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HOW ABOLISHING SCHOOL FEES INCREASED SUPPORT FOR THE INCUMBENT IN BURUNDI

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ABSTRACT

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This article addresses the question of whether voters reward politicians for the provision of public goods by looking at citizens’ responses to the provision of primary education in Burundi. It focuses on the abolition of primary school fees in 2005, using original data on district-level campaign rhetoric as well as access to and quality of public education. Based on these data, this article shows that in Burundi, the incumbent president extensively advertised the implementation of the policy during its campaign in the subsequent election in 2010 and that the voters did, in turn, respond with increased electoral support when access to public schools in their locality improved. It further shows that this process was not driven by ethnic and political affiliations, but rather cut across such identities. The positive impact of abolishing school fees was in fact equally strong in localities where the incumbent was not expected to win. An analysis of Afrobarometer survey data corroborates the mechanism at the individual level, indicating that satisfaction with the government education policy is strongly associated with support for the incumbent president.

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DO AFRICAN VOTERS REWARD their politicians for the provision of public services? The common wisdom in the literature is that voters in African developing democracies are driven primarily by ethnicity, clientelism, and bribery, and yet African governments have increasingly begun to provide public services free of charge, similar to what developed democracies have

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done in the past. In the latter, spending decisions are highly influenced by electoral competition, and so young democracies in developing nations are expected to follow the same path in order to appeal to a wide electorate. Because the electorate in developing countries' democracies is generally poor and rural, the establishment of competitive elections has resulted in changes to the provision of basic services such as increased spending on primary education and the abolition of school fees. From an electoral standpoint, these welfare concessions are cost-effective if citizens then use their votes to voice satisfaction with the policy. This article suggests that the provision of basic public services, such as primary education, can in fact be an important catalyst of electoral support.

Recent research has begun to document the existence of economic determinants of voting in African new democracies and measured the impact of economic improvements and provision of public services in selected countries. This article expands this research by isolating voter responses to the provision of a specific public good: the abolition of primary school fees. Furthermore, while most literature has examined voting behaviour in countries with a history of electoral competition, such as Ghana and Kenya, this article focuses on Burundi, a post-conflict country with a shorter history of elections, where the occurrence of ethnic voting and electoral malpractices—rather than the evaluation of public services—is expected to drive electoral behaviour.

Specifically, this article examines whether the abolition of primary school fees by the government elected in 2005 influenced its re-election in 2010. To do this, it investigates whether the issue affected the electoral behaviour of both politicians and voters by analysing different kinds of data, including political speeches and songs collected in the field, an original questionnaire answered by over 2,500 local electoral monitors, and a newly compiled data set with electoral and socio-economic information at the municipal level. It finds that the incumbent party campaigned heavily on the abolition of school fees across all municipalities, and that improved access to education influenced voting choices: where access to school improved, the incumbent party was rewarded with higher vote shares. This effect was not limited to localities already in support of the ruling party. It was equally strong in areas prone to supporting the opposition, or with a high proportion of people of an ethnic group different from the incumbent president's.

This article makes a 2-fold contribution. On the specific subject of the relationship between democracy and welfare concessions in Africa, it provides evidence that in Burundi, the implementation of public services by a government facing re-election did indeed produce returns. On a broader level, the evidence clearly shows the influence of economic and policy considerations in a society that according to common wisdom should be dominated by ethnic or clientelistic voting.

This article proceeds as follows. The next section discusses the literature on the relationship between elections and the provision of public services in Africa. The following sections describe the data used in the analysis and outline the context of public education in Burundi as well as how access to education effectively changed in poorer and rural localities after the abolition of school fees during the incumbent president's first term. Then, the empirical evidence is presented showing that the abolition of school fees received significant emphasis from the ruling party during its subsequent electoral campaign in 2010, followed by the analysis demonstrating that increased access to primary education translated into electoral gains for the incumbent party across the country. These results are corroborated by an analysis of individual political preferences based on Afrobarometer survey data, which show that satisfaction with the government's education policies is strongly associated with support for the incumbent president. This article concludes with a discussion on the broader implications of these findings.

Democracy, public goods, and voting behaviour in Africa

Democracy tends to be correlated with a greater provision of public goods, notably in education and health services. Scholars have found evidence that increasing levels of democratization can have a positive impact on educational attainments,¹ literacy,² access to school,³ or government spending.⁴ Competitive elections seem to be at the core of these relationships. Elections prompt governments to be more responsive to the majority of the population, which in many developing countries is poorer and located in rural areas and whose preferences are for the provision of public services. This claim has two observable implications. First, transitions to democracy should be followed by increased government spending and

1. Robert J. Barro and Jong Wha Lee, 'International data on educational attainment: Updates and implications', *Oxford Economic Papers* 53, 3 (2001), pp. 541–563; Jose Tavares and Romain Wacziarg, 'How democracy affects growth', *European Economic Review* 45, 8 (2001), pp. 1341–1378.

2. Ming-Chang Tsai, 'Does political democracy enhance human development in developing countries?' *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 65, 2 (2006), pp. 233–268; Sebastian Vollmer and Maria Ziegler, 'Political institutions and human development: Does democracy fulfill its "constructive" and "instrumental" role?' (Policy Research Working Paper 4818, The World Bank Development Research Group Macroeconomics and Growth Team, 2009).

3. David S. Brown, 'Reading, writing, and regime type: Democracy's impact on primary school enrollment', *Political Research Quarterly* 52, 4 (1999), pp. 681–707; David A. Lake and Matthew A. Baum, 'The invisible hand of democracy: Political control and the provision of public services', *Comparative Political Studies* 34, 6 (2001), pp. 587–621; Tsai, 'Does political democracy enhance human development in developing countries?'

4. David Stasavage, 'The role of democracy in Uganda's move to universal primary education', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 43, 1 (2005), pp. 53–73; Tsai, 'Does political democracy enhance human development in developing countries?'

greater efforts in implementing public services, and second that voters will condition their electoral choices on the implementation of such public services. 45

The first implication has already found some empirical support. 5
 Governments in sub-Saharan Africa have in fact increased spending in primary schools following the establishment of multi-party electoral competition, while at the same time leaving spending for higher education unchanged.⁵ The second implication, however, has not yet received meaningful attention. 50

10 The common wisdom is that politics in developing countries, especially in Africa, is determined by ethnicity and clientelism. However, the most recent literature has occasionally noted other determinants of voting behaviour. Scholars have shown that economic considerations are in fact sometimes driving ethnic patterns of voting, for example, in Ghana.⁶ In 55
 15 Uganda, Elizabeth Carlson shows that ethnicity and performance interact to determine the preferences of voters: voters prefer only candidates who are both coethnic and good performers.⁷ Michael Bratton, Ravi Bhavnani, and Tse-Hsin Chen explore the issue cross-nationally and show that African voters seek to engage in both ethnic and economic voting.⁸ 60
 20 Similarly, research on urban/rural cleavages suggests that the incumbent advantage seen in rural areas could be explained by the impact of taxation in urban localities,⁹ as well as by greater provision of public goods benefiting the rural population.¹⁰ Dissatisfaction with the economy and 65

25 5. Stasavage, 'The role of democracy in Uganda's move to universal primary education'; Robin Harding and David Stasavage, 'What democracy does (and doesn't do) for basic services: School fees, school inputs, and African elections', *The Journal of Politics* 76, 1 (2014), pp. 229–245; Keith M. Lewin, 'Access to education in sub-Saharan Africa: Patterns, problems and possibilities', *Comparative Education* 45, 2 (2009), pp. 151–174. 70

6. Nahomi Ichino and Noah L. Nathan. 'Crossing the line: Local ethnic geography and voting in Ghana', *American Political Science Review* 107, 2 (2013), pp. 344–361.

