transfers, compatible with political systems that are still fundamentally clientelistic. Fertiliser and other subsidies are an obvious example here. In Mozambique Frelimo suffered a significant electoral setback in 1999 that ultimately led to a change in party leadership after an internal power struggle. In response the current President Guebuza has placed much greater emphasis on support to agriculture, including championing a new food production programme (PAPA). However, in many ways this is a platform for distributing agricultural inputs and machinery across selected rural districts, many of which are opposition party districts. Moreover, in line with an argument above, the actions that are felt to have contributed most to his re-election in 2004 are those that have sought to reassert party control at decentralized level, e.g. establishment of district development funds and overtures to traditional authorities (do Rosário 2012).

As already observed, the agroecological diversity of many African countries makes agricultural policy particularly well suited to political systems where power

is obtained by constructing coalitions of multiple regional and ethnic groups. As Kasara (2007) rightly observes, “major” agricultural crops - and indeed livestock systems, both dairy and pastoralist, and fisheries! – are often concentrated in particular regions, and in turn are associated with the particular ethnic groups that predominate in those regions. Hence, policy to promote a given crop primarily benefits the inhabitants of a particular region, so can form (part of) the offer to members of a particular ethnic group(s) to join a political coalition. As democratisation moves politics away from prebendalism and political control strategies towards forms of patronage that distribute resources more widely amongst rural populations, regionally-based agricultural policy is likely to be a popular tool for securing voting support.

Agricultural policy may be a popular tool for securing voting support for another reason, too. van de Walle (2007) argues that one of the reasons why prebendalism has been slow to give way to other forms of clientelism in much of Africa is because donors micro-manage the use of such a large share of the so-called development budget of African governments (which they supply). Hence, the scope for broad-based patronage disbursement (as opposed to grand corruption) is limited. This argument may well overstate the effectiveness of donor monitoring. However, what it does do is highlight an important difference between health and education sectors, where donors have poured considerable resources in support of key Millennium Development Goals, and the agricultural sector. In the former, there are limited grounds for prioritizing investments in particular regions of a country (localized disease incidence or relative historical neglect being two possible candidates). By contrast, in agriculture, delivery of club goods to satisfy a regional voting base can be dressed in the respectable terms of policy towards a particular strategic commodity sector.

Before moving on, we note a couple of possible caveats to this argument. The first is that regional specificity may hold less true for staple food crops than for major cash crops, especially where past policies have accustomed entire populations to a particular staple (most notably maize in southern and eastern Africa). However, even here there may be important divergences of interest between producers of regular surpluses, who may be geographically concentrated for agro-ecological reasons (e.g. Southern Highlands in Tanzania, Rift Valley Province in Kenya), and the majority of households who are net food deficit (Weber et al. 1988). Thus, Kenya is an extremely diverse country agro-ecologically and maize surpluses are highly concentrated in a small number of districts with above-average farm sizes within Rift Valley Province (Nyoro et al. 1999). The main ethnic group in these districts is the Kalenjin. Ever since President Moi (himself a Kalenjin) used national response to the 1980 drought to establish a dense network of buying posts for surplus maize within the Rift Valley (Bates 1989), Kenyan maize policy has provided rents to the producers in these surplus districts through highly attractive in-store prices, accompanied by credit access for input

purchase and extension support. Effectively, therefore, maize policy has been pursued as a regional policy, to the detriment of the majority of the population, both urban and rural, who rely on purchasing maize and so benefit from low prices. Strikingly, since the overthrow of President Moi, all three Ministers of Agriculture have been Kalenjins, a succession that has survived national corruption scandals at the ministry and arguably has allowed the pro-Rift Valley maize policies to be sustained.

The second caveat is that some countries are less heterogeneous agro-ecologically than others. Thus, although Malawianists will elucidate the local agro-ecological variations within Malawi, the country is fairly homogeneous both agro-ecologically and socio-economically relative to many other African countries. Maize is the dominant crop throughout most of the country and, despite devoting a significant share of their land to it, the majority of land-scarce smallholder households in all regions of the country are net food deficit. This makes policy supporting maize production by resource-poor households a genuinely national policy; hence why the fertilizer subsidy was an attractive option to the isolated President Mutharika in 2005.

## 4. Appointment of Ministers

One of the characteristics of a presidential political system is that it is the President who appoints cabinet ministers, although rules differ as to who (if anyone) has to approve these nominees (see below). Following the logic that “mandate” is important, the basis on which ministers are chosen should influence their incentives for performance once selected. Naively, one might think that capability to run a ministry well should be a primary criterion for selecting a minister. However, African governments are replete with examples of ministers who have performed poorly running one ministry, but, instead of being dropped from the position of minister, have instead been moved sideways to another ministry (often on several occasions!). This suggests that a different logic is at work.

The earlier discussion on how the president is chosen provides a useful way in. Where a presidential majority is obtained by assembling a coalition of regional voting blocs, then ministers are likely to be leaders within their regions whom the president can rely upon to bring in the regional vote at election time – or during referenda, where applicable. This seems a reasonable summary of the situation in Kenya, for example. Where this is the case, the incentives for strong performance in running the ministry are immediately weakened, as the “bottom line” is that one’s tenure as minister does not depend primarily on ministry performance, but on ability to bring in the regional voting bloc.

What is perhaps more controversial, but fits with the “prebendalist” arguments of van de Walle (2007), is that a minister may be given a ministry in part (more or less large!) as a source of patronage to keep the regional

voting bloc happy and supportive. This is consistent with the observations regarding maize policy in Kenya over the past decade.

Note that, as per the previous section, the minister could in theory still pursue a number of strategies to bring in the regional vote. Indicators of a clientelistic approach might include: high profile “transfer” policies (e.g. fertilizer subsidy) designed and managed such that there is plenty of rationing and discretion over who actually receives the transfer; a disproportionate share of donor and other projects being directed towards the targeted region; large divergence between budgeted and actual expenditure within the ministry, plus weak accounting; a high level of corruption in contracting, asset sales etc. By contrast, a policy-based appeal could be associated with much greater transparency, but the benefit incidence would still fall heavily on the targeted region(s).

If ministries are indeed distributed at least in part *as a source of patronage*, then this reinforces the impact of ministerial selection criteria on performance incentives. The President’s power to demand improved performance from a particular minister (if the ministry in question is giving the government a bad name, for example) may actually be quite circumscribed. Furthermore, the onset of democratization may have exacerbated this situation: whereas an autocrat may enjoy some freedom to sack ministers, a minister with a strong following in his or her home region in a young democracy might enjoy a fair degree of bargaining power with the president. This may be one of the reasons why Rock (2009) finds an inverted “U-shaped” relationship between corruption and democracy, with corruption initially getting worse during democratization – due to a collapse in discipline – and only improving as institutional restraints on political behaviour are gradually introduced to counter-balance this tendency<sup>15</sup>.

