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Alieu B. Sanneh


A Dissertation Submitted to The Graduate School at the University of Missouri-St. Louis
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
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ABSTRACT

In the 2016 presidential election in The Gambia, the opposition coalition party had successfully managed to overthrow an authoritarian government, which has ruled the country for 22 years. Contrary to the notion of the prevalence of ethnic voting in African elections, this study found that ethnicity is not the only issue influencing the voting behavior of Gambian voters. The concerns voters have on human rights abuses by the Jammeh’s administration has resulted in a regime change. The election was issue-based, even though Gambian voters were split on the question of the economy, their dissatisfaction on Jammeh handling of human rights during the 22 years regime lasted led to his lost to opposition coalition leader Mr. Barrow, in the 2016 presidential election.

Using similar approach to investigating issue voting, this dissertation also examines the local government election of mayors in the Banjul City Council (BCC) and Kanifing Municipal Council (KMC). In both sets of elections, Gambian voters have demonstrated that they were more concerned with issues than with the ethnicities of the candidates in elections. Just as concluded that Jammeh lost the election based on issues of human rights, more than ethnocentric voting, the study of local government elections indicates that decisions were primarily based on issues that people care about more so then the ethnic identities of mayoral candidates.

In their determination of the second and third most important issues, differences emerged between the voters in Banjul and those in the KMC. While voters in the KMC
have stated that their second and third preferences were waste collection and building road networks within the city, the voters in the mayoral election in Banjul have repeatedly noted the importance they attached on fixing the road infrastructure of the city as their second and third most considered issue when they voted in the local government election. Although, ethnicity was important for some of the voters, but it wasn’t the main factor that influenced the regime change than the concerns Gambian voters have on Jammeh’s handling of human rights in the country.

Keywords— Election, Issue Voting, Ethnicity and Regime Change.
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List of Acronyms
Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC)
Armed Forces’ Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC) British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)
Banjul City Council (BCC).
Central River Region (CRR)
Democratic Alliance Party (DAP)
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
European Union (EU)
Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS)
Gambia Democratic Congress (GDC)
Gambia Muslim Congress (GMC)
Gambia Peoples Party (GPP)
Greater Banjul Area (GBA)
High Indebted, Poor Countries (HIPC)
Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)
International Monetary Fund (IMF)
International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
Kanifing Municipal Council (KMC)
Lower River Region (LRR)
National Alliance for Democracy and Development (NADD)
National Convention Party (NCP)
National Intelligence gency (NIA)
National Peoples Party (NPP)
National Reconciliation Party (NRP)
North Bank Region (NBR)
Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Peoples Democratic Organisation for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS)
People’s Progressive Party (PPP)
United Democratic Party (UDP)
United Kingdom (UK)
United Nations (UN)
United Party (UP)
Upper River Region (URR)
West Coast Region (WCR)
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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the year 2016, Gambian citizens made their way to the polls to elect a new president. The incumbent Yahya Jammeh had been in power for 22 years and was seeking re-election. Jammeh was a tyrant who ruled Gambia with an iron fist by curtailing individual rights and freedoms and implementing state sanctioned political oppression against innocent Gambians who were imprisoned, tortured and exiled for being critical of his regime. With Jammeh’s firm grip on The Gambia’s political system, a regime change was unthinkable. As Darboe and Kora (2017) have noted, the 2016 election was an assured victory for the incumbent dictator; the opposition coalition parties had zero chances of winning against Jammeh, but on election day, the people spoke and the results of the election sent a resounding message of defeat to Jammeh. The sudden regime changes in the country had witnessed the ousting of a corrupt leader/regime, the first of its kind in the country’s history, marking the dawning of a new democracy in The Gambia.

The victory of the opposition against an incumbent government is part of a trend sweeping across the African continent, signaling hope of a changing pattern towards strengthening electoral democracy. Elections that were organized in countries including Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, and others, have all witnessed a peaceful, democratic transfer of power following the outcome of the ballot boxes. In the Gambian, however, the 2016 presidential election resulted in an unexpected outcome that left many people stunned. A dictator who had been in power for 22 years organized an election and lost to the opposition, raising several important questions this dissertation will address. Why did Jammeh lose the election? If the election was issue-based,
what were the issues the Gambian voters had considered in this election? In order words, were Gambian voters more concerned with the status of the Gambian economy or human rights abuses when they voted in the presidential election? Or were the voting decisions of the Gambian electorates informed by their ethnic identities, influencing their support for a particular candidate?

While this study will primarily be focused on The Gambia as a case study, it will also compare similarities as well as differences in voting behavior across many African countries. The evidence provided in this dissertation will advance our knowledge, by offering a comprehensive understanding of the voting perspectives of the African voters. While, there are many factors such as religion, ethnicity and class that continue to shape the outcome of some elections in Africa, is it also important to note that the influences of these factors vary from one country to another? This study of The Gambian elections has branched away from the argument of ethnicity, to show that issues mattered and that Gambians voters wanted their political leaders to address those issues, namely the economy and human rights. Using similar logic of issue voting, this dissertation further examines the 2017 mayoral election in the Kanifing Municipal Council and Banjul City Council. These two are the only cities that are constitutionally allowed to organize election. This dissertation compared the differences as well as similarities in voting between local government and national elections and found that Gambian voters care more about issues that concerns them than the ethnicities of the candidates. In the presidential election, Jammeh lost the polls mainly because of his poor handling of human rights. In the local government elections, Gambians have voted in support of candidates based on their policy positions, such as creating employment opportunities for young people, improving road
infrastructure, garbage collection and upgrading the drainage system in Kanifing and Banjul. Ethnicity, although important for some voters in the presidential election, in the local government, support for candidates based on ethnic considerations appears to be lower among Gambian voters. The results and broader implication of this study is discussed in detail.

Overview of Democracy

Democracy, a political concept, means a government derives its source of legitimacy from the people. Huntington (2016) defines democracy as a form of government that allows the most powerful and collective decisions to be made by the people through periodic elections. Democracy allows all individuals, without discrimination, to freely run for public office, and the electoral franchise is extended to the masses to take part in the voting process. Democracy, according to Dahl (1971), is a political system that is completely responsive to the needs of its citizens. Joseph (1997) combines the deliberative and liberal elements of democracy to argue that a political system is democratic if the ultimate power derives from the people. Democracy broadens the political space to allow the participation of the masses in formulating public policy as well as to set up a constitutional mechanism that will protect individual freedom necessary for open political competition. While democracy as a system consists of different forms of political participation, holding an election is one way of measuring a government’s legitimacy because elections provide an avenue for people to express their political preferences peacefully through the ballot box to support their candidates of choice.

A democratic rule is preferable to authoritarianism because the ultimate decision-making lies in the hands of the people. The strength of electoral processes in Africa, even though in some
instances it has produced violent outcomes, signals the changing trend in democratic consolidation. For the first time, Africa’s monopolies of power, controlled by a few kleptocrats, are challenged by the masses. The new democratic dispensation has empowered the people to take part in decision-making, which, in one way, has enabled them to hold public officials accountable. Thus, in a democracy the will of the people dictates the course of actions of the government and this is often achieved through public deliberations. Simply put, “a country is democratic if it grants its people the right to choose their own government through periodic elections, secret ballot, multi-party elections on the basis of universal and equal adult suffrage” (Fukuyama (2006) p. 43).

Therefore, in order for a country to be classified as a democracy, examining the voting process is necessary because of the enormous powers vested in the citizens to dictate the political future of a country through the ballot box. Election is a form of political expression, which when carried out in a free and fair environment, has the power to determine the political future of a nation. Political power belongs to the people. The masses decide. Only through them do leaders derive their true legitimacy to rule. However, even though democracy as an ideal system of government is implemented differently across the globe, for a nation to be regarded as democratic, the basic foundations of democracy must be fully functional. Nations democratize because they want to be democracies.

The principles that uphold a democratic system of a nation are not only interrelated, but they also are interdependent, and one cannot function in state without the implementation of others. In essence, democracy cannot be cherry-picked as its components may be different, but they perform complementary roles in the realization of the democratic ideals of a state. Some of
the principles of democracy are as follows: rule of law, accountability, freedom of expression, observing checks and balances among the agencies of government, and the protection of fundamental human rights. Separation of powers is critical in diffusing the structures of governance and preventing the concentration of powers in a single governmental entity to prevent the potential abuse of power. A commitment to checks and balances enables the three main organs of government – executive, legislative, and judiciary – to function within the confines of the law as stipulated in a particular nation’s constitution. Therefore, while organizing periodic elections in a country may signify a stronger will by political elites to steer a nation's future towards a democratic path, holding elections alone would not classify a country as a democracy. As Gros (1998) notes, a country is either a fully-fledged democracy or it is not; and, better still, it is in the process of democratization in the hope that one day, it would become a democracy, when all democratic principles are functional in the governing processes.

**Democratization Processes on the African Continent**

In Africa, elections were organized by many countries in the 1960s after they attained independence and promoted self-rule, marking the end of colonialism. The winds of democratization that blew over the continent placed the people at the center of a crucial decision-making process about the political future of their nations. Afolabi (2017) advances three significant historical periods that paved the way for the introduction of competitive elections based on universal adult suffrage in Africa. The first phase of African democratic transition ranged from the 1950s to 1960s. Afolabi argues that this political process was short-lived as many of these countries, such as Ghana and Nigeria, later succumbed to military rule. The second period, which began in the 1970s, witnessed the re-introduction of competitive elections
following a brief departure of the military government. In this period, while some states where able to make giant strides in consolidating democratic rule, others resorted to authoritarianism because of the presence of the military dictatorship that continued to oppress and curtail individual freedoms. Afolabi’s third phase of democratization in Africa started in the 1990s as the Cold War ended, ushering in an environment of competitive elections in countries such as Benin, Zambia, and Mali.