30 7. Elizabeth Carlson, 'Ethnic voting and accountability in Africa: A choice experiment in Uganda', *World Politics*, 67 (2015), pp. 353–385.

8. Michael Bratton, Ravi Bhavnani, and Tse-Hsin Chen, 'Voting intentions in Africa: Ethnic, economic or partisan?' *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 50, 1 (2012), pp. 27–52. 75

9. Paul Nugent, 'Living in the past: Urban, rural and ethnic themes in the 1992 and 1996 elections in Ghana', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 37 (1999), pp. 287–319.

35 10. Robin Harding, *Democracy and rural bias in sub-Saharan Africa* (New York University, unpublished PhD dissertation, 2012); Paul Nugent, 'Living in the past'; Jeremy Youde, 'Economics and government popularity in Ghana', *Electoral Studies* 24 (2005), pp. 1–16; Simon Martin Primus, *Economic voting in Ghana. An in-depth study of the economic factor in African elections* (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, unpublished Master thesis, 2015). Daniel N. Posner and David J. Simon, 'Economic conditions and incumbent support in Africa's new democracies: Evidence from Zambia', *Comparative Political Studies* 35, 3 (2002), pp. 313–336. Keith R. Weghorst and Staffan I. Lindberg, 'What drives the swing voter in Africa?' *American Journal of Political Science*, 57, 3 (July 2013), pp. 717–734. Staffan I. Lindberg, 'Have the cake and eat it: The rational voter in Africa', *Party Politics* 19, 6 (2013), pp. 945–961. Staffan I. Lindberg and Minion K. C. Morrison, 'Exploring voter alignments in Africa: Core and swing voters in Ghana', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 43 (2005), pp. 565–586. 80

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11. Staffan I. Lindberg and Minion K. C. Morrison, 'Exploring voter alignments in Africa: Core and swing voters in Ghana', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 43 (2005), pp. 565–586. 85

concerns over government poor performances also contribute to explain recent electoral patterns in Ghana¹¹ and Zambia.¹² In Ghana, in particular, voters are found to be responsive not just to improvement of the economy but also to collective constituency goods and lawmaking,¹³ long-term goals such as national economic development,¹⁴ and incumbent performance.¹⁵

These contributions suggest that voters may in fact respond to economic and welfare concessions implemented by governments. However, studies that isolate the impact of specific policies on changes in support for incumbent governments are still scarce. Among the exceptions, Robin Harding and David Stasavage found that citizens condition their voting intentions on outcomes that politicians can control directly (such as abolishing school fees),¹⁶ and Harding shows that changes in road conditions are strongly related to increased support for the incumbent in Ghana.¹⁷ One of the problems in evaluating whether voters reward politicians for their policies is that voters first need the capacity to recognize and verify the performance of political elites.¹⁸ In the absence of such capacity, voters are unable to reward their politicians, not for lack of willingness or institutional means but simply for lack of information. Among all public goods, public education is particularly well suited to resolving this sort of information problem because voters can easily verify and attribute education policies—such as abolition of school fees—to executive actions.¹⁹ Furthermore, educational improvements are a common political request in developing countries, where primary education constitutes a concern for the largely rural, low-income electorate.

Building upon these considerations, the analysis in this article focuses on voter responses to the provision of primary education through the abolition of school fees. There are two hypotheses driving this article. The first is that the provision of public services is a relevant issue during an electoral campaign in which the incumbent president is seeking re-election. The second is that voters increase their support for the incumbent if they benefitted from improved access to primary schooling.

11. Youde, 'Economics and government popularity in Ghana'; Primus, *Economic voting in Ghana*.

12. Posner and Simon, 'Economic conditions and incumbent support in Africa's new democracies.'

13. Weghorst and Lindberg, 'What drives the swing voter in Africa?'

14. Lindberg, 'Have the cake and eat it'.

15. Lindberg and Morrison, 'Exploring voter alignments in Africa'.

16. Harding and Stasavage, 'What democracy does (and doesn't do) for basic services'.

17. Robin Harding, 'Attribution and accountability: Voting for roads in Ghana', *World Politics*, 67, 4 (2015), pp. 656–689.

18. Philip Keefer, 'What does political economy tell us about economic development and vice versa?' *Annual Review of Political Science* 7, 1 (2004), pp. 247–272.

19. Harding and Stasavage, 'What democracy does (and doesn't do) for basic services'.

This article brings together the research literature and these hypotheses in the context of Burundi, a country in which the first president elected after a civil war pledged the abolition of school fees. In addition to identifying a clear mechanism of electoral accountability for a public good that is clearly attributable to a government action, this article also expands the scholarship on African voting behaviour by studying a country with a limited history of competitive elections. Furthermore, while access to education has always been a relevant issue for the Burundian population (and especially for those excluded from it in the past), ethnicity, intimidation, and corruption also strongly influence Burundian politics. While this article does not seek to demonstrate that the provision of public services supplanted other practices as preferred electoral strategies, it nonetheless aims to show the effect of the abolition of school fees in a context where this impact might not be expected.

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Access to school, electoral appeals, and electoral results between 2005 and 2010

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To address whether the abolition of primary-school fees led to an increase in electoral support for the incumbent, I exploit territorial variation in changes in access to primary schools and in vote share obtained by the incumbent party in the elections that took place before and after the abolition of fees. The unit of observation is generally the municipality, the lowest administrative level for which data on school attendance and infrastructure as well as electoral results are available. Burundi has 129 municipalities grouped into 17 provinces. I created a pooled cross-sectional data set with the same variables measured at the municipality level both in 2005 and 2010. Since all this information constitutes an aggregate of individual-level data, all results presented here should be interpreted at the aggregate level. The statistical models used are explained in the individual sections. To corroborate the municipal-level findings, I also employ individual-level data from nationally representative surveys.