As an example of (attempted) institutional restraints, the new Kenyan constitution approved in 2010 requires that ministerial appointments gain approval from parliament, a requirement that was not present in the previous constitution. This “restraint” does not change the logic of ministerial candidates being selected on the basis of their position as regional leaders and opinion formers. However, it does mean that those selected may *also* have to demonstrate some capability to run a ministry well and this should restrict the “degrees of freedom” that they enjoy in running the ministry for political ends.

So far this section has considered the incentives facing Ministers in running their own ministries. However, it is worth remembering that many African governments are coalitions and that these coalitions may become very strained once the initial objective of gaining power has been achieved. In this context, and with the next election in mind, senior figures in one part of a coalition may actively seek to block implementation of a policy that is likely to be associated with another part of the coalition in the minds of the electorate, so that their future rivals do not gain an advantage at the ballot box. This sort of

stalemate – observed in Kenya after 2005 – can contribute to the policy inertia discussed in relation to Table 1.

Finally, it should be noted that the same basic selection considerations and performance incentives that have just been described for ministers also apply for senior civil servants, where these are Presidential appointments. van de Walle (2001) argues persuasively that the politicization of the bureaucracy through the extension of the principle of Presidential appointments deeper into the civil service has been a major cause of the observed decline in state capacity in Africa in recent decades. According to van de Walle (2001), this decline was first widely observed around the time of structural adjustment, but in fact started before this – indeed, in the first few years after independence.

## 5. Voting for MPs

In a Presidential system the theoretical role of the legislature is to:

1. shape and pass laws
2. hold the executive (President and Ministers) to account for their actions and performance.

In addition, under all voting systems other than pure proportional representation, members of parliament are also elected to represent particular constituencies, so are also expected by their constituents to represent their particular local interests. This could include:

- promoting (or opposing) legislation that is beneficial (or detrimental) to their local economy or interests
- lobbying for both public and private investment to be directed to their constituency. This role fits neatly within a clientelistic system, although under the name “pork barrel politics” it is also a well-known feature of so-called mature democratic political systems (e.g. the US).

Few would dispute the benefits to economic growth over the medium-long term if parliamentarians focus their energies on passing good quality legislation and holding the executive to account for their actions and performance, rather than lobbying for local investments and favours. These benefits are likely to come from well-chosen public investment in national public goods, as well as from increased private investment stimulated by a high quality policy environment. High levels of performance by ministries, resulting from effective accountability mechanisms, are themselves a public good. Unfortunately, African MPs are rarely elected for their capacity to shape national policy or hold the executive to account. Rather, literature suggests that local and/or personal consideration predominate when MPs are selected.



Leonard et al. 2009's brief summary of rural patron-client relationships summarises the relationship between MP and voters as follows: given the high levels of climate and other risk associated with predominantly agricultural livelihoods in poor contexts, patrons (in this case MPs) are expected to provide insurance cover for poor clients (in this case, voters) in exchange for political and other forms of support. According to Leonard et al. (2009), as clients have few other ways of coping with risk and limited alternative means of insuring themselves, the terms of this "contract" can be highly adverse to the client. In particular, MPs may abuse the political support that they receive from voters by going to the capital (e.g. parliament) and promoting or supporting policies that actually contribute to keeping their clients in their poverty. This may even be in the patron's interest, as poor clients will continue to offer their support in return for very limited insurance benefits, and the clients are likely to be almost completely ignorant of the patron's activities or their consequences. This narrative suggests that rural voters receive occasional personal transfers plus some promises of local public goods in exchange for their votes – not supportive policies.

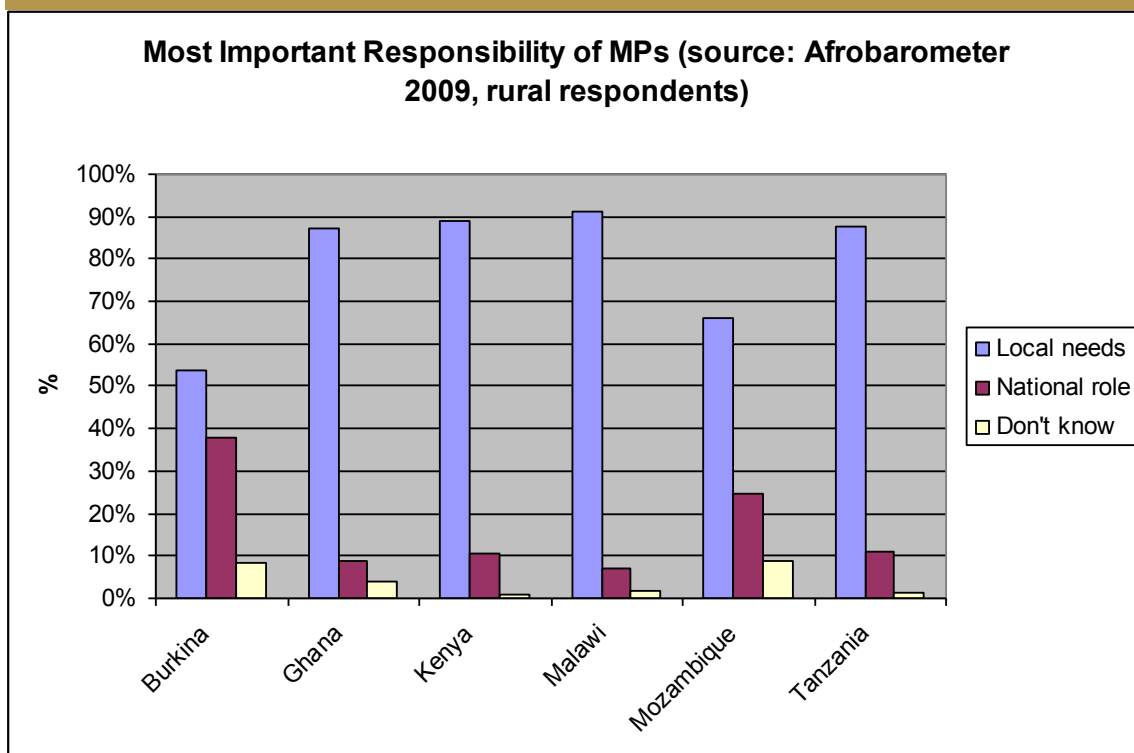
Alternative arguments stress low education of voters, combined with lack of information on voting patterns, whilst placing less emphasis on the patron-client relationship as an insurance substitute. Hence, voters who are ill-equipped to assess arguments about the merits and demerits of (some) alternative policy proposals and who anyway find it hard to access information about voting behaviour, may instead focus on performance that they can observe for themselves, i.e. how effective has their MP been in providing local public goods (and perhaps also personal assistance) to their area?