So, despite many challenges the African continent faced in its drive toward democratic governance, the wind of change continued to blow throughout Africa across five decades. Also during this time, many African countries periodically organized elections and political leaders, to a considerable extent, were handed mandates by the people, reducing the prospects of coups d’état. Collier (2009) describes this political transformation as Africa’s breaking from its experience in the past, especially during the time of the Cold War when most leaders assumed power through violence. Currently, however, more and more countries in Africa continue to organize successful elections and to peacefully transfer power from one government to another through the ballot box. While democracy appears to be gaining solid grounds over authoritarianism on the continent, it is also important to note the particularities in which democracy is implemented across various African countries.

Africa’s democratic transformation has been a subject of a much wider academic enquiry by many scholars, sometimes leading to sweeping claims by political scientists that African electorates vote based on the candidate’s ethnicity more so than on issues. However, as complex as human society is, political institutions created to maintain social order are also riddled with complexities, making it impossible to devise a single approach that will truly capture the voting
preferences of the masses of electorates in Africa. Many of the political scientists who examined elections in Africa have raised the issue of ethnicity as cues that African electorates used in determining their choices for candidates in elections. This has led to widespread claims by many academics that elections in Africa are synonymous with an ethnic census, that is, voters are more likely to support candidates of their own ethnic groups than they are on the issues the contestants promised to address (Collier, 2009; Porsner, 2005).

While this dissertation does not dismiss earlier studies on ethnic voting, the data evaluated of the presidential election in The Gambia, contradicts the ethnic votes' perspective. What follows is an examination of issue voting and exploration of multiple factors in addition to ethnicity, which influenced the preferences of Gambian electorates in the 2016 presidential election. Conversely, while many analysts have advanced the notion that ethnicity predicts votes among the electorates in Africa, this study shows that not all elections on the continent are influenced by ethnicity. Elections in Africa, like areas in all parts of the globe, have multiple factors that shape their outcomes, and it is misleading to rely on a single variable of causality for interpreting the complexity of electorate preferences.

To empirically investigate voting behavior of the people, this research explores a broader theoretical perspective that will highlight the structures of social categorizations as they exist in Africa and how they shape political outcomes that reflect social divisions among various groups in the society. Social cleavages, in particular ethnic cleavage, is the most noticeable form of social identity in African society, dictate the political orderings of the society where political activities occur. Thus, the researcher’s evaluations of the ethnic-cleavage structure in African
society shape the understanding of ethnic politics and how that structure influences the voting behavior of African electorates during elections.

**Theoretical Perspectives on the Origins and Nature of Social Cleavages**

Theories, in general, provide a wider spectrum that deepens our understanding of causality in examining political phenomenon, although no single theory will be enough to supply all the answers to a complex political concept such as the voting behavior of a group of people. However, the usefulness of theory relies heavily on the principle of generality, which we can use to apply to comparable situations, even though the results obtained may differ.

The cleavage theory assumes that a society is divided into various groups who are competing to obtain political power. What is cleavage? Cleavage is a social categorization as well as division among various groups in a society; this division may be in the form of class, religion, ethnicity, or race. In Gambian political society, other social cleavages, such as religion, class, and ethnicity, exist. Without downplaying the significance of other social structures, ethnicity is one of the most visible forms of social identification in The Gambia. It is not, however, the singular influence on the voting behavior of the masses.

The origin of the cleavage structure dates back to a historical account of how political parties were formed in Europe. This theory was developed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), who have observed that social identities were the basic foundations of partisan formation in Western Europe. As European society was undergoing social division along regional cleavages between the center and the periphery, marked by social inequalities between workers and owners of property, political parties were formed along these existing social cleavages. Also, the church
played a powerful role in medieval Europe, adding another layer of social division that created a religion-based ideological split between Catholics and Protestants. This split has continued to shape the ideological foundation of European politics.

The term “cleavage,” according to Bornschier (2009), denotes a specific type of conflict existing in democratic politics. The conflict consists of various social groups whose foundation is based on the structural transformations triggered by large-scale processes of nation building. In Europe, such processes dated back to the time of various social revolutions that swept through the continent, uprisings such as the French and English revolutions that led to a split of social groups based on religion and class structures within the society. The enlightenment period in European history witnessed the emergence of the Industrial Revolution, which facilitated the creation of a new social groups, the owners of capital and those who provided labor in the society. The presence of these cleavage structures did not automatically translate into political divisions; however, according to Lipset and Rokkan (1967), these social classification were eventually politicized and transformed into established political parties by the elites who had played a key role in mobilizing the masses to effect social change. To understand how current politics challenge African countries and how existing ethnic divisions continue to shape the continent's politics’ investigating the cleavage theory is necessary in this context to draw similarities as well as differences that exist between the formation of political parties in Europe and those in Africa.

Similarly, constructivist theory also provides a solid foundation for supporting the study of Africa’s complex voting behavior. Constructivist theory advances the notion that humans have multiple social identities that are constructed in the course of social, political and economic
interactions. “An ethnic group is socially constructed when individuals in a cultural societies self-consciously identify with one or more objective ethnic markers to distinguish their membership within the groups from those of the out groups” (Mozaffar et al. 2003, p. 83). We know that human beings have always ascribed names and consciously given meaning to multiple objective social markers such as language, religion, race, caste, tribe, territory etc., denoting social differences. These ascribed social categorizations continue to shape the character and make-up of our society as well as the political systems we establish.

Studying the cleavage structure and the role it plays using constructivist theory would mean that ethnicity is salient in African political society because social identities are constructed around it, which is occasionally used towards political ends. It is important to note that ethnic differences in society are not in themselves problematic. However, what is concerning is the use of ethno-linguistics as it relates to a country’s demographic population to foster political division by pitting some groups against the others and, in some cases, by distributing political benefits by creating social advancement to some members while depriving others because of their opposition to the ruling party. Understanding the politics surrounding ethnic cleavage is to argue that each of these ethnic groups competes to obtain political power by supporting its co-ethnic candidate in an election to influence public policy in favor of members of one’s own ethnic group.

While the theory of the cleavage structure shows the existence of various groups in both Europe and African society, how these groups are politicized differs in many ways across these two continents. In Europe, social cleavages were transformed into established political parties, primarily driven by ideological foundations motivated by human curiosity to experiment to explore the best form of government. In Africa, on the other hand, the most common forms of
social identity are ethnicities; so partisan formation is less based on strong ideological foundations and more likely takes on the characteristics and natures of the ethnic social makeup of the country.

Also, given the hereditary nature of ethnic identity in Africa, compared with class, it is difficult – if not impossible – for a voter to switch his/her political party affiliations. Even as an individual has obtained upward mobility in social status, his/her ethnic identities remain the same. In contrast, since political parties are based on ideological beliefs, Europe’s voters have greater flexibility and can more easily shift their party support corresponding to any change in their social status. With the benefit of studying cleavage politics, a more solid understanding of the factors that influence the formation of political parties is possible and one can go further to show the different factors that unify various groups in the society as they gravitate towards political actions. While cleavage politics in Africa are fundamentally different from those in Europe, comparing them provides a strong foundation for understanding how ethnicity, religion and class continue to shape the political participation of the masses in these two distinct continents. Based on this, the reasons Europe and Africa differed in the structural foundations of partisan formation can be further explored in the next section.

**Study of Cleavage Structures in Europe and in Africa**

The political parties, which were formed around existing social cleavages in Europe, can be traced to several historical events. In European society, the French and English revolutions produced various class structures, which were later transformed into well-established political parties. In Africa, by contrast, political parties were formed along ethnic cleavages, the origins of
which are linked to pre-colonial African and traditional political institutions, where the hereditary title of king/queen or ruler was based on ethnic and family lineage. The leadership system also operates a system of hierarchy, which recognizes certain ethnic groups to constitute a class of nobles in the society, which is able to rule alongside the royal family. In the kingship/chieftaincy system, leaders derive their political authority through family lineage; being born into a family of rulers automatically guarantees leadership based on family succession.

Although African societies had a well-established political system since prior to the arrival of the Europeans on the continent, the existing ethnic cleavage structure became divided and politicized with the advent of colonialism. European powers were clever technocrats who did not alter most of the traditional political institutions but strengthened and exploited them to promote their own political interests. For instance, in British-controlled territory in Africa, the British governors, understanding the challenges they faced due to the lack of personnel to expand their political representations in the countries they controlled, implemented indirect rule as a means to ease the burden of governance. Indirect rule was a form of governance wherein a colonial power used traditional political institutions, such as kings or chiefs, to rule their subjects while making them answerable to the British colonial government. The British used force to coerce local leaders into accepting their authority to rule over them, while allowing chiefs or kings to serve as intermediaries between the colonial government and the local people. Traditional rulers who opposed British rule were forcefully dethroned and replaced by puppets willing to serve and protect the interests of colonial administrators.

Therefore, to understand the voting behavior of the masses of African voters and trace the origins of partisan formation based on ethnic cleavages, one must investigate the continent's
historical experience with colonialism. The colonial policy of divide-and-rule may not have been
the only cause of Africa’s current ethnic political predicament but it's certainly one of the main
effects of colonialism, which is widespread and highly noticeable in the ethnic politicization of
the African continent by European colonial powers. As noted by Mozaffar et al. (2003), colonial
institutions created incentives for constructing and politicizing ethnic groups through a policy of
divide-and-rule. Colonialism has not only affected the formation of ethnic groups but has also
restructured their sizes and distributions within their geographic spaces. Thus, “the greatest
responsibly lies on the colonial administrators for not just creating groups, but also dividing
nations according to the landscape of ethnic cleavages, which continues to shape the
Chapter 2

Colonialism and European Administrative Policies in Africa

Ethnic polarization on the African continent has been linked to the legacy of colonialism. One single event that dramatically shaped the historical foundation of Africa was the Berlin conference in 1884 that witnessed a scramble for the partition of the African countries by major European powers namely the French, English, Germans, Portuguese, and Spanish. Following the industrial revolution, there was a greater demand for raw materials to sustain Europe’s economic growth. The African continent, with abundant and untapped natural resources, was enticing to the European powers in their quest to secure new territories to exercise political control and dominance. The European interests forcefully imposed territorial boundaries, which divided the African continent into countries, regions, and created political divisions that in some areas transected similar ethnic and linguistic groups. They also empowered some ethnic groups with political authority, while suppressing and marginalizing others.