Electoral results for 2005 and 2010 were obtained from the Burundi electoral commission. In 2005, the president was elected indirectly by Parliament, so I focus on the municipal elections to examine the change in support for the president's party. In 2010, the municipal elections were the first in a series of electoral rounds; voters were formally called to elect only municipal council members. However, because the presidential and legislative elections were only a few weeks after, municipal electoral campaigns focused heavily on national-level parties (seven of which had presidential candidates). As Burundian political scientist Julien Nimubona noted, 'The campaign was animated by the presidential candidates, and the message conveyed during the campaign was the message of the parties

at the national level, not the message of the candidates at the municipal level; people voted for the presidents of the parties, not the presidents of the municipal councils'.²⁰ Even though most opposition parties subsequently declared that elections were rigged, the European Union Electoral Observation Mission and other local and international observers did not question the overall validity of the results, despite some irregularities.²¹ Furthermore, even though turnout rates in the 2010 municipal elections were extremely high, to the point that they might appear artificially inflated at a first glance, such voting behaviour has been fairly consistent across elections in Burundi, and turnout in 2010 varied across municipalities in a fashion that is consistent with the turnout rates in 2005 and 1993. The 1993 election, in particular, was not found to be fraudulent.²² To strengthen the analysis, I also examine the preference for 'presidential' candidates, by looking at individual voting intentions stated in the nationally representative Afrobarometer survey, completed in Burundi two years after the 2010 election.²³

In order to explore the content of the campaign messages, I introduce two novel sets of data. First, I collected video recordings of campaign rallies, television interviews, and debates of the political candidates. I used recordings from Burundi's National Radio and Television (RTNB), which included one or more speeches for the major parties, generally at the opening or closing of the campaign. I also collected from the RTNB recordings of television interviews with the candidates of the major parties. Additionally, I collected recordings of the campaign songs of all major political parties that were available on CDs. While these data are certainly not comprehensive, and the selection of video recordings archived by the RTNB was beyond my control, they nonetheless constitute a rich and unique empirical point of reference for discussing electoral campaign rhetoric.

In addition, I conducted an expert questionnaire with more than 2,500 local electoral observers deployed by the *Coalition de la Société Civile pour le Monitoring Electoral* (COSOME), the largest civil society coalition tasked

20. Author's interview, September 2010. See also Stef Vandegiste, 'Power-sharing as a fragile safety valve in times of electoral turmoil: The costs and benefits of Burundi's 2010 elections', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 49 (2011), p. 2.

21. Union Européenne, Mission d'Observation Electorale, 'Burundi. Rapport final. Elections communales, présidentielles, législatives, sénatoriales et collinaires 2010' (Union Européenne, Mission d'Observation Electorale, 2010).

22. National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 'Communiqué de presse' (Bujumbura, 19 May 1993); National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 'International observer delegation post-electoral statement' (Bujumbura, 1 June 1993).

23. Respondents were asked 'If the presidential elections were held tomorrow, for which candidate would you vote?' (Question number 99). I coded the answer as '1' if the respondent said the incumbent party, and '0' otherwise. Undecided respondents and individuals refusing to answer are coded as missing.

with domestic electoral observation, in polling stations during the village-level elections in September 2010. One of the questions asked whether the ruling party ‘talked a lot’ about the abolition of school fees during the electoral campaign in that locality. I averaged these answers by municipality and created a continuous variable between 0 and 1 measuring the extent to which the monitors stated that the incumbent party emphasized the issue in each municipality.

The data on education are from the Ministry of Education’s yearbooks, and include information on school enrolment and number of classrooms in public primary schools between school years 2004/05 and 2009/10. In order to measure ‘access to school’, my primary explanatory variable, I consider the gross enrolment ratio (GER): the proportion of individuals enrolled in school to the number of children of the age group that officially corresponds to the same level.²⁴ The territorial variation of changes in GER between 2004/05 and 2009/10 across municipalities is shown in Figure 1. I employ GER rather than the raw number of enrolled students in order to account for differences in school-age population across municipalities. School-age population data follow government estimates based on a 3-percent yearly demographic increase on the 2008 population census.²⁵

In order to measure the quality of primary education, I follow Burundi government reports and employ the repetition rate: the proportion of students in any grade of primary school that also attend that same grade in the following school year. The repetition rate in Burundi is one of the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, and increased from less than 30 percent before the abolition of school fees to more than 34 percent right before the 2010 election. Government reports use the repetition rate as an indicator of internal performance, together with the drop-out rate. However, the drop-out rate is generally affected by factors that go beyond the quality of teaching, such as local conditions (e.g., lack of higher grade classrooms close to students’ homes), sustained school-related costs, and opportunity costs for the children’s families.²⁶ The repetition rate is more independent of external conditions and is closely associated with the quality of learning

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24. It should be noted that GER can be greater than 100 percent as a result of grade repetition and entry at ages younger or older than the typical age at that grade level.

25. République du Burundi, Ministère de l’Éducation Nationale et de la Culture, ‘Données provisoires issues du recensement national de 2008. Répartition de la population scolarisable par province et par commune’ (République du Burundi, 2008).

26. Ministère de l’enseignement de base et secondaire, de l’enseignement des métiers, de la formation professionnelle et de l’alphabétisation, Commission d’évaluation du système éducatif burundais Dispositif Qualité/Gestion 2010/11, ‘Rapport de l’évaluation diagnostique des élèves de début de 3^{ème} année de l’enseignement primaire’ (Ministère de l’enseignement de base et secondaire, 2011).



Figure 1. Change in GER in public primary schools between 2004/05 and 2009/10 (darker colour corresponds to higher GER increase).

conditions,²⁷ and therefore is better suited to proxy for quality of schooling. Furthermore, increases in repetition rate were generally considered by non-governmental analysts to be a negative outcome of the decline of the public education system.²⁸ Since I consider information for all grades of primary school, the variable used is, more precisely, the ratio of the number of repeaters in all years to the total students enrolled in primary school.

In order to measure popular reaction to the abolition of school fees, I rely on the *Questionnaire des Indicateurs de Base du Bien-être (QUIBB)*. This nationally representative survey was administered in 2006 by the Burundian government and the University of Burundi to measure the living condition of the population after the war and the knowledge and the impact of various public policies, including the abolition of school fees. Finally, in order to further corroborate whether satisfaction with the

27. See, for instance, Ministère de l'éducation nationale et de la culture, 'Indicateurs 2005/06 sur l'enseignement au Burundi' (Ministère de l'éducation nationale et de la culture, 2007).

28. Joseph Ndayisaba, 'Gratuité de l'enseignement de base: Bilan et perspectives' (Observatoire de l'Action Gouvernementale, Bujumbura, Burundi, 2009).

education policy may be behind voters' support for the government, I turn to individual answers about policy preferences collected in the two rounds of the Afrobarometer survey that followed the 2010 elections. 45

5 Since support for the incumbent party (as well as access to school) could be affected by other socio-economic factors, I include several demographic indicators in my analysis. First, I create an indicator for the average wealth of municipalities, relying on data from two nationally representative surveys. The 2005 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)²⁹ by the National Institute of Statistics (ISTEEBU, by its French 50 acronym) was carried out right before the abolition of school fees in 2005, and UNICEF's 2010 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) was conducted by the ISTEEBU, the Ministry of Economic planning, and the 55 Ministry of Health right before the 2010 elections. I employ the wealth index computed directly by the survey researchers,³⁰ which ranges between 1 and 5; once households' responses are averaged by municipality, it ranges between 1.7 and 5. For individual-level data, I create a composite indicator based on how often the individual has gone without food, 60 water, money, medications, and fuel in the past 12 months.