Figure 6 presents data from the 2009 round of Afrobarometer surveys suggesting that voters expect their MPs to focus first and foremost on local development issues<sup>16</sup>. In all countries except Malawi and Tanzania, urban respondents gave a slightly higher priority to MPs' national role than rural respondents. However, even in urban areas the vast majority of respondents prioritized local needs in all of the six PEAPA countries covered, with the exception of Burkina Faso.

Young 2009's study of Kenya and Zambia finds no evidence that distribution of private goods might help MPs win elections, but does find "suggestive, though not overwhelming, evidence that an MP's presence in their electoral constituencies impresses voters" (p8). Meanwhile, Twaweza (2010) examined the re-selection or de-selection of sitting CCM MPs in primary elections within the party prior to the 2010 general election in Tanzania in relation to their degree of activity within the 19 sessions of the Bunge (parliament) since the previous election in 2005. They found that the ten least active MPs were all re-selected whilst seven of the ten most active were de-selected. A likely explanation for this is that those MPs who engaged heavily in national legislative activities were perceived as insufficiently focused on constituency issues by local party members.

In this context the spread of constituency development funds (CDFs) as an adjunct to democratisation is readily understood. There is anecdotal evidence that diligence and largesse in promoting local development through CDFs is emerging as a major issue in the outcome of elections at constituency level. This suggests that voters are not as dependent on their MPs as a pessimistic take on the Leonard et al. (2009) argument might indicate.

Figure 6





Nevertheless, the lack of attention to MPs' national roles means that the lack of upward accountability for performance of ministers to presidents (discussed above) is mirrored by a lack of accountability for ministry performance to voters via Parliament.

One study that offers a dissenting view is Lindberg (2011), drawing on a survey of around 1600 people conducted in ten constituencies in Ghana shortly before the 2008 elections. Whilst respondents stated that the main tasks of MPs were constituency service (almost 70%) or provision of personal support (15%), rather than legislative oversight (only 8%), Lindberg 2011's analysis of voting intentions shows that, "controlling for perceptions of how well the government (i.e. the president and his ministers) have done in terms of policies, and controlling for the respondent's perception of how well the country's economy has done in the last 12 months, the effect of the MP's contribution in terms of small-scale club goods and the support in terms of private goods to an individual respondent, is nil" (p13)<sup>17</sup>.

The combined arguments of this section and the previous one are of enormous practical significance for the performance of African ministries of agriculture and hence for the likelihood that investment in the infrastructural and institutional public goods needed to support smallholder-led agricultural growth will indeed occur. In particular, policy and coordination to ensure provision of multiple support services is a technically challenging task (Poulton et al. 2010). Government agencies are only likely to persevere with this until they get it right if they face strong performance incentives to do so.

## 6. Sources of More Positive Agricultural Policy

Thus far the paper has examined the incentives for agricultural policy arising from democratizing political systems in Africa. The basic conclusion is that incentives for broad-based, pro-smallholder agricultural policy remain weak, despite the rural majority receiving the vote in presidential, parliamentary and sometimes also local elections. Potential sources of heightened incentives include policy competition between more or less programmatic parties (Ghana?) and the ability of some groups (e.g. within Kenya, Burkina?) to demand reasonably broad-based distribution of rents in exchange for their support for political coalitions. However, these cases are the exception, rather than the rule, and/or remain subject to debate. Therefore, as in the analysis of Bates (1981), the major commonality is a "negative": heavy taxation of agriculture is no longer the dominant issue, but weak performance incentives for Ministries of Agriculture and weak political incentives for investment in public goods are both serious issues when the state has an important role to play in creating the conditions for private market development and in enabling poor smallholders to participate.

In the final chapter of his book, Bates (1981) examined factors that could contribute to a more positive outcome (i.e. lower agricultural taxation) than in his principal narrative. In a similar vein, this final section considers two factors that are observed to increase political incentives for pro-smallholder agricultural policy within the PEAPA case studies. The commonality across these two factors is that they establish some alignment between the interests of elites and rural populations.

## Dependence on Agriculture

Bates (1981) argued that the availability of non-agricultural resources, especially minerals, within an economy provided an alternative source of tax revenue and, therefore, reduced the perceived need to tax agricultural exports heavily. On the other hand, it also provided an additional source of foreign exchange and, therefore, allowed governments to import (subsidised) food products, potentially compounding a negative effect on domestic producers of agricultural importables through overvaluation of the exchange rate. Availability of non-agricultural resources could thus have a mixed effect on agricultural policy.

In an era when performance incentives for Ministries of Agriculture and political incentives for investment in public goods are more serious issues than agricultural taxation, comparison across PEAPA countries suggests that availability of non-agricultural resources, especially minerals, within an economy may be bad for agricultural policy, the additional state revenue available for agricultural investment notwithstanding. The argument is as follows: insofar as elites are insulated from pressure from rural interest groups ("autonomous"; to quote van de Walle 2001), tax revenue and foreign exchange from minerals and other non-agricultural resources allows them to pursue their own consumption and investment priorities without paying much attention to the plight of agriculture. By contrast, where an economy is highly dependent on the performance of the agricultural sector for these things, even an urban-based elite tends to realize that it cannot afford to neglect the sector if it wishes to generate resources for its own activities, whether these be public (investments in other sectors) or private (campaigning for re-election).

Figure 7 illustrates the relative dependence of the economies in the PEAPA study on agriculture as a source of foreign exchange. This shows that Burkina, Ethiopia and Malawi are the most heavily dependent on agriculture. In all three countries, policy makers have historically paid considerable attention to the fortunes of the agricultural sector, knowing that there are few other sources of wealth, including for the elite, in the country (see especially Loada 2012). According to Fan et al. (2009) (and as illustrated in Figure 4), all three of these countries featured in the short list of eight African countries that devoted at least 10% of their national budget to agricultural investment in 2007. By contrast, in both Mozambique and Tanzania, which are much less dependent on agricultural exports, a sustained period of relatively rapid macroeconomic growth has failed to

Figure 7<sup>18</sup>



Source: WDI (2010)

make much, if any, impact on rural poverty figures (Table 2), supporting the argument that agricultural policy has been relatively neglected amongst elite concerns.

### *Perceived Threats to Continuation of the Regime*

A military threat to a regime may endanger elites as well as the poor - thereby creating some alignment in the interests of elites and citizenry<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, military threats can force rulers to depend more heavily on citizens for taxation for national defence, once alternative sources of revenue are exhausted. As the 18th century American colonists realized (succinctly expressed as, "No taxation without representation"), citizens can then demand political or economic concessions in return for greater taxation. A military threat may also emerge in part because a regime neglects large sections of its rural population, who are thus willing to provide refuge and perhaps other types of support to armed groups seeking to overthrow the regime, not to mention directly swelling their ranks with young combatants.