Many of the European powers that came to Africa adopted distinctive colonial policies. These policies as evidence will later show, have impacted local populations differently in the countries where they imposed control. In this section, the focus will be on the French policy of assimilation and the British indirect rule policy, investigating how these policies contributed in some ways to the ethnic politicization that continue to challenge the governance institutions of modern African states.

Lange (2004) defined the British indirect rule system as one “based on a tripartite chain of patron–client relationship where the chiefs serve as an intermediary between the colonial
administration and the local population”. The British indirect rule consisted of a mixture of traditional and conventional forms of authority, which while different, in many ways, perform complementary functions in the administration of the colonized state. These structures of power were divided between the British colonial administrations and the native chiefs functioning under the guardianship of the colonial government. The indirect rule system provided room for local inhabitants to maintain their traditional institutional, governance structures, and helped preserve the customary laws and traditions of the indigenous people residing in the protectorates. Under the direct administrative control of the British, English laws were used to govern the population.

In the implementation of the indirect rule system, the British recognized the importance of maintaining traditional authority in the administrative processes. However, this did not mean that chiefs had freedom to dictate public policy any way they wanted; rather, they were required to conform to the demands of the British. The local chiefs were, to some extent, granted quasi-political autonomy to regulate public policy in their chiefdoms, but only in line with the British colonial interest. Lord Lugard, the primary architect of this system has noted that “the indirect [rule system] is designed in such a way that it operates in two sets of rules, the British and the native rules all working together under the guardianship of a single government in which the native chiefs have well-defined duties.” The chiefs’ roles are complementary to that of the government, and “have no right to place and power unless to the services that he renders to the State” (Lugard, 1926, p. 203).

The chiefs were empowered to serve as custodians of customary laws and their authorities were constrained and limited to the territories in which they control. The chiefs, despite the important duties they perform in maintaining laws and order in their jurisdictions,
must maintain unquestionable loyalty to the colonial government. This means that chiefs have to balance their responsibilities of serving the interest of their direct subjects and at the same time protect the interest of the British. Where the interest of the colonial administrators conflicts with that of the natives, the chiefs are expected to safeguard the British interest over that of their own community, tribe or people or risk the possibility of being deposed. Those who failed in these efforts were forcefully dethroned by the British and replaced by individuals who were willing to serve as puppets to the colonial administrators.

Lange (2004) describes two characteristics of administrative practices that were jointly implemented both in the colony and in the protectorate. In the colony, he observes that there were well established and organized central administrations that regulated the society based on rules enforced by the police with a functioning legal system that settled disputes through the courts, through which law and order was maintained. In the protectorate, on the other hand, the local chiefs some of whom obtained this position either through traditional patrilineal family inheritance, or through forceful installments by colonial officials, were allowed to rule based on existing customary laws. They presided over the settlement of disputes, maintained law and order, and collected taxes, which were often generated from the control of land and communal contributions from their subjects for onward delivery to the British.

Reasons Why the British Used Indirect Rule in Africa

There were several reasons why the British used the indirect rule system as a colonial policy in Africa. First, the colonial administrators had faced significant human resource shortages to rule large sections of the territories under their control. This was due to hostile
environmental climatic conditions, especially in West Africa, marked by the prevalence of diseases, such as malaria, yellow fever, small pox, and many other tropical illnesses that the British were susceptible to when they first arrived on the continent. Those who managed to survive tropical diseases and returned to England, were afraid to take a similar dangerous mission of returning to the continent. Just as Lange noted, “the extensiveness of colonial rule also depended on the disease environment of the colonies. Since much of Africa was characterized as ‘white man’s grave,’” neither settlement nor the use of numerous European officials was feasible even if great economic potential existed” (Lange, 2004, p. 3). Hence, to effectively govern these vast territories, colonial administrators had no choice but to rely on the existing traditional institutional system of local chiefs to assist them in the administration of their colonies, and to help maintain law and order.

The second reason for use of the indirect rule system was that colonialism was not just a political imposition of a foreign territory by a dominant power, but the decision to colonize a country was strongly predicated on the potential economic gains for the colonizing state. Economic considerations powerfully influenced British colonial officials’ willingness to establish indirect rule in countries where the potential was high for huge economic gains. Acemoglu et al. (2014) have noted that “indirect rule across Africa was not only viewed by colonial administrators as a way to maintain law and order, but also to decrease the economic cost of local government administration by deliberately keeping in place the existing rulers and ruling through them.” Colonialism is an economic investment that allows unrestricted access and rights by the colonizing country to trade with the local people. In Africa, the indirect rule system was also cost effective given that few British officials were on the ground, significantly reducing
expenditures, and allowing the colonial government to maximize its income generating capacity from the colonies while minimizing costs to England.

Finally, in some countries the indigenous people were hostile to the presence of foreigners on their land. In South Africa for instance, in order to prevent any potential conflict with the locals, the British instituted a system of indirect rule as a preventive measure to avoid direct contact with the local inhabitants and minimize confrontations with them given to the history of violent resistance to the presence of the British in their lands. As Lange (2004) observes, the large presence of British settlers in South, and East Africa created strained relations with the local inhabitants, some of whom were denied access to their land which was crucial for their survival as most of them depended on subsistence agriculture to feed their families.

Additionally, many local populations were resentful of the presence of the missionaries who had introduced Christianity and converted many locals from their traditional religion to Christianity. For many local people, the Christian religion contradicted and undermined their customs and traditions and people felt like they were under attack by the presence of the missionaries. It is also important to note that the British colonial government had no particular interest in the education of people in their colonized territories, nor were they concerned about the spirituality of the African population in the countries they colonized. This void was filled by the Christian missionaries’ activities, who took it upon themselves to build schools, and taught the indigenous people how to read and write in English language in order to understand their bible.
The legacies of the missionary activities in the African continent has added another layer of renewed political conflict that revolves around religious affiliations, reinforcing the already existing ethnic politicizations that continue to dominate African politics. The British, even though presumed to be neutral in their approaches to the Islamic groups who were spreading Islam, and the role played by Christian missionaries, favored the latter over the former, as evidenced by their frequent intervention to protect the Christian missionaries from harm any time they came under attack by locals. The British policy of indirect rule, despite its narrow focus, was a cost-effective administrative mechanism that has created a long-lasting impact on the political development of post-colonial African societies. As a result, one the most noticeable impacts of indirect rule on the African states is the rise of cleavage politics where the politicization of ethnicities and religion continues to create many of protracted conflicts in African nations, hindering the advancement of democracy.

**The French Policy of Assimilation in the Colonized States of Africa**

The French colonial policy of assimilation was very different from the British indirect rule system. France, unlike Britain, did not only assume direct administrative control over the newly colonized territories but had also instituted a system that combined political and cultural elements with the goal of transforming the existing African political institutions to assimilate them with those in France. The policy to assimilate was a deliberate political effort to incorporate politics with French culture, which the French promoted in the colonized territories under their control. Assimilation in this respect meant imposing Francophone and French cultural expectations on Africans in ways that entailed a much deeper social integration, going beyond political dominance.
In essence, African states that were colonized by the French, were regarded as an extension of the state of France, and unlike the British, the French did not maintain the existing traditional system of local governance. Their policy called for a total domination of the newly conquered territories. The French disrupted most of the existing pre-colonial traditional intuitions of chieftaincy that were in place and replaced them with French bureaucracies. Their strategy was a civilizational mission embedded with a policy of acculturation that strongly encouraged Africans to abandon their ways of lives and adopt the French culture.

This colonial policy made the French uniquely different from the rest of the European powers who colonized Africa. The French policy of assimilation offered strong incentives for upward political mobility to Africans who demonstrated strong proficiency of the French language and were able to adopt to the French way of life. The French unlike other European powers, “are more culturists than racist in any strict sense, because they have accepted black Africans who speak perfect French into their legislature” (Huntington, 1996, p. 200). Africans who were able to embrace France as the undisputable colonial power and were able to successfully embrace the French language and culture were given leadership roles in the French administration without any discrimination based on the person’s ethnic or religious backgrounds.

The assimilation policy was carefully designed to integrate colonial peoples into a 'Greater France', promoting cultural assimilation through a centralized bureaucratic structure that coordinated all administrative functions of the colonies and was headed by the governor general based in Dakar, the Senegalese capital. The colonial state intentionally restructured traditional systems of governance and replaced them with a centralized French bureaucratic structure. Just as noted by Blanton et al. (2003), the relations with the central state was no longer mediated by
traditional local elites, whose powers were eroded by the administrative power of the colonial state. They argued that French colonial rule reflected a strong motivation for the creation of a centralized state, which “incorporated individuals from different regions and ethnic groups into a single social and political system, all under the control of an administrative state” (Blanton et al. 2003, p. 12).

In Senegal, for instance, which had served as the sub-regional headquarters of the French colonies of West Africa, individuals who were born inside the territories of Saint Louis, Refusque, Goree, and Dakar referred to as the French commune, were granted special status of automatic citizenship of France. Whereas, those born outside of these territories were only granted French citizenship dependent upon their ability to fluently speak the French language and demonstrate successful integration into the French culture. In essence, the French established their language and way of life as the official means of communication and living, and only those who mastered the language and culture could be granted citizenship to France and be allowed to serve in higher administrative positions.