20 Because ethnicity might still be salient in Burundi, I also estimate the ethnic composition of the municipality. In the absence of a recent ethnic census, I measure the percentage of Hutu population through the vote share obtained by parties associated with that specific ethnic group (and whose support base was strongly associated with that group) in the legislative election of 1993—the first election open to multiple parties, in which 65 ethnicity was highly mobilized.³¹ For individual-level data, I use the ethnicity stated by respondents in the Afrobarometer survey.

I also create a dummy variable measuring whether the municipality is urban or rural, based on the sampling strategy adopted for the 2005 MICS. In this study, 16 municipalities out of 129 are considered urban. 70

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Public education policies and access to school in Burundi before and after the civil war 75

35 Access to education has always been an important issue in Burundi and was particularly salient in the aftermath of the civil war. Educational discrimination along ethnic lines dates back to the colonial period, when the 80

29. The full name in French is 'Enquête Nationale d'Evaluation des Conditions de vie de l'Enfant et de la Femme, l'Enquêtes par grappe à indicateurs multiples' (MICS).

40 30. These household surveys rely on different samples taken in the two different periods. However, both samples are nationally representative and utilize similar sampling strategies.

31. René Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic conflict and genocide* (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Cambridge, 1994); Thérénce Sinunguriza, *Les élections au Burundi: Tout savoir et tirer des leçons de juin 1993* (Editions Luc Pire, Bruxelles, 2004); Peter Uvin, *Life after violence: A people's story of Burundi* (Zed, London, 2009). 85

governing administration privileged access to the Tutsi in order to strengthen the minority's supremacy.³² This discrimination persisted even after independence,³³ and was deliberately employed to maintain the ruling elite's advantage by ensuring that the proportion of Tutsi entering high school and college was kept high. This context contributed to make ethnicity salient for the economic and political life of the country.³⁴ These ethnic differences in access to education crystallized in the 1972 genocide against the Hutu, when members of the Hutu educated class were particularly targeted. Discrimination in access to education continued for the next two decades along both ethnic and regional lines, with southern districts privileged over their northern counterparts.³⁵

After the coup d'état in 1993 in which the newly elected Hutu president was killed, Burundi entered a civil war that lasted over a decade. During this period, the hope of receiving access to education pushed many to join the fighting.³⁶ Although peace agreements were signed in 2000, the demobilization of all armed groups was finally complete only in 2009. However, as soon as security and economic conditions began to improve in the latter stages of the civil war, attendance in schools—particularly in primary schools—increased as well, catching up to pre-war levels by the early 2000s,³⁷ as shown in Figure 2. The country then experienced a spike in school attendance rates after the abolition of fees in 2005,³⁸ following the same trend demonstrated by Harding and Stasavage for several other African countries.³⁹

The Government of Burundi removed the fees in 2005 after the ruling party and former armed group *Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie—Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie* (hereafter CNDD-FDD), led by former rebel leader Pierre Nkurunziza, secured its first term in office. The pledge of free primary education was delivered during

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32. Leonce Ndikumana, 'Institutional failure and ethnic conflict in Burundi', *African Studies Review* 41, 1 (1998), pp. 29–47.

33. Johnson W. Makoba and Elavie Ndura, 'The roots of contemporary ethnic conflict and violence in Burundi', in Santosh C. Saha (ed.), *Perspectives on contemporary ethnic conflict: Primal violence or the politics of conviction?* (Lexington Books, Lanham, 2006), pp. 295–310.

34. Ndikumana, 'Institutional failure and ethnic conflict in Burundi'.

35. Floribert Ngaruko and Javier D. Nkurunziza, 'An economic interpretation of the conflict in Burundi', *Journal of African Economies* 9, 3 (2000), pp. 370–409.

36. Gwendolyn Hall Taylor, *Choosing to fight: The dynamics of civil war participation in Burundi* (New York University, unpublished PhD dissertation, 2010).

37. Herménégilde Rwantabagu, 'Education in Burundi: An evolutionary perspective' (University of Burundi, Faculty of Education, Bujumbura, 2013).

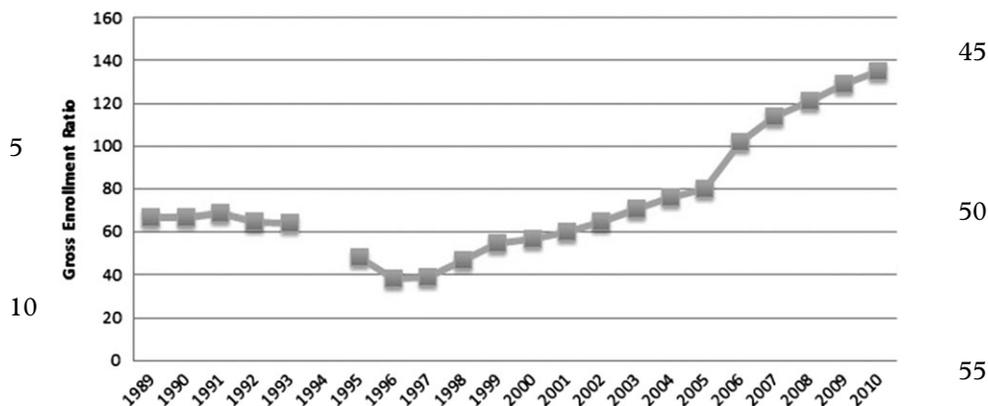
38. See 'Rapport Burundi, Objectifs du Millénaire pour le développement 2010' (Programme des Nations Unies pour le développement et le Gouvernement du Burundi, July 2010).

39. Harding and Stasavage, 'What democracy does (and doesn't do) for basic services.'

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15 *Figure 2. GER between 1989 and 2010.*

*Source: World Bank Indicators.*⁴⁰

President Nkurunziza's inaugural speech and took effect immediately.⁴¹ This policy was accompanied by a substantial increase in the budget for education.⁴² Within the state budget for education, 'primary' education gained the lion's share—rising from 37 percent in 2001 to 54 percent in 2008.

While the abolished fees accounted for only about 15 percent of the total cost for a family to send children to school,⁴³ according to local analysts, the abolition of these fees had a psychological impact on the Burundian people, creating the perception of primary school as more affordable than in the past.⁴⁴

To explore the actual impact of the abolition of school fees of school attendance, and therefore assess whether the poor did indeed take advantage of the lowered educational cost, I examine both people's attitudes

40. World Bank Indicators data retrieved from <<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/>> (Accessed September 2016).

41. According to interviews conducted by Katrin Wittig with CNDD-FDD senior members in 2014–15, it seems that the decision to abolish primary-school fees, as well as to provide free healthcare for pregnant women and their children under five, may have been taken by the CNDD-FDD party before consultations with international donors. (Author's exchange with Wittig, 2016.)

42. Antime Mivuba, 'La qualité de l'éducation: Defi de l'achevment de l'enseignement primaire en 2015. Rapport Provisoire' (Coalition pour l'éducation pour tous 'Bafashebigé', December 2009).

