

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Dictators, Democrats, and Development in Nigeria

by

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What factors account for variation in Nigeria's government performance since independence? I dispute explanations based on regime type, fiscal resources, and ethnic diversity. My hypothesis tests for a causal relationship between the number of policy actors and two broad categories of policy outputs: pork and public goods. Building upon the veto player literature (Tsebelis 2002; Haggard and McCubbins 2001), I construct a model that applies over time and across regimes. Informal "regional" vetoes emerge when three conditions are met: one of Nigeria's two major geographical regions is under-represented, subnational actors have political cause to organize, and some organization facilitates preference coordination.

I predict that regimes with more veto players deliver higher overall levels of pork, fewer public goods, and they spend money on pork less efficiently. I operationalize public goods with variables measuring fiscal discipline and judicial efficiency as estimated from an analysis of 550 property rights cases. Using other original data gathered during field research, I operationalize pork with variables measuring student/teacher ratios and annual change in the number of primary schools. My tests show that veto players do not significantly impact the level of pork as predicted. However regimes with more veto players deliver fewer public goods. I attribute this to bargaining problems at the center. According to at least one variable these regimes also engage in more wasteful spending on pork. This runs counter to existing literature on veto players and corruption. Test results also show that democracies waste less money than dictatorships on teachers, but they suffer from statistically significant levels of corruption when constructing schools. This implies that investment in teachers, rather than capital spending, may be a better education investment for new democracies.

I conclude first by noting that regimes with more veto players do not necessarily improve political accountability. Second, I argue that policy makers face a dilemma: increasing the number of political actors makes the policy process more inclusive, but this contributes to bargaining problems that impair the delivery of public goods.