Comparing the Effects of the French and British Colonial Policies in Nation-States of Africa

The two colonial powers examined here, differed significantly in their policies of colonialism. While the British indirect rule was a dual system that allowed both traditional rulers and British administrators to play an active governance role in the colonial state, the French dismantled traditional political systems and replaced them with French bureaucratic administration. As a result, one cannot discuss the impact of colonialism in African states without pointing out the effects the French and British colonial policies have had on
institutionalizing the existing political divide. It is this divide that made it extremely difficult to unify various cleavage structures, such as ethnicity and religion, which are currently active in African politics. As a consequence, there has been continued hindrance of the democratic processes as well as socio-political advancement of modern African states since their attainment of independence.

In what ways have the different British and French colonial policies impacted the post-colonial partisan formation in Africa that is now reflected in the current ethnic politicization? The legacies of the British and French have in some ways shaped the nature and characteristics of modern African states in many ways. For instance, the British system of indirect rule, which was heavily reliant on local rulers, had not only attempted to incorporate existing local institutional structures of ethnic division, but intentionally imposed structural barriers that cut across similar ethnic demographics, leaving some groups politically empowered, and others deprived and marginalized. In practice the British policy of indirect rule gave autonomy to the native administration, “which segregated locals along tribal affiliations and controlled them via locally powerful men known as chiefs” (McNamee, 2019, p. 23).

Ethnicity was silent in the indirect rule system under the British, and according to Ali et al. (2018), the British emphasis on native administration led to the division of the local population into tribes, in which the British made no commitment towards inclusive governance, and allowed traditional leaders to engage in divisive politics that empowered some groups and excluded others as along as that the policy serve their colonial interest. In the British’s administration of the native people, the traditional chiefs were not only empowered to rule over their respective local populations, they were also allowed to institute a “rigid association between
one’s ethnic identity and access to basic resources such as land and local government services” (Ali et al., 2018).

The indirect rule policy has created a widespread ethnic stratification, which not only heightened the prospect of ethnic conflict among various groups who competed for political power, but also weakened the powers and authorities of the traditional rulers who were at risk of being deposed if they countered the British interest. In his observations, McNamee (2019) finds that in countries where indirect colonial rule was implemented, there is a strong relationship with people identifying in ethnic identities terms than they would have on their national identities across sub-Saharan Africa. He argues that “ethnic conflict should be more frequent in former British colonies because of the effects of the British colonial rule, and maintains that “indirect rule in particular, has left intact traditional patterns of social organization that facilitated the mobilization of aggrieved minorities for collective action” (McNamee, 2019, p.12).

In contrast to the British colonial policy of indirect rule, the French policy of assimilation established a centralized bureaucratic administrative policy, which promoted the political participation of all ethnic groups in the state. Under the French policy, all people regardless of their ethnic or religious identities, were seen as equals in the eyes of the state and individuals were evaluated for public functions not because of their family connections to traditional leadership, but based on their ability to perform and understand French administrative rules, language, and culture. As Ali et al. (2018) clearly noted, local administrative boundaries in French colonies did not necessarily represent specific ethnic groups and, therefore, did not hinder various ethnic groups from belonging to the same political unit. The use of French as a common official language was promoted throughout the colonies, encouraging language integration...
within the colonial bureaucracy. The power of local chiefs was also suppressed allowing the French authorities to have total control of the administrative policies and governance of the colonized states.

Additionally, the French were able to unify various ethnic groups by neutralizing conflict and promoting ethnic harmony and cooperation, which allowed different ethnic groups to participate in the governance process of the colony. Under the French rule, the politicization of ethnicity was discouraged and a merit-based system was instituted that facilitated upwards-political mobility and advancement regardless of an individual’s ethnic background, but based instead on the person’s proven academic performance and adaptation to French language and culture.

Furthermore, having explored the two contrasting governance systems of the British and French and outlining how they both differently impacted the formation of post independent political parties that emerged in Africa, some critics may argue that colonialism is not entirely responsible for institutionalizing ethnic and religious politics in the African continent. The cleavage politics existed in Africa at various social levels before the advent of colonialism. The British indirect rule policy was merely an exploitation of the existing ethno-linguistics divide, in which they took advantage of the weak traditional institutional system of local authority and empowered them to protect their colonial interest.

Given that colonialism ended long time ago, what responsibility do African leaders bear for failures to unify various ethnic groups in the society? It is important to note that post independent political parties that were formed in Africa after the attainment of independence,
have not reflected inclusive ethnic linguistic perspectives representing the diversities of the cleavages that existed in African states at that time. While some African leaders such as Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Leopold Senghore of Senegal, and many other African leaders have individually taken aggressive steps to address ethnic cleavage politics by promoting strong nationalism and forming inclusive ethnic and religious political parties that represented the demographic diversities of their countries, others such Félix Houphouet-Boigny of Ivory Coast, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, and Nnamdi Azikiwe Nigeria’s first president have in many ways failed to bring various competing ethnic groups together. While the legacy of the nationalist’s movement in Africa has succeeded in the attainment of political independence, one crucial challenge faced by post-independent political parties is the unification of various ethnicities. Ethnic rivalries and tensions have not only hindered social advancement of nation-states in the continent, but also slowed the democratic progress as some the states descended into ethnic motivated conflicts that resulted in protracted civil wars, which brought untold suffering to the masses of the people.

Finally, one of the strongest pillars of the British indirect rule was its emphasis on tapping traditional chiefs to administer their people based on local customs and tradition. It is argued that some of the customary practices put in place were, by nature, discriminatory based on ethnic and religious backgrounds, but it has well served the British interest. In contrast, the French colonial policy dismantled traditional administration and forcefully centralized their colonial political system to assimilate the people into French language and culture. Both systems of colonial policies have in many ways shaped and impacted the structure and formation of modern African politics.
Africa’s demographic structure created a potential vulnerability to segmentation politics by colonial powers that exploited the policy of divide-and-rule to conquer and control Africa. In their evaluation of modern African political system, Mozaffar et al. (2003) advanced three features that the African political system has inherited from the colonial government: (1) the composition of ethnic groups and the differences in group sizes, which are carefully positioned in a way that no single ethnic group would obtain an outright majority in a country’s election; (2) due to considerable variety and complexity in ethnic markers, a politically salient inter-group would have limited cultural differences among the larger group; and (3) some ethnic groups are territorially concentrated in one region or area of a country, enabling their social constructions as a large cohesive force that gives them an advantage to present a united front toward a collective political action.

Similarly, post-colonial regimes that emerged after independence have strengthened ethnic division because African leaders, even as they were successful in securing independence, failed to reformulate partisan structures that promote ethnic harmony. Political leaders who fought to obtain Africa’s independence were overly ambitious in trying to secure political freedoms, an idea promoted by Kwame Nkrumah who argues that Ghana’s independence would be meaningless without the total liberation of African countries from colonialism. Hyper-focus on independence and unification of the African states was a policy at odds with the realities of ethnic tensions and divisions that were developing within the domestic societies of African states. The irony is apparent. African leaders who had championed the fight for self-governance used nationalism as a strong ideological base to rally the masses towards self-rule, but failed as leaders in successfully establishing political parties that could unify various ethnic groups in
shaping the political future of the newly formed independent nations. Although some countries, such as Senegal and Tanzania, are outstanding in attaining ethnic diversity in political participation of their societies, most African countries still face serious challenges to uniting various ethnicities in their nations. A historical account of partisan formation on the African continent, as discussed above, is necessary to understanding how the political events of the past continue to influence modern-day political structures that shape the voting behavior of the masses of the electorates on the African continent.

**Evaluating Voting Intentions in Africa Based on Ethnic Cleavages**

Having examined the historical origins of the cleavage structures and how they affect political outcomes on the African continent, the foundation is laid to investigate why voters in Africa use ethnicity as cues to support candidates in an election. Scholars who have examined ethnic voting in African elections have advanced several factors as reasons African electorates vote the way they do. In their study, Posner et al. (2010) argue that social identities in Africa reflect people’s cultural ties to kith and kin, which reinforce strong social/cultural identities that promote communal values and solidarity among the people. Ethnicity, the foundation of people's social identities, carries strong links to people's cultural makeup, which is used as a tool toward political advantage. Posner noted, “Ethnicity serves as tool for mobilizing people, policing boundaries, and building coalitions that can be used in the struggle for power and access to scarce resources” (Posner et al., 2010). Similarly, writing on the significance of ethnic identity and how it influences the nature of African politics. Udogu notes, “Ethnicity is an embodiment of a tribe, where one man’s fortune is strongly identified with the fortune of the tribe. The idea that (this is our guy) and if he succeeds, it is the tribe that has progressed, and if he fails, it is the
Tribe that has suffered a setback. Thus, each time a high office goes to someone in the community, his tribe members will jubilate openly” (Udogu, 1999).

According to Posner (2007), Africa's political system consists of various structures of cleavages. Religion and ethnicity, the most visible forms of social identification, are not singular. Africans are also divided along regional, class, and linguistic differences, dominating the political spectrum of the continent. The structure of the political system affects the regime types formed in an African country; and while it is true that one cleavage may be politically dormant in one country, in another it may be relevant, depending on the size and influences the cleavage has on the political system. Why do electorates in Africa vote based on ethnicity? To answer this question, Posner (2007) advances three main claims that shape the nature of African political society. First, African voters are interested in maximizing the resources they can obtain from the state, such as employment, roads, health care, and schools. Voters rely on access to these scarce resources in exchange for votes.