43. Other expenses include academic materials, uniforms, and contributions to the school's budget. It is estimated that annual school fees were 1,500 Burundian francs (FBU) from a total expense of 10,000 FBU (The World Bank, 'Le système éducatif Burundais. Diagnostic et perspectives pour une nouvelle politique éducative dans le contexte de l'éducation primaire gratuite pour tous' [Document de travail de la Banque Mondiale No. 109, 2007]).

44. Ndayisaba, 'Gratuité de l'enseignement de base'.

Table 1. Estimated probability of answering ‘yes’ to the following QUIBB questions

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<i>Wealth index score</i>	<i>Child would not be attending school if fees were in place (%)</i>	<i>Child did not attend last year because fees were in place (%)</i>
Very poor	33	26
Poor	30	24
Average	28	22
Rich	25	15
Very rich	14	9

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and their behaviour. First, I analyse the QUIBB data collected in 2006. In this survey, carried out right after the abolition of fees, households across the country were asked if the household’s children who were currently attending primary school would instead have stayed home if the president had not abolished school fees. While on average only one-third of people answered ‘yes’, the probability of saying so varied considerably across economic groups. Using the QUIBB wealth index, I compute the impact of wealth on the likelihood of saying that children would not have attended primary school if fees were in place by estimating it as a function of a matrix of dummy variables for each wealth quintile in a hierarchical model. This statistical model accounts for unobserved effects that are due to having households nested within municipalities nested, in turn, within provinces. The estimated likelihood of saying that children would not have attended primary school if fees were in place was highest for the poorest quintile, and decreased by more than half for the wealthier ones. Similarly, when the household was asked whether at least one of the children did not attend school in the past due to lack of money to pay for school fees, the estimated probability to say ‘yes’ for the lowest quintile was 26 percent, and 9 percent for the highest. Table 1 sums up these data.

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These responses are backed by a closer look at the effect of the abolition of the fees on school attendance at the municipality level for different levels of wealth. I estimate by ordinary least squares (OLS)⁴⁵ the impact of socio-economic factors on access to school (captured by GER), holding constant the number of classrooms. Since observations in the municipalities across the two years may be serially correlated, the standard errors are clustered at the municipal level and also corrected for potential heteroscedasticity.⁴⁶ I include a year dummy in order to proxy for the

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45. The OLS is a method to estimate the parameters of a linear regression model.

46. Heteroscedasticity occurs when different observations have different error variances. In the presence of heteroscedasticity in OLS estimation, estimated standard errors are inconsistent, so test statistics using the standard error are not valid.

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implementation of the policy—which takes the value of 0 at the base year 2005 (when fees were in place) and 1 for the following election year 2010 (when fees had been removed). In order to estimate if the impact of the policy was different across various economic groups, I add an interaction variable of the wealth variable with the year dummy. Similarly, in order to estimate whether the impact of the policy differed for people living in a rural or urban municipality, I add an interaction of the year dummy with a binary variable indicating whether the given municipality is urban or rural.

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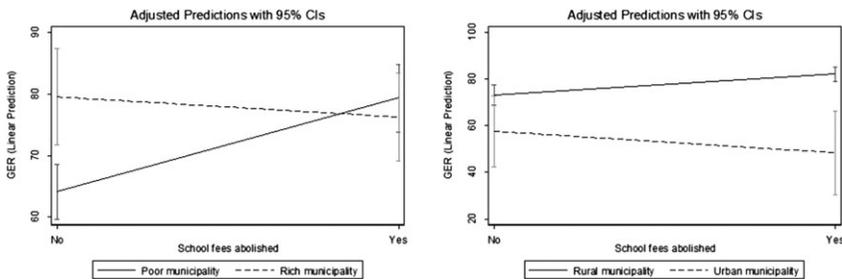
Even though the abolition of school fees was implemented uniformly across the country, it is clear from the results, reported in the online appendix, that the nation-wide policy produced a different reaction across municipalities according to the socio-economic conditions of these municipalities. The negative and significant coefficient of the interaction implies that the abolition of school fees had a greater impact on enrolment in localities where economic conditions were lower—that is, moving from year 2005 to year 2010 produced a larger significant increase in GER in poor locations. The impact of the abolition of school fees on school enrolment according to different levels of wealth is represented graphically in the left graph in Figure 3. Similarly, the policy had a greater impact on enrolment in rural localities, as shown in the right graph of Figure 3. This impact is robust to the inclusion of province fixed effects to account for other unobserved factors such as past educational discrimination and existing educational infrastructure.

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Public education in electoral propaganda

The first step in understanding whether the abolition of school fees played a role in electoral behaviour is to look at whether the issue was present in the discourse of political parties during their campaigns. Even though this

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Figure 3. Impact of abolition of school fees on GER differentiated between poor and rich municipalities, and between urban and rural municipalities.

issue was not the only topic during the electoral period,⁴⁷ if the provision of public services was considered a method for gaining electoral support then one would expect the incumbent party to make consistent reference to having abolished primary-school fees. 45

5 The video recordings of rallies, interviews, and candidates' debates reveal the predicted emphasis on abolished education fees.⁴⁸ In one of his campaign speeches, incumbent President Nkurunziza declared: 50

10 Now it is time to have politics that is based on facts and actions. Now it is the time in which the people are going to evaluate us. Each party will bring the list of implemented projects ... You know ours ... What is the party that made education for children free? Give yourselves the answer.⁴⁹ 50

The issue also emerged in the party's campaign songs chanted by youth groups or broadcast by cars touring the streets during the campaign. One of these songs said, 55

15 I run into a man ... I asked him: who are you going to vote for?
And he replied ... Pierre Nkurunziza,
who allowed our children to study for free. 60

20 Another song was even more explicit:

You [the president] gave the possibility to all children to study for free. What else would they like, then, those who dislike you? 65

And another one praised the provision of several public services,

25 Schools have been built across the country, in addition to primary-school fees being abolished, and mothers delivering for free Pierre Nkurunziza, we thank you, we thank you.⁵⁰

30 These were not isolated claims. Three out of four local observers whom I surveyed declared that the incumbent party significantly emphasized this message during the campaign in that district. The message was stressed fairly consistently across all municipalities, with some peaks in rural areas and in provinces that had lower access to education in the pre-war period (Figure 4), according to the coding proposed by Floribert Ngaruko and Javier Nkurunziza.⁵¹ 75

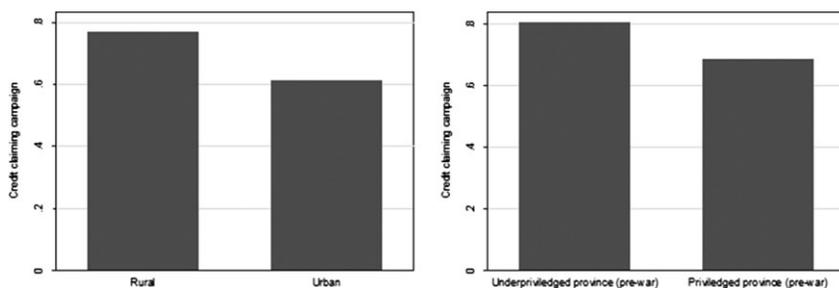
35 47. For example, the issue of transitional justice was often mentioned both by the incumbent and by other parties. See Sandra Rubli, '(Re)making the social world: The politics of transitional justice in Burundi', *Africa Spectrum* 48, 1 (2013), pp. 3–24. 80

48. The incumbent also referred frequently to the provision of birth delivery assistance and healthcare for infants free of charge.