According to Campos and Root (1996), the huge Communist threat throughout East Asia in the 1950s and 1960s created the political incentives for the rapid economic growth experienced by South Korea and Taiwan starting in the 1960s. The external threat was particularly acute for both South Korea and Taiwan, but in addition there was some internal sympathy for the Communist cause within both states (along with others in East and South-east Asia). In both countries agrarian reform was one of the first major policy acts, designed to increase the number of rural dwellers with their own stake in the land and to demonstrate an attractive alternative to collective ownership of assets. Leaders realized that an interventionist state was desirable to stimulate the rapid growth needed to generate resources for defence. However, the state also had to be as efficient as possible,

which led to an effective, outcome-based management of the bureaucracy, along with clear and enforced performance targets for enterprises seeking support from the state (Stiglitz 1996; Khan 2000). Meanwhile, rapid growth implied sacrifices (most notably, a very high savings rate), so it was imperative that growth was broad-based as possible. In a low-income context, broad-based growth typically means investment in smallholder agriculture alongside stimulation of investment in labour-intensive manufacturing that gradually pulls labour out of the agricultural sector (Mellor 1986; Timmer 2009). This enabled the government to keep enough of its citizens "on side", despite significant restrictions on political freedom, and enabled it to gradually win over Communist sympathizers.

Whereas democratization may be thought of, in theory (and perhaps in the long term), as strengthening the bargaining position of the rural poor within an elite-dominated political system, the possibility of a military threat linked to rural dissatisfaction with regime policy may be thought of as raising the "reservation position" of the rural population in political calculations, even in the absence of any direct say in government policy making.

Within the PEAPA study, two countries that face circumstances analogous to those experienced by 1950s and 1960s South Korea and Taiwan are Rwanda and Ethiopia. In Rwanda a government centred on the Tutsi-dominated RPF continues to be confronted by Hutu rebel groups just across its borders whilst governing a population that is majority Hutu. It continually needs to generate resources for defence (a short-term imperative), but it also faces major long-term challenges. The first of these is to prevent the country from slipping back into the type of devastating ethnic violence that erupted in 1994. The second is that it cannot win an election under full political liberalisation<sup>20</sup> as long as voting preferences are determined primarily by ethnic allegiances. Whilst it

can resort to political control for some time, this will only get more difficult as time goes on. Its economic strategy, therefore, is to push for rapid and broad-based growth, much as South Korea and Taiwan did. This includes the recent emphasis on agriculture and – in the absence of credible manufacturing options in a small landlocked country (Collier 2007) – internet-based service industries, requiring major investment in both infrastructure and education.

The logic seems to be that, if enough people benefit from growth and gain a sufficient stake in economic prosperity, then eventually elections will be fought on the basis of policy, rather than ethnicity<sup>21</sup>, as voters recognize the cost of a return to ethnic conflict. The present government should then stand a good chance of winning even if electoral rules are liberalised.

The imperative of sustained growth – looking beyond a single electoral cycle, but nevertheless to be achieved as rapidly as possible – in turn creates incentives for systemic reforms in areas where neighbouring governments may only tinker superficially, e.g. agricultural support services. As in South Korea and Taiwan, outcome-based management of the bureaucracy is being developed to enhance the efficiency with which state agencies perform their roles – encouraged, *inter alia*, by the annual cabinet retreat and Annual National Dialogue. All this said, agricultural policy received relatively low priority in the first decade of RPF-led rule after 1994. It was only after the shock of two poor harvests in 2003-04 that it rose up the agenda. Since then, efforts to make up for lost time have been impressive and include a programme for distributing subsidized inputs, promotion of synchronised planting and harvesting by smallholders in (service) cooperatives, irrigation of under-utilised marshlands (especially for rice), promotion of sound intensification principles by extension staff and the promotion of a national ‘one cow per family’ policy. A feature of agricultural policy making in Rwanda, which should not be unusual in Africa but is, is that it appears to learn from past mistakes (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi 2012), which is evidence of a regime that it knows it has to perform.

It is not the place of this paper to comment on the overall strategy of the Rwandan government, which is both bold and controversial in a number of respects. Rather, the much narrower intention is to illustrate how a combination of external and internal threats to a regime can shape the performance incentives that it faces. One might also note that, when an external threat does shape incentives for state performance, the agriculture sector will often benefit from increased investment and more supportive policy, due to its irreplaceable role in broad-based growth. However, it is not only the agricultural sector that benefits. Rather, the entire state system is subject to the increased performance incentives and a predictable outcome of this is that more rapid growth will hasten the structural transformation of the economy that will eventually reduce the relative importance of the agricultural sector (Timmer 2009).

Meanwhile, in Ethiopia the long-standing imperial and military (communist) regimes were eventually both overthrown by force, in part made possible by the disaffection of rural populations with the unfavourable agricultural policies inflicted upon them. Having itself capitalized on such disaffection, the current EPRDF regime knows that it neglects agriculture at its peril. It also faces considerable opposition itself – both external (from Eritrea and Somalia) and internal; mainstream political and armed insurgency (Ogaden National Liberation Front and Oromo Liberation Front); ethno-nationalist and pan-Ethiopian – and knows that its core support base is limited, both numerically and territorially. Under such circumstances, the regime has sought to maintain tight political control, a strategy that cannot be sustained indefinitely. It knows that it only really has one way out of its predicament in the longer term: namely, to achieve greater legitimacy through delivering broad-based growth. This has translated into persistent efforts to support smallholder producers (recent efforts to also attract large-scale farming notwithstanding), including significant investment in the classic public good, the national agricultural extension service (Berhanu 2012). However, the large and diverse nature of Ethiopia makes it much more difficult to achieve rapid change than in the smaller and culturally more homogeneous (and historically “disciplined”) Rwanda. At the same time, the short-term need of the Ethiopian regime to maintain political control means that the extension service performs a dual economic and political role, something that may reduce the efficiency of some of the investment made in it (Berhanu 2012).

Finally, it should be noted that, whilst an existential threat to a regime may lead to improved agricultural policy, this is not inevitable. Indeed, many African countries have experienced civil war and some face the danger of sliding back into it (Collier 2007), but this has not necessarily led to a revolution in policy making. This is where leadership comes in, along with the ability of elite groups to negotiate a developmental “political settlement” or “elite bargain” (Di John and Putzel 2009) in response to challenging circumstances. Thus, in Rwanda, President Kagame has succeeded in persuading a large enough proportion of the national military and civilian elite (the current electorate?) to unite behind his bold vision of national economic and social transformation, even to the extent of sacrificing some of their “entitlement” to short-term reward from holding public office, i.e. restraining personal corruption and resisting other forms of rent-seeking (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi 2012; see also Appendix A5)<sup>22</sup>.