Second, voters would rely on ethnic cues to support an ethnic candidate whom they perceive as capable of delivering these resources to them. Reliance on a co-ethnic candidate creates trust and boosts voters' confidence that the election of a co-ethnic candidate would deliver them the political goods. Voters premise their support for a co-ethnic candidate on the person’s ability to deliver targeted benefits to his/her ethnic loyalists. In a political society where ethnicity is salient, a candidate’s chances of victory increase when his/her own ethnic group is rewarded and, equally, will risk losing an election when his/her ethnic political base is neglected.
Third, politics in Africa, unlike in developed, democratic countries, is highly centralized on the executive branches of government, meaning that the most important decisions are made unilaterally by the president, which diminishes the powers of the legislative and executive branches of government. Therefore, in the struggle for political power, politics tends to take the form of ethnic cleavages, where each group in the society competes for control of the executive branch that carries abundant functions of power and where public policy is centralized, offering political rewards of scarce resources to loyalists. In his evaluation of the Zambian political society, Posner (2007) observes that ethnicity is highly considered in hiring and promoting in the public sector. From the president down to the lowest public office holder, ethnic favoring is a common practice and government officials often use their powers to assist members of their own ethnic group.

In her studies of the voters in Uganda, Carlton (2015) advances that voters do not only prefer to support their co-ethnic candidate but also tend to strongly correlate ethnic candidacy with strong performance in government. In a situation where ethnic cues dictate the voter’s behavior, support for co-ethnic candidates could increase the prospects for an incompetent leader to gain electoral advantage and be elected into public office. It is a fact that if a candidate’s performance is evaluated based on particular links to ethnic identity, a strong candidate who does not hold favorable ethnic connections would stand to lose an election even though such a person has an exceptional track record of performance in governance. The data obtained through this study suggest that ethnic support matters less to voters in their choice for candidate despite the literature’s suggestion that ethnicity is a strong influence on voters compared with performance.
Still investigating the notion of ethnic votes, scholars such as Arriola et al. (2017), argue that voters engage in ethnic voting because they have limited knowledge about a candidate in order to make an informed voting decision. Where electorates lack access to vital information about a potential candidate to make informed decisions, voters may easily resort to ethnic cues to evaluate which candidate they will support in an election. This logic holds true in a political society where ethnic support is strongly associated with targeted allocation of government resources based on political loyalties. Through public endorsements Carlton (2015) argues that some differences may occur in changing the voting alignment of electorates in support of a candidate of another ethnicity. This happens when a contestant from a distinct ethnic group drops out of the race and publicly endorses a candidate, encouraging his or her co-ethnic group to cross over and vote for a candidate of a different ethnicity.

Furthermore, the evidence of voting among the electorates in rural areas compared with those found in urban centers, according to Batty (2011), suggests that cues of ethnic identity are stronger among people living in agrarian societies compared to those living in urban centers. She observes that people who live in agrarian societies are faced with two major barriers: (1) lower levels of education and (2) limited access to news media that will better inform them about candidates in an election. On the African continent, many rural voters have limited access to basic education. Education, a strong pillar to individual enlightenment, serves as a catalyst to independent reasoning. An educated mass is also a critical mass that cannot be easily manipulated by politicians inclined to use divisive tactics of pitting one group against the other to win.
Access to education in rural areas is a serious challenge faced by many African countries as schools tend to be more concentrated in urban centers, a great distance from those residing in rural areas. Also, rural electorates have limited access to information about candidates and their policy dispositions, which is critical in deciding for whom to vote. Due to the presence of these challenges, coupled with the need to address pressing social issues that affect their societies, African voters often feel compelled to rely on ethnic cues to choose politicians they believe will deliver the political goods they desire.

As Bates (1983) clearly noted, voters will use the ethnicity of a candidate as a guide to obtain informational shortcuts for party support, then rely on this information to select the party that is most likely to deliver social benefits to them. In a study of Kenyan electorates, Romero (2013) found that ethnicity strongly predicts support for a candidate in the election. His evidence shows that Kenyan voters' support for a candidate was contingent upon their ability to access private and public goods distributed by the government. When a political system is structured around ethnic divisions, a leader's loyalty is channeled to a few sections of the populace, especially those who helped him or her win an election. The consequence of reducing political power to a patron-servant relationship is the loss of accountability, setting the political stage for massive corruption and reducing the wider electorates' confidence in their government's ability to deliver political goods to all citizens.

However, judging from many studies that have examined the voting behavior of African electorates, it is evident that Africanists scholars do not agree on the foundational causes of ethnic voting on the continent. While some analysts have argued that voters are to blame for engaging in ethnic politics, noting that political elites in Africa are merely responding to voters'
existing, and underlying ethnic cues to support a candidate, other scholars have pointed out that political elites engage in ethnic politics because it is the most efficient means of securing the political support needed to win an election. This political pendulum is a chicken and egg scenario in respect to determining which came before other. Analysts pondering this issue have led to a heightened circular debate that is counterproductive, resulting in a diminished understanding of the voting behavior of the African voters.

In addition, a country’s size and its ethnic composition impact the electoral system. African countries with a heterogeneous population, such as in Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, etc., tend towards their electorates being highly divided along cleavage structures such as ethnicity, religion and race. In contrast, nations that have a homogeneous population such as this researcher’s own country, The Gambia, as well as Senegal and Mauritania, may be less impacted by cleavage structures like ethnicity, religion, and race. Political competition for resources tends to be higher among nations with a heterogeneous population due to multiple ethnicities involved in the political process. Heterogeneous societies are complex in nature, so addressing the political demands from various groups in society who seek government intervention is a difficult task for leaders. As a result, policies get crowded into ethnocentric terms, enabling political parties to strategically pick winners to strengthen their electoral base on ethnic grounds while depriving others who are outside of the winning ethnic group.

In Africa, scholars have also identified religion, in addition to ethnicity, as another form of identity that influences the way people vote in an election. Islam and Christianity are the two most common forms of religious identities on the continent. Even though religious beliefs encompass all sectors of society and transcend ethnic barriers, followers of Christianity and
Islam are often targeted for political support by politicians who exploit religious institutions, churches and mosques alike, for political gains. McCauley (2014) argues that religion and ethnicity influence the political preferences of an individual when examining government policy. His survey of electorates in Nigeria shows that voters who identify themselves in ethnic terms are more likely to consider an issue such as land dispute in the country as the primary cause of conflict, whereas those who identify by religion do not. Similarly, Nigerian voters who identify religion as important in their lives are more likely than those who identify themselves in ethnic terms to regard corruption as the central problem in their governance system. Thus, “when individuals respond in an ethnic context, they place greater priority on material concerns and local development, whereas those who express strong religious beliefs have shown preference of a certain way of life or morality as more important over development policies” (McCauley, 2014:2).

Voters often rely on existing stereotypes about a certain ethnic group when voting. In his studies in Uganda, Krutz (2013) found that voters' perception of an ethnic group influences their voting behavior toward a candidate from that particular ethnic group. He concluded that Ugandan voters held negative views on the Karamojong ethnic group, whom they perceived as uncivilized because of their dress and nomadic lives. This negative view about an ethnic group always affects the electability of an individual candidate from that group; even if the person is qualified to hold public office, the voter’s choices are more likely to be influenced by existing stereotypes.

Posner et al. (2010) observed that ethnic identity in African elections becomes increasingly salient when political competition is high in a country. To win and consolidate
power, political elites tend to use the ethnic card to mobilize their political base, pitting one group against the other. In a study conducted across 10 African countries, Posner et al. (2010) found that a competitive political environment powerfully predicts that the respondents will self-identify in ethnic terms. No doubt that a competitive election heightens the political environment among various groups competing for power in the society; however, if political elites used ethnic cues to appeal to the masses of the electorates, the election could result in what is referred to as ethnic block-voting, where ethnic identities are widely favored over the issues of concern to the general electorates.

In sum, there are many factors that justify the reasons ethnic voting prevails in some African countries. Scholars who studied African voting behavior have explored a wide-ranging issue in explaining ethnicity salience in Africa. The effects of ethnic voting have been a serious concern to all people who are interested in the political development of Africa. Africa’s ethnicity diversity is a source of strength unless used to divide or marginalize people. Equally, it is potentially difficult to obtain political stability on a continent when ethnicity is publicized and weaponized for winning an election. While such efforts may serve a politician's short-term goal, the long-term challenge is that ethnic politics creates social division and increased ethnic tensions that lead to conflict as evidenced in Kenya in 2007.

While ethnicity is the most common form of social identity which influences the voting behavior of the electorate masses on the African continent, it is not the only factor that continues to influence voting behavior in African nations. Other factors also influence electorates' voting decisions; one among these is "clientelism." Clientelism denotes a political system heavily reliant on intermediaries, such as local leaders and influential members of society. These local
leaders have followers who hail from different ethnic backgrounds and they command wide respect from the masses of the electorates at grass-root levels. Their public endorsement of a candidate can turn into a win of opportunity for a party if they have a large following of loyal supporters. In her study of the election in Senegal, Koter (2013) noted the power that Sufism and religious leaders had in shaping the electoral outcomes. She advances the idea that, despite Senegal's multi-ethnic composition, partisan support tended to be structured around clientelism, more so than on the basis of ethnicity, contrasting from the electoral behavior of many other African countries where ethnic voting appears to be a stronger consideration.

In a clientelist system, politicians supply benefits directly to local leaders who distribute these resources to the local populace without discrimination based on ethnic identities. Local leaders, especially the powerful Islamic sects such as Mourides, Tijan, and Niass in Senegal, enjoy a huge following and are highly trusted by the people because they deliver important social services to their communities in areas where government performance lies dormant. As intermediaries between the government and people, these leaders also play a significant role in garnering the attention of the government to address the social needs of the people.