49. Excerpt from a TV-recorded campaign rally by the CNDD-FDD, Bujumbura, April–May 2010. English translation based on French translation from Kirundi by author's research assistants. 40

50. There is no evidence from the electoral speeches I collected of the president ever acknowledging that actual school fees constituted only about 15 percent of the total school expenditure for families. 85

51. Ngaruko and Nkurunziza, 'An economic interpretation of conflict in Burundi'.



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Figure 4. Credit-claiming campaign, urban/rural location, and pre-war status in access to education.

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Furthermore, if this issue was perceived to be salient for voters, then opposition parties should have included it in their discourses as well, but from a critical perspective. And indeed, opposition campaigns mentioned the drawbacks to the policy, in particular that the abolition of school fees did not actually make primary education completely free and that the needs of a now-larger student population were not met by a sufficient increase in the number of teachers and schools: ‘How can one claim that kids study for free if classes are overcrowded? It would be better to say that all kids study nothing for free’.⁵² Or, conversely, other candidates extended the scope of the same policy by proposing the abolition of ‘all’ costs for primary school,⁵³ or even for secondary school.⁵⁴ The question then becomes whether voters cast their ballots according to an actual evaluation of the change in their access to public education—which constitutes the core of the following section.

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Did the incumbent gain from abolishing school fees?

If my argument is correct, then in the 2010 elections, Burundian voters should have conditioned their voting choices on the provision of public services received since 2005. Admittedly, Burundi does not present itself as the ideal country through which to observe the presence of economic and policy concerns driving voting behaviour, given that 2010 marked only the second elections after the end of the civil war and the first following the demobilization of all armed groups. Political competition was characterized by a contentious ethnic cleavage and marred by violence and intimidation in both 2005 and 2010. In 2010, the opposition was as

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52. Excerpt from a TV-recorded rally of the *Forces Nationales de Libération*—hereafter FNL—presidential candidate before the municipal elections.

53. As per the political platform of the *Mouvement pour la Solidarité et la Démocratie*—MSD (Imigambi).

54. As per the political platform of the FNL (Imigambi).

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strong as in 2005, perhaps stronger; however, the incumbent CNDD-FDD relied on its control over the largest group of ex-combatants in the country and over the state police and intelligence service, and it possessed both the resources to buy votes and the capability to distribute valuable positions, jobs, and services conditional upon partisan affiliations.⁵⁵ Under these conditions, ethnicity, vote-buying, and intimidation can easily supersede economic and welfare considerations. As such, observing economic forces driving voter choice is particularly relevant.

In order to test my hypothesis, I analyse the impact of indicators of public education on electoral returns for the incumbent party, with closer attention to areas where the incumbent was ‘less’ likely to win. To do this, I estimate the impact of school attendance on electoral support ‘within’ each municipality, as well as the impact of voters’ satisfaction with the ability of the government to address education needs on their likelihood of supporting the incumbent.

I begin with the first-difference model to estimate the impact of school attendance on electoral support ‘within’ each municipality, rather than across them, in order to isolate the impact of the policy on the temporal variation in electoral support in the same localities. This model, therefore, assesses the effect of the ‘change’ in school attendance on the ‘change’ in incumbent vote share:

$$\Delta y_{it} = \Delta x_{it}\beta + \Delta u_{it}$$

where Δ indicates the change between 2005 and 2010, and x_i is the set of factors changing over time. Specifically, this includes my principal explanatory variable that measures access to school in each municipality between the two election years by the gross primary-school enrolment ratio (GER) in each municipality. The first-difference approach allows one to identify the effect of change in access to school on electoral support, while ensuring controlling for any unobserved confounding factors that do not vary over time such as past public investments in education, historical support for the incumbent, urban or rural location, and ethnic composition of the municipality. These factors may be related to both the dependent and the independent variable. For instance, lower post-war literacy rates might have spurred greater increase in school attendance, but might have also made voters more likely to be manipulated by the incumbent party during the electoral campaign. First differencing absorbs

55. Willy Nidondera, ‘Burundi: The deficient transformation of the CNDD-FDD’, in Jeroen de Zeeux (ed.), *From soldiers to politicians: Transforming rebel movements after civil war* (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, CO, 2008), pp. 103–130; Lidewyde Berckmoes, *Elusive tactics: Urban youth navigating the aftermath of war in Burundi* (Maastricht University, unpublished PhD dissertation, 2014).

municipal-level fixed effects, so these time invariant factors are accounted for in the estimation. I also use robust standard errors to further correct for any potential heteroscedasticity across municipalities. Finally, in order to account for other factors whose change might have affected changes in incumbent support, I include among the set of independent variables the change in economic conditions, number of classrooms, and repetition rate. 45

I begin by estimating a model that includes only the primary independent variable of change in access to school (Δ GER). In this leanest model with no controls (column 1 of Table 2), the coefficient for the variable measuring access to school is positive and just shy of the 10 percent significance level (the p -value is 0.101), meaning that a change in school attendance in a municipality produced a change in the same direction in electoral returns for the ruling party. The effect is robust to the inclusion of potentially confounding time-variant factors that might drive both school enrolment and political preferences. I control for school infrastructures (measured by classrooms), since it is possible that electoral support for the incumbent resulted from an improvement in education ‘inputs’, rather than in access (even though these inputs were not always provided at a rate sufficient to balance the increase in students),⁵⁶ or even from the presence of the president himself participating in the new school-building construction.⁵⁷ I also include the change in average wealth of the municipality, in order to control both for the possibility that voters rewarded the incumbent for better economic conditions and for the possibility that the change in access to education was influenced by economic growth that made it easier for families to incur the remaining costs of schooling after 2005. Finally, I also include the change in repetition rate, as a measure of education quality, in order to control for both the possibility that voters punished the incumbent for a decrease in education quality and for the possibility that lower education quality induced families to stop sending their kids to public schools. These results are reported in column 2 of Table 2, and the coefficient for change in GER is of increased magnitude and significance. In substantive terms, a one standard deviation increase in GER in public primary schools between 2005 and 2010 increases the incumbent’s vote share increase of over one and half percentage point; while in places with no change in GER, the vote share of the incumbent increased by about 4 percentage points between 2005 and 2010, this doubled to more than 8 percentage points in localities with the highest 80

40 56. Ndayishimiye, ‘Analyse de l’impact de la politique de gratuité sur l’enseignement primaire’.