## 7. Concluding Remarks

The political economy of agricultural policy in Africa has received insufficient attention (certainly in terms of multi-country comparative studies) since the seminal work of Bates (1981). In the intervening period, important elements of the policy and political environment have changed. Domestic policy bias against the agricultural sector has declined as a result of structural adjustment policies, in the process changing the single major feature

of African agricultural policy that Bates (1981) sought to explain. Meanwhile, competitive multi-party politics have now been a feature of many African countries for 15 years or more, generating the potential for rural preferences to exert increasing influence over national policy choices.

This paper has presented elements of a framework for the political economy analysis of African agricultural policy. A key assumption is the importance of “mandate”; in other words, that an examination of how policy makers are selected will shed important light on the policy priorities that they will pursue once in office. The paper has examined the selection of presidents, ministers and MPs, attempting to draw implications for agricultural policy, given the preponderance of rural dwellers (with a greater or lesser degree of dependence on the agricultural sector for their livelihoods) in most African populations. It has considered the challenges confronting the emergence of programmatic politics in many African countries and thus explained why African politics is often based on the formation of regional coalitions.

Agricultural policy fits neatly into a regionally-based politics because of the agro-ecological basis of agricultural activity, in contrast to the relative standardization of education and health service delivery across geographic space. An important issue deserving further attention is how voting majorities are obtained within particular regions, as this affects the prospects for policies that are supportive of smallholder (i.e. broad-based) agricultural growth. As democratisation gradually increases the distribution of rents from national elite to average citizen, agricultural policy can be expected to be an important vehicle for this. However, the argument of this paper is that one should not expect a strong emphasis on the provision of public goods to support agricultural growth as a result of this, but rather a renewed interest in the provision of club goods and transfers, compatible with political systems that are still fundamentally clientelistic.

Finally, the paper considered additional influences on policy making that could generate more positive incentives for agricultural policy, through the (partial) alignment of the interests of the political elite and poor rural households. Within the PEAPA case study countries, macro-economic dependence on agriculture and existential threats to regime survival create some of the strongest incentives for pro-smallholder agricultural policy, including encouraging reform of public agencies and public agricultural service provision (i.e. public goods). The bad news for those seeking to improve agricultural policy making in Africa is that the factors that create strong state incentives to perform are essentially “exogenous”.

Whilst future work within the PEAPA project will explore the policy implications of these findings, at this stage we note the following:

- For donors, recognizing and seeking to work with, rather than against, domestic political incentives is important if impact is to be seen beyond “pilot” projects. As the

discussion in section 3 highlighted, there may be opportunities to support pro-poor change in some commodity sectors within a country even when there is limited scope for enhancing delivery of national public goods. Conversely, conditions conducive to strong incentives for state performance in national agricultural policy may also be associated with imperatives towards political control. Thus, donors will have to make judgements as to how far to support and how far to critique both individual policy initiatives and the wider political strategy of which they are part.

- In contexts where political incentives for pro-smallholder agricultural policy are currently weak, key questions concern the role that civil society actors can play in changing this state of affairs and the timescale over which investments to build the capacity of such actors may be expected to yield results. Section 3 noted the weak demand for programmatic politics. Applying this to pro-poor agricultural policy, a smallholder in one part of (say) Kenya feels less affinity with another smallholder of similar socio-economic status in another part of the country than with an elite member of his or her own ethnic group. Can civil society-led awareness and advocacy campaigns begin to change this and, if so, how quickly? In Latin America mobilization of poor groups by diverse social movements (Vanden 2007) arguably began to exert an influence on electoral outcomes around 15 years after the return to democracy. However, there are various reasons why such mobilization might take much longer to achieve in much of Sub-Saharan Africa than in Latin America, including deeper levels of absolute poverty, lower education levels (although recent increases in school enrolment are a positive sign in this respect) and little prior history of awareness raising amongst the rural poor in Africa (some early cooperative development activity aside).

Encouraging macroeconomic growth notwithstanding, the road to rural poverty reduction in parts of Africa could still be a long one.

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Golooba-Mutebi; Tanzania – Brian Cooksey. At the time of finalising this paper, six of the country papers are available as working papers on the Future Agricultures website ([www.future-agricultures.org/peapa](http://www.future-agricultures.org/peapa)). All these authors have, therefore, contributed to the thinking contained in this paper. The author also wishes to thank Mette Kjaer, William Kingsmill and participants at presentations in Florida, Washington, Accra, Copenhagen and Ankara for comments on earlier versions of the paper, and Helena Perez-Nino for research assistance underlying section 2. Any errors or omissions are, however, entirely my own.

## END NOTES

- 1 Indeed, whilst Anderson and Masters 2009 report that there is room for further progress on pricing in some countries, there are also problems with some of the underlying data used to calculate distortions, which tend to overstate the amount of anti-agricultural bias still remaining (Delpeuch and Poulton 2011).
- 2 This emphasis on (lack of) investment in public goods should not be read as a dismissal of the potential role that input subsidies, which are transfers, can play in stimulating smallholder agricultural growth. As Dorward et al. 2004 explain, these were an important component of policy to stimulate agricultural growth in Asia during the Green Revolution era. However, then as now, subsidies need to be combined with investments in rural road and irrigation infrastructure, research and extension, interventions to assist smallholders cope with price and other risks, and policy coordination if they are to lead to sustained transformation of smallholder agricultural production.
- 3 Identifying donors as rational-legal agents is not an entirely uncontroversial position. A radical critique of donor agencies might portray them as instruments of foreign or commercial policy, opening new markets to international capital (see, for example, Perkins 2005). A related criticism of the neo-patrimonial concept, and hence of the simplified portrayal of scenarios in Table 1, is that a given individual – especially a senior figure within a ministry – may both ascribe to technocratic ideals whilst finding him/herself subject to strong political pressures. S/he may act largely according to technocratic logic in one situation but bow to political pressure in another.
- 4 Of course, the tension between stated public policy objectives and the requirements for retaining power exists in all states, not just African ones. It is perceived as acute within African states because (as will be discussed below), in many African states retaining power requires that a government gains the support of key local leaders and “opinion formers”. The policies that are useful in gaining the support of such people are often not those that flow from official public policy objectives, as local leaders and “opinion formers” are typically not poor.

(Contrast this with a “pure” democratic model where stated public policy objectives and the requirements for retaining power are aligned through the exchange of policies for votes). In addition, in poor countries with relatively small states (measured by the ratio of tax revenue to GDP), leaders are more likely to resort to reallocation of property rights and to extra-legal measures (corruption) to buy the support of important “opinion formers” than they are in developed economies, where political competition can focus on the legitimate sources for and distribution of the budget (Khan 2005).