Hence, in an environment characterized by deep mistrust of politicians among the electorates, reliance on traditional leaders serves as a source of credibility and assurance to the voters that a politician would keep his or her promises. Koter writes, “When electoral politics is clientelist in nature, reliance on intermediaries presents an appealing mobilization strategy for politicians in ways that transcend ethnic considerations” (Koter, 2013, p. 93). This political formation is significant because it unifies people from various ethnic backgrounds around one single leader who powerfully advocates for the interests of the community on behalf of his or her
subjects. In Senegal, the efficiency of the government in delivering important development projects to the citizens is linked to the critical role played by influential Islamic leaders, who, through their followers, are able to hold government officials accountable.

In this section, the range of circumstances that explain the voting behavior of African electorates has been explored. In understanding why the electorates in Africa vote the way they do, some analysts have argued that voters respond to ethnic cues because ethnicity is functional and provides political benefit, while others think that African electorates have limited information about candidates in the race to make informed voting decisions. To some, voters’ preferences of a candidate are influenced by their membership in an organized religious group and, as the case presented above in Senegal, on how the Islamic sect affects political outcomes. While it is important to note that there are many factors that continue to influence voting outcomes of African electorates, the two most powerful forms of social identities are ethnicity and religion, which continue to affect the voting behavior of the masses of electorates across the continent.

**Issue-Based Voting Perspectives on the African Continent**

Are all elections in Africa influenced by ethnic voting? Certainly, no one single variable can completely explain the voting behavior of the masses of electorates. Factors that shaped the voting behavior of a group of people are complicated because many variables are involved, which simultaneously influence electoral outcomes. Ethnic-based voting may prevail in some African countries; in others, the electorates tend to be more focused on issues that affect the entire society. Thus, focusing on a single unit of analysis, ethnicity, in studying the voting
behavior of African electorates may not only be misleading but also diminishes the influence of other factors, which may equally impact the voting preferences of the electorates in Africa.

This section advances the idea that, while ethnicity may have influenced electoral outcomes in some African countries, in other countries voters are more drawn to issues unrelated to existing ethnic cleavages. What is issue-based voting? It is defined as a type of voting where the electorates cast their ballots in support of candidates in an election based on substantive policy positions. An issue-based voter is a voter concerned with the governmental system, that is, how government policy affects the general well-being of the entire populace rather than just a few. Electorates' support for a candidate is not based on any presumed social identity an individual may hold but rather on the person’s ability to deliver essential services such as building schools, providing access to water, constructing roads and hospitals, etc.; or, in some cases, voters may be drawn to a candidate's approach to non-material and value-oriented issues, such as protecting fundamental human rights, improving the economy, creating employment opportunities for the masses in the country, maintaining transparency in governance, and fighting corruption in public enterprises.

Voting is a complex decision-making process that involves many factors and it is often difficult for political scientists to agree on a single causal variable that extensively captures the voting behavior of the masses. Just as voters respond to different cues in making their voting preferences, a nation’s political structure has potential to shape the voting behavior of the electorates in ways that reflect dominant forms of social identities. As Norris and Mattes (2003) have noted, ethnocentric voting in African countries varies cross-nationally. A country’s demographic characteristics have the potential to influence the electoral behavior of the citizens
in ways that reflect the existing social divisions. It is, therefore, evident that votes based on ethnicity will be stronger in countries with a heterogeneous population that have multiple ethnic identities. Countries such as Namibia, South Africa, and Nigeria are divided by many languages and cultures and are particularly vulnerable to politicized cleavage structures. Conversely, countries that have a homogeneous ethno-social makeup, such as Lesotho, Botswana, Senegal, and The Gambia, ethnicity may have a minimal effect on the electoral choices of the masses given that there are strong social ties within the population making it much more difficult for divisive cleavage politics to flourish. People in small societies are in many ways united by shared social identities, which are formed either through a common religion, ethnicity, regional location, or shared cultural backgrounds. The proximity in the ways people live among various groups in the society is closely linked, enabling intermarriages and intercultural exchanges that facilitate the emergence of a collective identity, and making it more difficult, if not impossible, for politicians to divide and rule.

Therefore, it would be a misleading conception for anyone to argue that African electorates – unlike those in advanced democracies – are not capable of voting based on issues. Rather, our focus should be tailored to understanding why ethnicity is salient in some African countries and not in others. An analysis of scholarly contributions to understanding the voting behavior of African countries has exposed one consistent fact this study relied upon: the presence of strong social identities in a nation, such as ethnic, religious or class, creates a fertile ground for divisive politics to rise into the mainstream political culture. The electorates – even though they are aware of the issues that concern them in a society – tend to rely on existing cues of social identities because identity serves as an assurance that their needs will be addressed. Since
election is a game of numbers, identity politics is a unifying force for a group of people to secure electoral advantage and collectively influence government policy.

But in a political society, voters are concerned with a wide range of issues, which are classified here in two main categories of goods: the public and the private. Collective goods and public goods are distributed to all the people in a society. No member is excluded from the use of or access to these resources. Public goods such as schools, roads, hospitals, community garden or a well etc. are funded by the government and allocated to the public. Applying Bentham’s utilitarian philosophy, these are the goods that provide the greatest benefit to a greater number of the people. No one is excluded from their use.

Private goods, on the other hand, are targeted goods given to specific individuals or groups, in which other members of the society are excluded from their use. These goods could be money, food, awards of government contracts or, in some cases, an offer of employment awarded to an individual or group through an established network of corrupt practices that prioritizes individuals' needs over those of collective society. The importance of public goods, as opposed to private goods, is that many of these goods are locally non-excludable to others and able to benefit all regardless of their ethnic identities. Hence, in the absence of discrimination based on social identity in a society, voters will shift their focus on evaluating issues that concern them individually to support a candidate whose policy position will deliver public goods that will satisfy the needs of the entire community. Issue voters are ones who are aware of their own needs and who strategically choose a candidate who can deliver to those needs based on their manifested policy position. When evaluating a candidate, an issue-based voter may note that social identity cues, such as ethnicity or religion, matter less than the candidate's qualification to
effectively deliver public goods as voting decisions are more heavily dependent on the individual’s performance.

Other factors, such as the regional origin of a candidate, also affect voting outcomes. According to Ichino and Nathan (2013), ethnic voting is a less significant influence in the voting behavior of people in countries with strong regional settings. They argue that voters may disregard their ethnic identities to support a regional candidate if they think they will gain more from the election of a regional candidate. In Nigeria, for instance, the electorates appeared to be divided along regional lines across north, south and eastern divides. A voter who lived in the north of Ibo origin may cross the carpet to vote for a Hausa candidate, disregarding his or her co-ethnic candidate because regionalism will provide more benefit to her or him than ethnic solidarity. Thus, an electorate that places greater importance on regional preferences is less likely to support a candidate from another region even if the person shares a similar ethnic group. The importance of voters forming a regional alliance is premised on the need to distribute resources to benefit the residents, and if a victory for a regional candidate is expected to attract government development projects that will benefit the entire region. Building regional alliances reduces the prospect of ethno-centric voting, helps direct the voting decisions of the electorates towards issues which are nondiscriminatory, and tends to help the entire region as all members of the society are given equal access.

The current trend among emerging African democratic states is that they gravitate toward a promising electoral future when issues tend to matter more than ethnic cleavages. The evidence of this changing pattern in voting behavior is reflected by Weghorst and Lindberg (2013), who argue that voters increasingly pay attention to issues that concern them and objectively evaluate
their voting decisions based on the incumbent's performance in delivering collective goods that are useful to the entire society and not just for the private gains of a few.

Elections are a process of making decisions, and the choices of the voters are contingent upon their awareness of issues. Voters, the ultimate decision-makers, have power to shape the nature of their political society through the ballot box. Their support for an issue not only dictates political outcomes that will determine the winners and losers in the poll but also influences public policy. Thus, according to Weghorst and Linberg (2013), the electoral outcome in a country will nurture development-oriented policies if voters put a premium on collective goods in their voting choices. However, they cautioned that a nation's political future could gravitate towards corruption and predation of the resources of the state by political elites when the pursuit of private interests supersedes public gains in a country, which will hinder development of a nation and social advancement of the people as witnessed in many African countries suffering from resource curse, otherwise known as the paradox of plenty.

Consistent with the notion of issue voting, Beyer et al. wrote, “The electorates will choose a party after a careful consideration of candidates’ positions over the issues that interest them” (Beyer et al., 2014, p. 10). The fate of every election is decided by the people who defect from their established partisan disposition to vote for the opposing party in the race. This defection is premised on voters' pursuits of a party policy position and willingness to cast their votes to support the party’s agenda. In examining the theory of issue ownership, Herrnson and Curry (2011) have claimed that the tendency for voters to change parties rises when they agree with the position held by the opposing party on issues.
Political scientists may not often agree on a single issue that influences votes in an election; however, the evidence presented above seems to be convincing that African electorates, like many others, are capable of paying attention to issues that concern them and will defect to support another party when the issues that matter to them are raised. Therefore, while it is difficult to agree on a single, monolithic issue that affects the voting behavior of most African electorates, it is important to approach African voters as rational groups of individuals with self-interest in mind. If ethnicity is salient in a political system, voters may be drawn to ethnic cues as a means to obtaining political goods; hence, the political structure of a country will reflect ethnic division. Similarly, if voters are concerned with issues, the electoral process will reflect an issue-oriented voting preference, so ethnicities of candidates would matter less as long as the people have access to their basic needs. This is also true when voters have strong regional affinities; their votes will be regionally based with the goal of obtaining political goods.