57. The president encouraged local communities to build their own schools during time off-set for ‘community works’ on Saturday mornings, in which he often actively participated. His personal engagement and charisma may potentially have mobilized communities and bolstered electoral support. 85

Table 2. Impact of change in GER on change in incumbent's vote share in municipal elections of 2005 and 2010

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	
5			<i>Old school districts</i>	<i>Clustered SE</i>			
Change in GER	0.073 [†] (0.044)	0.105*** (0.052)	0.107 [†] (0.068)	0.105 [†] (0.062)	0.259*** (0.053)	0.249 (0.172)	50
Change in classrooms		-0.016 (0.026)	-0.022 (0.027)	-0.0165 (0.037)	-0.020 (0.021)	0.001 (0.026)	
10 Change in wealth		-2.850* (1.459)	-2.908** (1.456)	-2.849* (1.433)	-2.149 (1.337)	-3.053* (1.653)	
Change in repetition rate		-0.111 (0.206)	-0.325* (0.160)	-0.111 (0.276)	0.221 (0.174)	-0.100 (0.256)	55
15 Stronghold					-13.990*** (2.306)		
Stronghold × Change in GER					-0.091 (0.095)		60
Co-ethnic %						-0.067 (0.054)	
20 Co-ethnic % × Change in GER						-0.002 (0.003)	
Constant	5.152*** (0.993)	5.192*** (2.110)	6.866*** (2.127)	5.191** (2.686)	13.007*** (3.676)	9.031*** (5.368)	65
25 <i>N</i>	129	125	117	125	125	118	
<i>R</i> ²	0.012	0.047	0.075	0.047	0.391	0.066	

Heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors are given within parentheses.

[†] $p < 0.15$, * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

30 GER increase. Changes in education inputs and in education quality show instead no significant impact on changes in incumbent vote shares, a result consistent with previous findings from other countries.⁵⁸

35 These results are robust to a different coding of the municipalities of the capital Bujumbura based on the administrative organization of education districts in existence until school year 2004/05 (column 3 of Table 2).⁵⁹ Since municipalities are nested within provinces, I cluster standard errors by

58. Harding and Stasavage, 'What democracy does (and doesn't do) for basic services'.

40 59. While Bujumbura comprised 13 administrative divisions (municipalities) since the end of the civil war, in 2004/05 education data were aggregated in 5 larger divisions that encompassed the 13 municipalities. All data from 2005/06 onward are instead recorded by municipality. In order to employ all 13 municipalities in the longitudinal analysis, I estimate how the data at the aggregate level of the 5 divisions would break up at the municipality level, based on the proportion of the same data for the following years. In order to ensure that

province to correct for potential within-province correlation in the errors. The result, reported in column 4 of Table 2, is virtually unchanged, with the coefficient for ΔGER just shy of the 90 percent significance level.⁶⁰ 45

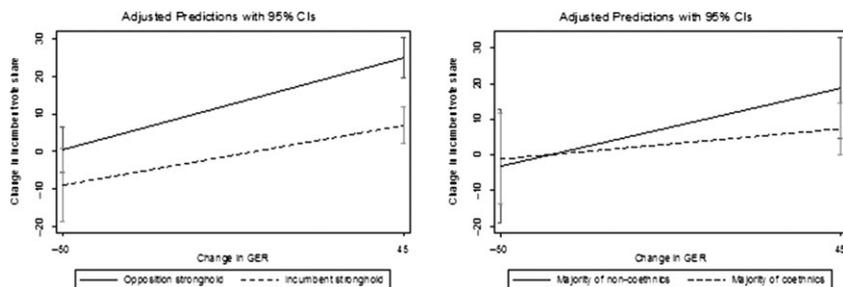
5 The response to the abolition of school fees was certainly not the only determinant of the incumbent's success in the 2010 elections, as the change in GER explains only a small percentage of change in incumbent vote share, and the substantive effect of a few percentage point increase in vote share might appear limited. However, such impact is actually not negligible 50
 Q4 when considering the context of Burundi. First, most of the change in vote share between 2005 and 2010 is driven by municipal-level factors; regressing the incumbent vote shares in 2005 and 2010 on the set of municipality dummies in fact explains almost 94 percent of the variation of the data;⁶¹ 55
 10 therefore, there is only little variation in vote share to start with what can be accounted by changes in access to school by differencing over time within municipalities. The inclusion of relevant observed time-varying factors in column 2 also provides confidence that the estimated change in support for the incumbent within municipalities is not driven by changes in wealth, quality of infrastructures, and quality of learning between 2005 and 2010 within each municipality. The nature of the estimation method further 60
 20 ensures that the change in support is also not driven by other historical characteristics of the municipalities that we are not able to observe, such as patterns in regional distribution of patronage and power. 65

Finally, the magnitude of the impact should also not be minimized. Since the 2010 elections were only the second ones after the civil war, it is not possible to compare changes in incumbent support to historical patterns of vote fluidity in Burundi. However, a comparison between the impact of change in GER and in wealth within the same time period shows that changes in school attendance have the same impact, if not higher, of change in wealth on support for the incumbent. Namely one standard deviation change in GER corresponds to a change of 1.8 percentage points in vote share for the incumbent from 2005 to 2010, while a one standard deviation change in wealth corresponds to a change of 1.6 percentage points in vote share. 70
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35 results are not biased by incorrect estimates, in the robustness check I aggregate all data for the municipalities in Bujumbura following the same structure of the previous education districts. 80

60. Since the number of clusters is small (17 provinces)—a factor that may lead to over-rejections—I confirm the robustness of the results by generating the *t*-statistics and 95 percent confidence intervals by the pairs cluster bootstrap-*t* procedure that is robust to clustering with a small number of sampling units. See Andrew Menger, 'CLUSTSE: Stata module to estimate the statistical significance of parameters when the data is clustered with a small number of clusters' (Statistical Software Components from Boston College Department of Economics, 2015). 85

61. This approach is consistent with the analysis of the relationship between road conditions and support for the incumbent presented by Harding, 'Attribution and accountability'. 85



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Figure 5. Impact of change in GER between 2005 and 2010 on change in incumbent's vote shares, differentiated on whether the incumbent gained the most votes in previous elections, and on proportion of population of same ethnic group of the incumbent.

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In summary, the relationship I found between access to school and support for the incumbent is unlikely to be spurious and its magnitude is relevant within the Burundian context. Furthermore, this relationship cuts across both political and ethnic affiliations. In fact, when I include an interaction term⁶² between change in GER and a dummy for whether the incumbent obtained the highest vote share in 2005 in the given municipality (column 5 in Table 2) and an interaction term between change in GER and municipal share of the population of the same ethnic group of the incumbent (column 6 in Table 2), neither term is significant.⁶³ These findings, shown graphically in Figure 5, indicate that the abolition of school fees produced the same impact on voting behaviour in areas where the incumbent was 'less' likely to win; in other words, it did not boost only the established support base. Greater access to public school appears to support incumbent performance at the same rate across both co-ethnic and non-coethnic municipalities, and across both strongholds and opposition-prone localities.