- 5 Democratisation may also encompass decentralisation reforms, insofar as they are intended to give local people greater control over the services that they receive from the state, but these are not the focus of this paper.
- 6 The degree of political competition is measured using the Executive Index of Electoral Competitiveness (EIEC) which “measures the level of competition that occurs during the executive selection process” (p9). Countries are scored on a scale of 1-7 and Bates and Block 2009 consider countries scoring 6 or 7 to be politically competitive. This requires that candidates from more than one party compete in executive elections, with the share of the vote for the winning candidate (above or below 75%) determining whether a country scores 6 or 7.
- 7 These four countries scored 6 or less in the Executive Index of Electoral Competitiveness in 2009, whereas the other four countries all scored the maximum 7. (The results of the 2010 presidential election in Tanzania - which represented a wake-up call for the long-standing party of government, CCM - mean that Tanzania also now scores 7 on the EIEC).
- 8 Khan 1995 argues that property rights tend to be fairly insecure in low income economies: as most asset values are low, this reduces the amount that it is worth investing to defend rights to them.
- 9 In Tanzania President Nyerere did plenty of “ideology work” as part of establishing first TANU then CCM as an institutionalized, socialist-oriented party. Today the party remains more institutionalized than many African parties, with party organs claiming to determine key policies that individual ministers then implement. However, after several decades of uninterrupted power, during which time the country has transitioned towards a market-oriented economy, the ideology of the party has weakened. As already noted, it now encompasses factions of people who hold quite contrasting views on key issues of national development, but who all see CCM as the best route to obtaining political power.
- 10 The differing results may stem in part from the differences in the underlying databases. The Distortions to Agricultural Incentives database used by Bates and Block 2009 is both more recent, thereby encompassing much more evidence from “democratic” systems, and includes more data



points. On the other hand, Bates and Block 2009 rely on aggregate data for distortions for/against all cash crops in a country (when the President's region is only likely to grow one or two of these), whereas Kasara 2007 looks at commodity-level effects.

<sup>11</sup> Swing voting groups are not necessarily found in all countries, e.g. where one party consistently dominates power.

<sup>12</sup> A noteworthy counter-example of public goods provision is the major investment in road and other infrastructure undertaken during the Kibaki presidency in Kenya, at a time when much government activity has been stalled by wrangling over the governing coalition. A plausible explanation for this is that senior politicians and (ex-) bureaucrats in Kenya have a long history of investment in domestic tourism, agribusiness and other enterprises, the competitiveness of which depends heavily on trunk infrastructure. In other words, this is apparently an example of a national elite pursuing its own interest, albeit one that happens to have wider spin-off benefits (North 1990).

<sup>13</sup> Note, however, that the "competitive elections" variable is insignificant in Bates and Block 2009's equations for cash crop taxation and presidential origin, so this remains a point of debate.

<sup>14</sup> This conceptualization is analogous to that of an agricultural value chain and the competing efforts of the different players within the supply chain to capture the value created within the chain.

<sup>15</sup> See also Collier 2007's discussion of growth performance in natural-resource abundant economies under autocracy vs democracy with and without restraints.

<sup>16</sup> Data are for responses to Q52: "Members of Parliament have different responsibilities. Which of the following do you think is the most important responsibility of your Member of Parliament?" Number of rural respondents to this question varied from 656 in Ghana to 1022 in Malawi. In figure 4, each category encompasses two responses as follows: "rural needs" = Listen to constituents and represent their needs + Deliver jobs or development; "national role" = Make laws for the good of the country + Monitor the president and his government; "don't know" = don't know + none of these (a very small number of responses in each case!).

<sup>17</sup> Note that the link between government performance and voting for MPs may be strong in Ghana because of the dominance of two well-established parties in the country. One might also speculate regarding the incentives created by the "repeated play games" between these two parties and the electorate over five elections (soon to be six) since 1992. Lindberg 2011 argues that Ghanaian voters have now begun to learn what it is important to vote for – and that politicians in turn are taking note of evolving voter behaviour.

<sup>18</sup> Note that, where a country receives significant foreign exchange revenues from tourism (e.g. Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda), Figure 2 may overstate its relative dependence on agricultural exports, as tourism receipts are not fully captured in figures for merchandise exports.

<sup>19</sup> Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007 further specify that external military threats should have "intermediate intensity and urgency" (p37) to produce this effect. In the case of "total war", a regime's time horizon will compress to focus only on immediate survival and, in pursuit of this objective, it may take decisions that are extremely damaging to the long-term interests of the wider population.

<sup>20</sup> Current elections may be fair and indeed competitive, but with clear restrictions on the nature of competition (e.g. no ethnically-based appeals) and, therefore, on who can contest.

<sup>21</sup> Another element of the government's strategy is to discourage reference to ethnicity within the country, stressing instead the common heritage of all Rwandans. The implementation of land reform – presented as creating viable holding sizes essential for economic growth – is a key test of the sincerity of this (Pottier 2006).

<sup>22</sup> Centralized control of rents and their deployment in support of long-term growth objectives is a common feature of both the early East Asian "tiger" economies (Khan 2000) and current Rwanda and Ethiopia (Kelsall 2011).

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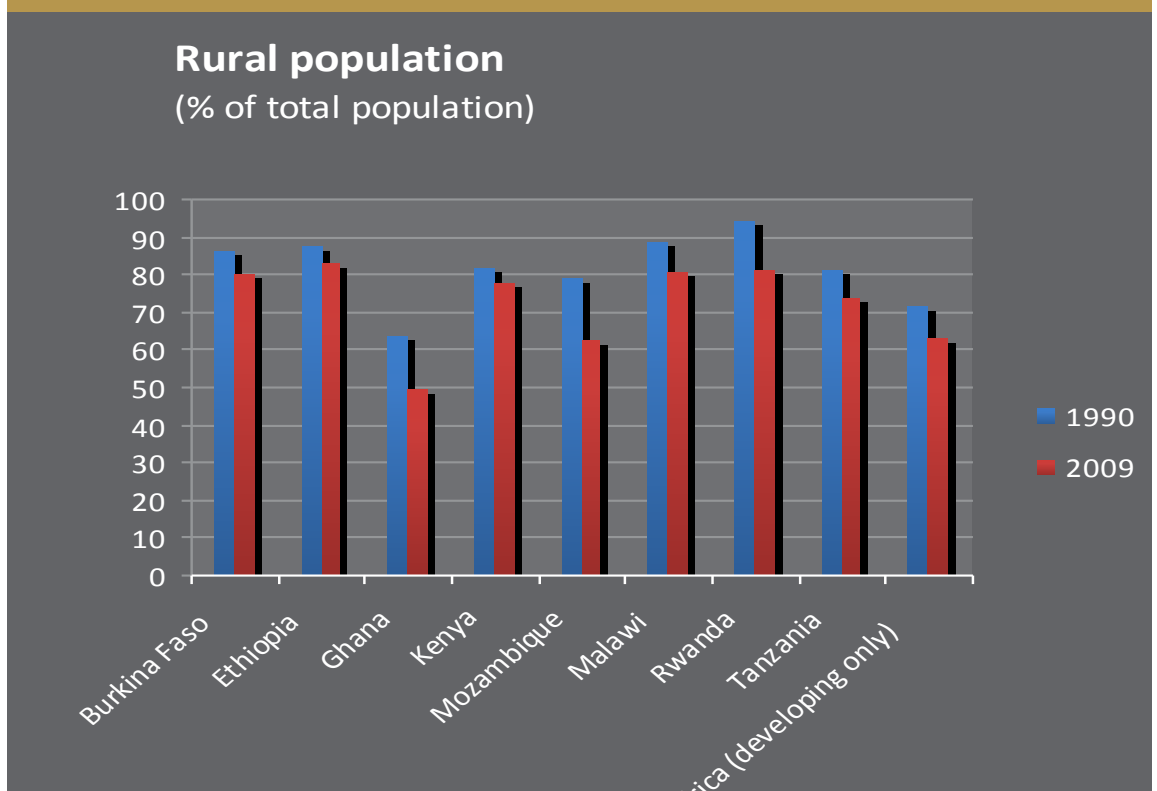
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## Appendix: Additional Comparative Indicators Across PEAPA Countries