In exploring the theory of issue ownership and how it relates to partisan positions on issues, Petrocik (1996) explains that parties take ownership of an issue by advancing a strong position and incorporating that issue on their platforms and programs. These ideas are occasionally tested in a campaign setting to allow the public to react to a party-policy position. Thus, a party will benefit more with an issue it owns and will manage to raise it to the level where that issue becomes significant among voters. Voters are not only concerned with issues but also to determine that the party is able to address a particular issue given its historical position on that issue. In the United States, for instance, both Democrat and Republican parties have issues they considered their own. When it comes to issues of social welfare, education, and immigration, the Democrat party traditionally held stronger positions; the Republican party, on
the other hand, has concentrated its concerns with policy issues relating to tax cuts, limiting government regulations, and higher spending for the military defense. African electorates, unlike those in the United States, are not split ideologically in their support for issues; that is not to say that voters in Africa do not pay attention to the things that concern them. Issues matter to African electorates, but the ways in which they arrived at securing these issues is not ideological, but instead is based on their affinity to existing social cleavages and these cleavages may translate into support for ethnic, regional, or religious identities and in some instances class depending on a country’s level of economic development.

According to Harrnson and Curry (2011), partisan defection among voters occurs within the framework of party positions on issues. A candidate will benefit greatly when voters support a policy issue that is owned by his/her party and, likewise, may lose votes if the electorates are dissatisfied with a policy position that is owned by his/her party. Election is a democratic process that allows voters to evaluate the performances of the government and determine in the ballot box whether to reward an incumbent by giving him/her another mandate or punishing a candidate by voting him/her out the government. “Voters are mostly aware of the issues that concern them in a policy and will use their judgment to determine which issues are important and decide the party suitable at handling those issues” (Graefe, 2013, p. 48).

Consistent with the theory of issue ownership and how partisan alignment on an issue affects voting outcomes, Green and Hobolt (2007) argue that parties will strategically focus on issues they have an advantage to win, while downplaying other issues. This is based on the logic that the more significant an issue becomes among the voters, the greater the advantage there is for a party that owns the issue to rally the support of the masses in an election. However, given
the multiple issues that political parties raise, there may be situations where several parties advocate for similar issues, causing the challenge of conflicting agendas. As much as the agenda conflict may create confusion among some voters in determining which party is best suited to address the issue, dependent on this various alternatives parties offer, a political party that raises an issue and manages to take ownership of it will benefit electorally if that issue rises as a main focal point among the voters.

In The Gambia’s presidential elections of 2016, voters have demonstrated that issues mattered, and they were able to elect the opposition candidates over the incumbent when the economy and human rights were at the forefront of the opposition campaign agenda. Issue ownership and partisan defections in pursuit of those issues, were the main reasons why the regime change took place in The Gambia. Election is a measure of votes for a party in support of a policy position. If support for a political party in a country is based on policy issues, rather than on ethnicity, every political party must clearly define its turf and take ownership of it. The opposition coalition was successful because of the poignant issues they campaigned on, which centered on how to restore The Gambian economy, uphold fundamental human rights, and expose bad governance in the Jammeh administration. The opposition coalition intentionally shied away from divisive ethnic politics which understandably has created political division and conflict elsewhere in Africa, and instead focused their messages on how they would address problems on the economy, and protect human rights differently than the Jammeh administration that had held 22 years of rule in the country.
Chapter 3
The Gambia’s Political Development from Colonialism to Independence

The Gambia is the smallest country in West Africa, surrounded on three sides of its territory by Senegal. To the west, the River Gambia, which defines the geography of the country, flows into the Atlantic Ocean. The Gambia was once a colony of Great Britain. The British founded the capital, Banjul, in 1816 as a strategic base point for the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. The country has a total area of 4,363 square miles (11,300 square kilometers) and a population of 1.9 million people, according to estimates from the national census (GBOS, 2013). The Gambia obtained its independence from Britain in 1965. Dawda Kairaba Jawara, a British-trained veterinary officer, served as The Gambia’s first president, presiding for a period of 30 years. His regime was overthrown in a coup d’état in 1994 by a group of young military officers under the leadership of Yahya Jammeh. Jammeh assumed the presidency and ruled the country for 22 years. Jammeh’s regime ended abruptly with the 2016 presidential election when the opposition coalition president, Adama Barrow, defeated Jammeh in the polls. Jammeh went into exile in Equatorial Guinea, where he currently resides.

Prior to Gambia’s obtaining independence from the United Kingdom, many people had expressed doubts about the country attaining nationhood due to its population size and location. These doubts, explored by an American anthropologist, Berkeley Rice, in The Birth of an Improbable Nation (1967), included that The Gambia was the smallest and poorest country in mainland Africa with no university, railroad, or natural resources to support its economic growth as an independent nation.
The British government's policy toward its colonies was primarily based on establishing trade relations with local people, and the river Gambia, due to its strategic confluence with the Atlantic Ocean and its navigable waters across the entirety of Gambia, was suitable for the expansion of British commercial activities into the backcountry. For administrative convenience, the British had divided the country into two main regions: the colony and protectorates. In the colony, the British had direct administrative control and presided over the day-to-day functions of the colony. These areas include Banjul, the capital city, and the immediate surroundings, often referred to as Kombo St. Mary’s and including James Island, which is located in the interior of the country. The rest of The Gambia, referred to as the protectorates, was placed under direct administrative responsibilities of local rulers, known as chiefs The chiefs operated under the British colonial policy called "indirect rule," a system of governance wherein as local rulers, the chiefs were used to directly govern their populace while being answerable to the British government to collect taxes, settle disputes among the people, and maintain law and order within their territories.

Colonialism ended in The Gambia in 1965 after the country had obtained its independence and Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara became the nation's first president. Jawara’s leadership in the country was, for the most part, peaceful. However, in 1981 a group of dissidents led by Kukoi Sanyang waged a rebellion that succeeded in overthrowing the Jawara regime. At the time, The Gambia was the only independent country in Africa that did not have a standing army to protect its national sovereignty. Given the small size of the country, Jawara thought establishing an army was unnecessary. Perhaps this was a wise move at a time when many African countries were facing military-led coup d’états. However, the lack of an army opened up
security challenges unknown to Jawara: A group of disgruntled security forces took advantage of insecurity problems in the country to catalyze a regime change and succeeded. At the time, President Jawara was attending the royal wedding of HRH Prince Charles to Lady Diana Spencer in the United Kingdom. President Jawara had to cut short his visit and returned to enter into an agreement with the government of Senegal, led by Abdou Joof, who agreed to help Jawara flush out the dissidents. Both Jawara and Abdou Joof promised to establish a confederation between the two countries. After successfully removing the rebels and restoring law and order in the country, Jawara was reinstated to his post, and the Senegambia confederation was formed.

In the preliminary negotiations, several reasons were advanced to justify the establishment of the confederation. First, The Gambia and Senegal with similar, strong, social, cultural, and familial ties, were geographically separated by politically imposed colonial boundaries. Given these ties, both countries would benefit from a deeper political integration by synchronizing institutions of governance and getting rid of the colonial structures that continued to divide the two countries. The second reason had to do with Gambia being a very small country compared to Senegal; it lacked natural resources to support its economic advancement. Many people had been skeptical about the possibility of The Gambia's even attaining independence, given the country's total land area and population size. The proponents of the confederation have always maintained that, by integrating the country into Senegal, The Gambia would have benefited more from economic development.

However, the fear on the Gambian side was that closer political integration could lead to domination by Senegal. As Wiseman (1996) clearly notes, while the Senegalese side sought to establish greater unity, the Gambian side was concerned with the protection of national
sovereignty *vis-à-vis* a powerful neighbor. The confederation was a marriage of convenience that ended shortly after it was formed as neither country could reconcile its differences. The issues that ended the confederation were the desire to protect national sovereignty and the difficulties in reconciling two official languages (Senegal’s official language is French whereas The Gambia’s is English). In addition, the two countries had different national languages: Wolof was and still is the national language in Senegal whereas in The Gambia, both Wolof and Mandinka are spoken. Gambian politicians made no effort to specifically designate either of the two as a national language.

Jawara’s legacy in The Gambia had produced mixed reactions among many Gambians. While some argued that his government promoted democracy and championed the fight for human rights’ protection in Africa, others accused Jawara’s government of turning a blind eye to corruption, nepotism, and mismanagement of public resources. Critics have argued that the Jawara administration operated an elitist government that was out of touch with the realities of mass poverty and destitution that the Gambian people faced during his 30 years of leadership. Gambians juggled uneven access to social and economic opportunities. While those who had political connections were given access to government resources, others languished in poverty with no access to education. There were huge divides and limited access to social services between citizens in urban areas and those living in rural areas of the country. While some people had access to education based on their family connection to power, the masses in the country remained poor and uneducated as the government had established only three high schools and only one major hospital for the entire country and there was no road infrastructure connecting the
country's main towns. This persisted throughout the entire three decades of Jawara's regime in The Gambia.

Corruption remained at an all-time high. Government officials under Jawara were frequently accused of diverting public funds for their personal use. The most disturbing scandal during the Jawara’s Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) government was the allegation of corruption involving Vice President Saikou Sabally. Similar allegations were also made against senior management of The Gambia Cooperative Union, and even after external auditors found serious financial mismanagement in the organization, the Jawara government did not take any further steps to punish perpetrators of financial crime (Loum, 2002). The government's inability to proactively combat corruption dampened public trust and damaged its reputation among the populace who had supported the coup. Under Jawara, the country was politically independent but economically dependent on foreign aid. Great Britain, the former colonial masters, provided 70% of the budgetary support to the government as payment for wages and salaries to civil servants. With the lack of natural resources to support its economic development and the main source of the economy heavily dependent on agriculture, the Jawara government failed to boost the agricultural sector and diversify the national economy.

Despite the allegations of corruption and mismanagement of public resources, Jawara was credited for strongly advocating for democratic rule. He periodically organized elections and allowed many opposition parties to compete in the elections. Jawara was credited internationally as not only the nation's founder who fought for Gambian independence from Britain but also, unlike his future successor, Jammeh, was a strong proponent of human rights and individual freedoms in the country. One of Jawara's notable legacies in advancing human rights was the
establishment and hosting of the African Center on Human and People's Rights. The office of this important African Union agency, currently located in The Gambia, is referred to as the Banjul Charter, and honors Jawara's contribution to advancing human rights on the African continent.