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These findings suggest that voters' satisfaction about the incumbent free education policy contributed to increase their support. In order to corroborate this interpretation, I explore how individual satisfaction with

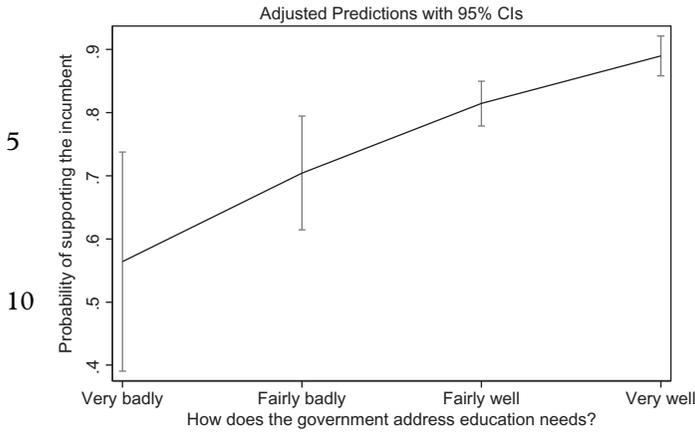
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62. An interaction term allows estimation of whether the effect of an independent variable on the dependent variable changes according to the values assumed by another variable. An interaction term that is significant indicates that the relationship between independent and dependent variable is not consistent across the units, but changes according to the values of the interacting variable observed in the various units. In this case, I estimate whether the impact of change in GER on change in support for the incumbent was different according to whether the incumbent obtained (or did not obtain) the highest vote share in the municipality in the previous election, and according to the share of the coethnic population in the municipality.

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63. The interaction term remains not significant also when I employ it to the Afrobarometer data to measure the ethnic composition of the municipality, averaging the Hutu responses by municipality for the 109 municipalities that were surveyed in 2012.

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15 *Figure 6.* Impact of individual satisfaction about how the government addresses education needs on probability of voting for the incumbent president.

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20 the ability of the government to address education needs is related to the likelihood of supporting the incumbent using nationally representative data collected from Afrobarometer in 2012. Respondents were asked how the current government addressed the country’s education needs, providing answers on a Likert scale. While this analysis cannot speak to whether voters in 2010 supported the President following satisfaction with his government’s education policy, it can assess whether satisfaction with education and support for the ruling party go generally hand in hand.

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25 Since the dependent variable is binary, I estimate the impact of education indicators on support for the incumbent using a logistic regression, adding province fixed effects to control for any factors at the province level that might be affecting the results. Results are reported in the online appendix. I find a positive and statistically significant relationship between satisfaction with the government’s handling of education and support for the incumbent president. This relationship is robust to the inclusion of other factors that might affect both satisfaction with education policies and support for the incumbent, such as wealth, education level, urban or rural municipality, and ethnicity.⁶⁴ Holding all constant, believing that the government is addressing ‘very well’ rather than ‘very badly’, the country’s education needs increases the expected probability of supporting the incumbent by over 50 percent (from 0.56 to 0.88), as shown in Figure 6. Such

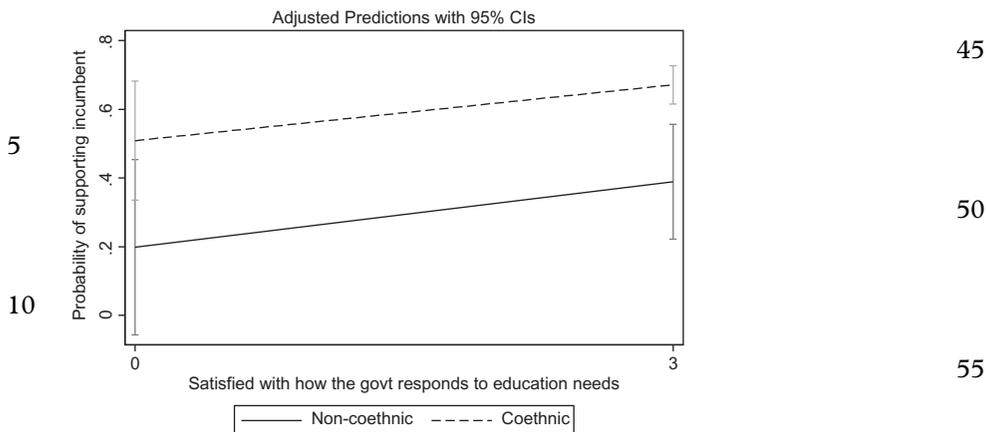
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40 64. Ethnicity is included since education is believed to be particularly important for Hutu, given their history of deprivation. Being Hutu is, on the contrary, likely to be associated to a higher support for the incumbent president, a Hutu former armed leader.

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15 *Figure 7.* Effect of individual satisfaction about government addressing of education needs, differentiated on whether respondent is of same ethnic group of the incumbent president. 45
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20 relationship remains strong in the following round of Afrobarometer, implemented right before the 2015 elections.⁶⁵ Furthermore, and as in the municipal-level analysis, the impact of satisfaction with the education policy on the support for the government is equally strong among coethnics of the president as among non-coethnic ones.⁶⁶ 65

25 While these results are not conclusive of a causal relationship, and only refer to the three quarters of respondents that did express their voting preferences in the survey, they enrich the municipal-level analysis and corroborate its interpretation by showing that greater levels of satisfaction with the government management of education is indeed associated with higher likelihood of incumbent support, regardless of voters' ethnic identities. Furthermore, the consistency in the direction and magnitude of the coefficients estimated across the two Afrobarometer rounds indicates that such association is stable, therefore increasing confidence in the general validity over time of the argument proposed in this article. 70
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35 *Conclusions* 80

This article addresses whether voters reward politicians for the provision of public services. It shows that in contemporary Burundi, there is a

40 65. The Hutu variable is absent since the ethnicity question was not asked in Round 6. The education variable is omitted because of collinearity.

66. The interaction term between education policy satisfaction and a dummy for whether the survey respondent is of the same ethnic group of the incumbent is not significant, as is shown in Figure 7. 85

positive relationship between change in access to primary school due to the government’s abolition of school fees and electoral support for the incumbent party that abolished the fees. It employs original qualitative and quantitative data to show that both politicians and voters had this issue in mind during the 2010 elections—the first following implementation of the fee abolishment. The incumbent party consistently emphasized this issue as part of its campaign message. It appears in political speeches and songs, as well as in the responses of more than 2,500 local election monitors to whom I administered a post-election expert questionnaire. Voters, in turn, rewarded politicians based on improvements in access to education. The positive impact of abolishing school fees was equally strong in localities where the incumbent was ‘not’ expected to win.

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These findings are remarkable because they are produced in a post-conflict, ethnically divided country, where elections may be heavily influenced by ethnic considerations and marred by intimidation, vote-buying, and violence. They highlight the existence of economic and policy concerns at a nascent stage, and therefore contribute to explaining the process of public-good provision during the democratization of developing countries. The findings demonstrate clear country-specific evidence that, even in a post-conflict and highly ethnically polarized society, once politicians utilize the provision of public services, electoral returns can in fact follow suit.

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Unfortunately, it is not possible to replicate the same analysis to the latest elections in Burundi, which were held in 2015. These elections took place in a more authoritarian context than 2010, and the strength of the opposition was compromised. However, survey data at the individual level collected by Afrobarometer before the 2015 elections do show a strong relationship between satisfaction for education policies and support for the ruling party. This observation provides further support to my findings that these two variables would go hand in hand, and also suggests that the relationship between support for public education policies and support for the government does persist over time and across electoral cycles.

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