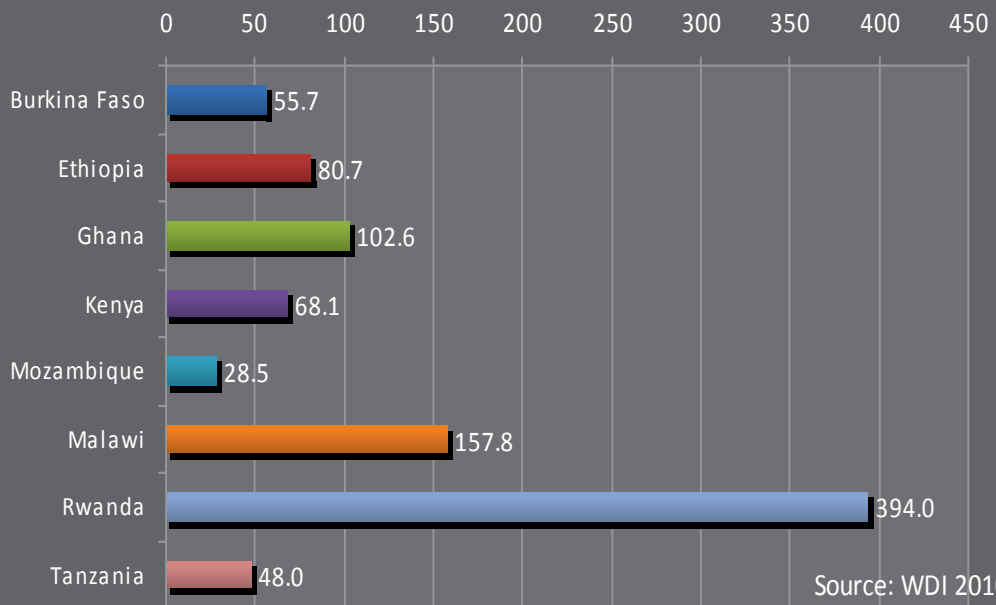
A1: Rural Population (%)



## A2: Population Density

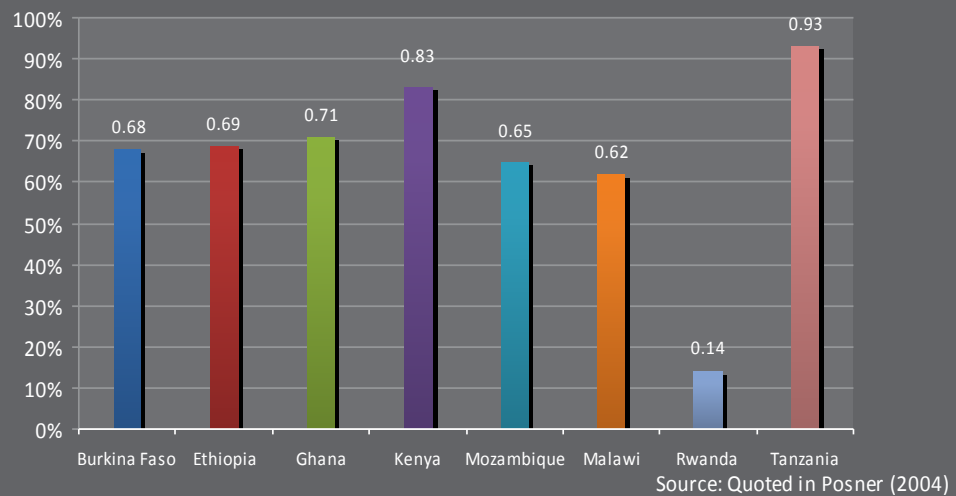
### People per sq. km

2008



## A3: Ethno-Linguistic Composition

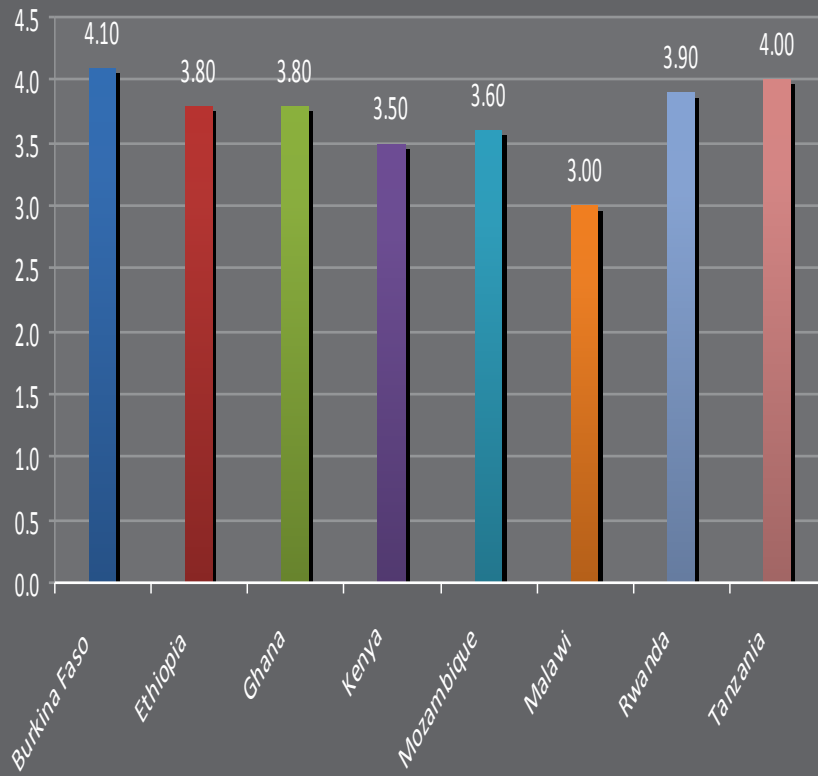
### Ethno-linguistic Fractionalisation Index





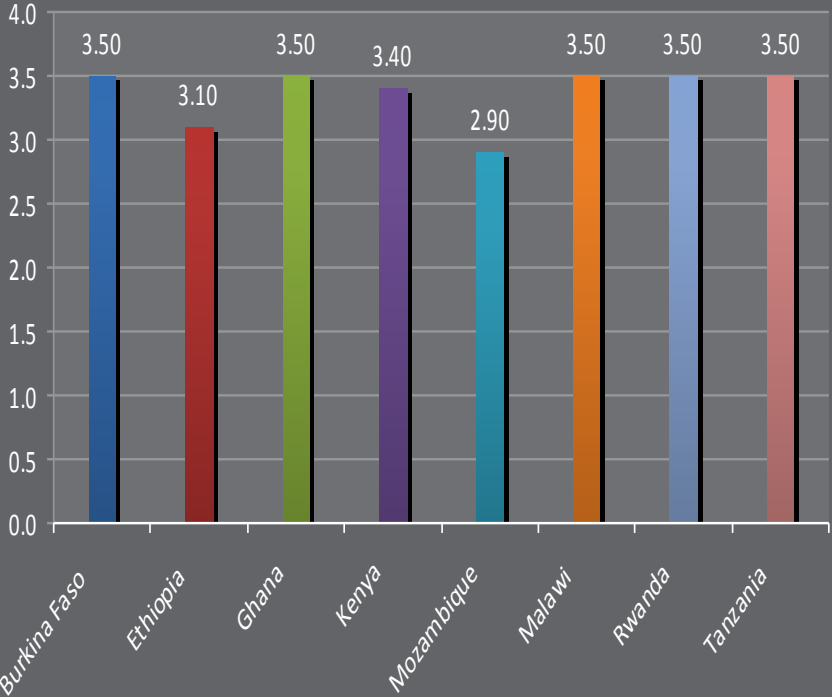
#### A4: Administrative Quality

### CPIA quality of budgetary and financial management rating (1=low to 6=high)



Source: WDI (2010)

### CPIA quality of public administration rating (1=low to 6=high, 2005-2009 average)

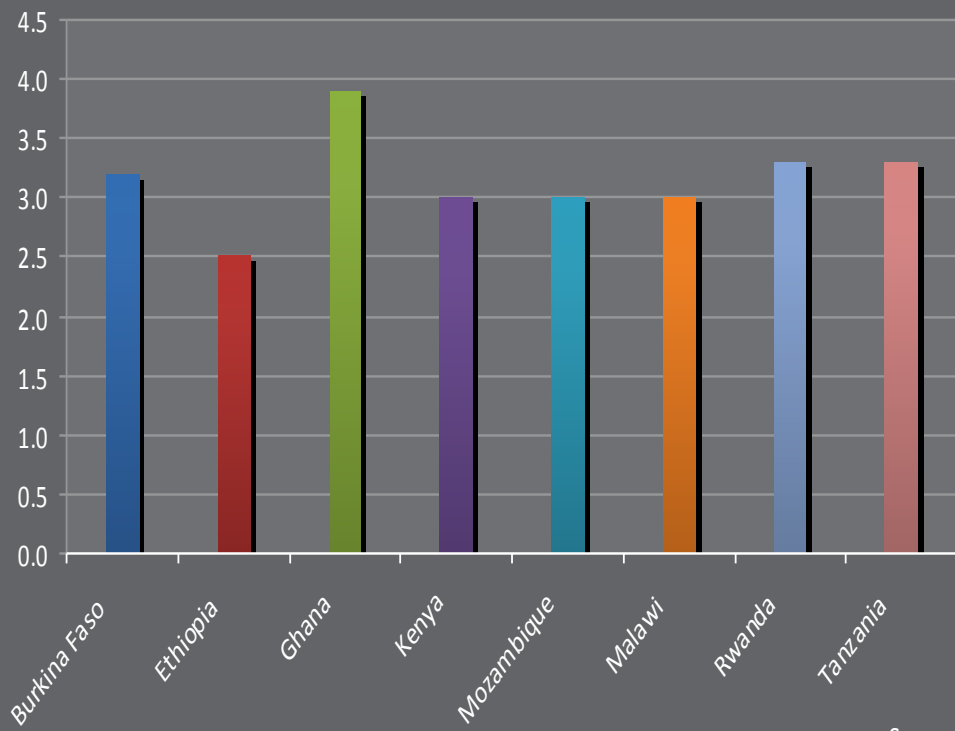


Source: WDI 2010

Source: WDI (2010)

### CPIA transparency, accountability, and corruption in the public sector rating

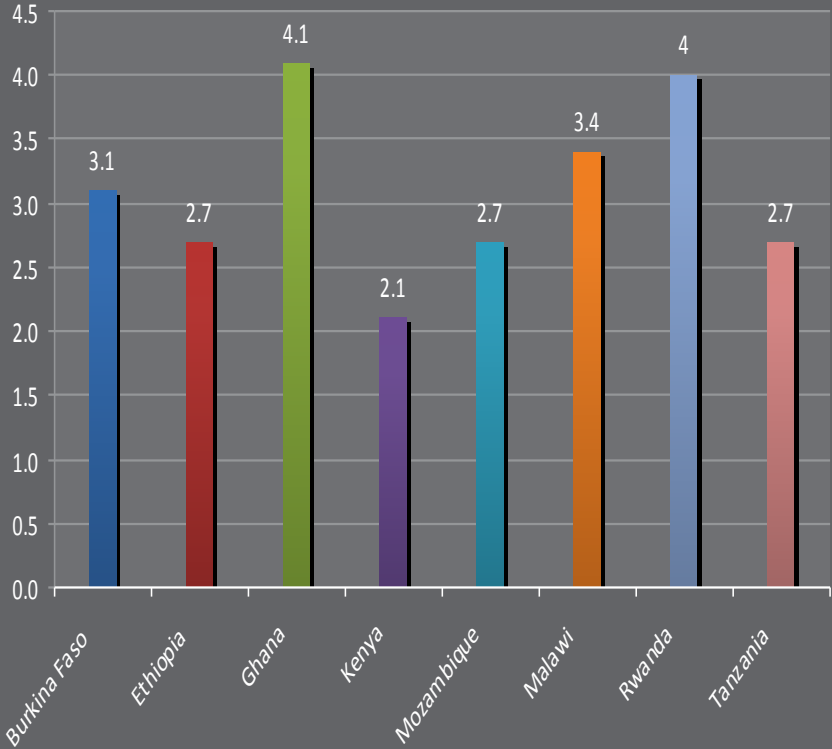
(1=low to 6=high)



Source: WDI 2010

### Corruption Perceptions Index 2010

(Scores)



Source: Transparency International

Note: higher is better!

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