Also, during his 30 years in power, Jawara allowed multi-party-political participation in the electoral process. Several political parties were formed and competed in the presidential elections: People’s Progressive Party (PPP) led by Jawara; Democratic Alliance Party (DAP) formed by the Rev. J.C Faye; The Gambia Muslim Congress (GMC) founded by I.M. Garba Jahumpa; and the United Party (UP) formed by Pierre Njie. As Sallah (1990) observes, the Jawara party's ability to appeal to the masses of the electorates in the protectorates (regions of The Gambia that were not directly controlled by the British, but by the local chiefs) by expanding their reach beyond urban areas provided the clear advantage that the party has had over the others, which were mainly concentrated in urban centers of the country.

Thus, the PPP's dominance of the electoral system was primarily based on a consolidated grassroots support that the party had received from the rural voters. Jawara organized regular elections recognized internationally as free and fair, and his party succeeded in winning the polls until July 1994, when a group of soldiers stormed the state house in Banjul and overthrew his government, sending Jawara into exile in the United Kingdom.

The Reasons for the Coup D’états in The Gambia and Beyond

Two main theoretical frameworks can help explain why there are so many of coup d’états in Africa: internal and external. Based on these, further exploration of the reasons military
intervention is common in African politics is possible. Internal factors suggest that the army is responding in defense of a perceived threat to corporate interest of the army in the allocation of wages and associated benefits by political elites. Low wages and loss of income for the army have been consistent reasons given by many successful coup leaders for why a civilian government is overthrown.

The army in most African countries has often viewed itself as responsible for protecting both the national sovereignty and the territorial integrity of a nation, as well as serving a much bigger role in governance: the forceful removal of an incompetent government. It has been reported that prior to the events that led to the 1994 coup d'état in The Gambia, an army mutiny had taken place over the soldiers' dissatisfaction with the government's refusal to pay allowances to those who participated in the peace-keeping mission in Liberia. This incident could have served as a warning to the government to pay attention to the needs of the army. However, the Jawara government failed to address the concerns of the military, so when the coup erupted, many rank and file soldiers defected to support the coup.

Also, some coup leaders had noted ethnic favoritism and division in the society, one justification for a regime change. In some countries in Africa, individuals from certain ethnic groups are given an unfair advantage in rising to higher positions in government than others, especially concerning promotions and benefits. In the army, official promotions occurred more often as a means of rewarding regime loyalists or in favor of ethnic connections, as opposed to on merit. Politicizing the army created an unwanted distraction from the core principle of protecting national sovereignty and moved it towards developing an interest in politics. It is often
said that the army should stay away from politics, but the same is also true that politics should stay out of the army.

Hence, politicizing the army is a dangerous way to achieve short-term political gains because in the long term it could backfire and create political instability in a nation. Politicizing the army has been one of the main reasons for the proliferation of *coup* on the African continent. Loum (2002) argues that certain characteristics are essential for the effective function of an army, e.g. nationalism, professionalism, and cohesion are all key elements that guide the work of the soldiers. The army will, therefore, take a stand to preserve these core principles if threatened by the political class. In The Gambia, prior to the *coup* that ended the Jawara government, analysts indicated that not only was the army neglected by political elites, but was also heavily politicized and divided along ethnic lines. While some officials, due to their political connections, were promoted to senior ranks, others with similar qualifications were denied career advancement and benefits.

One factor that causes military intervention is linked to corruption in government. “A government that is corrupt creates a wide economic disparity between the rulers and the ruled, which potentially provokes a reaction from the military that capitalizes on public dissatisfaction as an advantage to stage a coup and forcefully remove a corrupt government” (Loum, 2002, p. 149). A strong economy is a good sign of regime stability as opposed to a weak national economy that renders its citizens jobless. This could also create relatable consequences of lawlessness, endangering the security and stability of a country, thus, inviting the army to intervene to forcefully remove the government and to restore law and order.
Why did the coup take place in Gambia? In his autobiography, Jawara accounted a vivid memory of July 1994, when a soldier rushed into his office and broke the news of the *coup d’état*. “There is group of soldiers advancing towards the capital, Banjul and I was instructed to immediately evacuate to avoid any loss of lives. An arrangement was made to safely transport me and my family to a nearby US Navy Ship that is duck at the port” (Jawara, 2009, P.385). As the event continue to unfold, it later became clear that soldiers under the leadership of Lt. Yahya Jammeh led a *coup d’état* that successfully overthrew Jawara's government. Members of the junta advanced several reasons to justify the *coup*. The soldiers believed that military action was necessary to restore sanity in the government and to root out corruption, which was prevalent and out of control under the Jawara government. A case in point where an act of corruption directly affected the military: The government refused to pay allowances to a group of soldiers who participated in a peacekeeping mission in Liberia during the civil war (Wiseman, 1996, p 20). While this incident may not be the leading cause of the *coup*, it clearly signaled the general frustration faced by members of the Gambian army against Jawara’s government, which neglected the poor living conditions of the soldiers in their barracks, despite their complaints of the dilapidated housing facilities, low salaries, and substandard food supply.

The second reason advanced for the *coup* was the dissatisfaction of the Gambian soldiers with the presence of Nigerian officers: The Nigerians were brought into the country on a technical mission to train Gambian soldiers on how to run a national army when it was newly formed. Some of the soldiers, including senior officials, had complained about the insubordination and mistreatment by Nigerian soldiers. “The appointment by Jawara of the Nigerian officers to senior command and position within The Gambian National Army had
caused considerable resentment among Gambian soldiers, which provided a motivation for the coup” (Wiseman, 1996, p. 20).

Third, many critics have argued that Jawara’s government was completely out touch with the realities of poverty, destitution and misery faced by many Gambians whom for far too long have been neglected by their government. Jawara focus has been more broadly on fixing international issues and delegating domestic issues to his corrupt officials who have failed to deliver in addressing the needs of Gambians. He was too busy trying to solve the world’s problems instead of addressing the needs of Gambians. Jawara’ numerous international travels have placed him out of touch with domestic realities faced by citizens on daily basis. Jawara was not only aware of the presence of the US Naval Forces in the country but has stated that his vice president and defense minister have not informed him of the joint military exercise between Gambian army and US Navy. From this account, it was obvious that there was a power vacuum in the country, and Jawara was neither paying attention in the domestic affairs of the country nor was his security forces. The soldiers were cleaver enough to recognize the power vacuum and took up arms to fill the void and rallied the people to support of their cause with the promise of instituting a government that will be transparent and responsive to the needs of the people. While on board the US Naval ship his family, “I have tried to negotiate with the Junta leaders to convince them to return to the Military Barracks. I have promised to address their concerns if they allow me to return but they rejected every demand I made” (Jawara, 2009 p.386). That offer was perhaps too late given the frustration many people have faced in the country, and when that negotiations failed Jawara, his family and some of his government officials went into exile in the United Kingdom marking the end of the 32 years of the PPP leadership in The Gambia.
The coup in The Gambia is not relatable in many aspects to the coup d’états that have taken place in the African continent, which usually have ethnic components as motivating factors in justifying regime change. In The Gambia, according to Wiseman (1996), ethnicity has never played a significant role in Gambian politics as the coup leaders hailed from various ethnic backgrounds. Jammeh was from the Jola ethnic group; Sabally, Fula; Hydara, a Moor of Mauritanian descent; Touray, Mandinka; and Singhateh, Christian and a Mandinka with an English mother. The coup had also no particular links to the controversial World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural adjustment program, an imposed economic policy that resulted in creating political instability and coup d’états in many African countries.

The Waves of Elections During the Twenty-two Years of Jammeh Leadership in The Gambia

Following the successful coup d’état, the military junta formed the Armed Forces' Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC) with Jammeh as chair. It also promised a temporary stay in power until an election was organized, at which time it would hand over power to a civilian ruler and returned the military to the barracks. During this transitional period, the constitution was suspended, and the junta instituted series decrees aimed at strengthening its political power, restricting individual freedoms, and banning opposition political parties from operating in the country. Decree 57, for instance, gave the interior minister unlimited powers to arrest and detain without charge any person perceived as threatening national security and disrupting the peace and stability of the country (Wiseman, 1996).

The junta did not keep its promise, despite mounting international pressure, and imposed economic sanctions from the European Union (EU) and United Nations to organize elections and
hand over power peacefully to a civilian government. It was reluctant to do so. Jammeh resigned from the military and became the flag bearer for the newly formed Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC) to contest in the 1996 presidential election. Although this was the first election to be organized serving as a test to the popularity of Jammeh, serious concerns were raised relating to the credibility of the polls as the ban on existing opposition parties was still in place. While a handful of selected opposition parties was allowed to participate in the polls, major pre-coup political parties, such as PPP, National Convention Party(NCP), and Gambian Peoples Party (GPP), were prevented from contesting, a clever tactic that gave Jammeh a clear electoral advantage. Jammeh won the presidential election with 56% of the votes, while Ousainou Darboe, his main rival, managed to secure 36% of the votes. Jatta and Bah secured but 10% of the votes (Perfect, 2010, p. 12).

Following Jammeh's victory in the polls, a referendum was organized in 1997 that presented Gambian voters with an opportunity to vote for a new constitution. Results were also a victory for Jammeh as 70% of Gambian electorates voted in favor of the constitution (Perfect, 2010). Having secured a five-year leadership mandate in addition to obtaining a stamp of approval by Gambians on a new constitution, Jammeh would wield enough political influence to sway future elections in his favor as he strengthened his grass roots base with promises to change the living conditions of Gambians and to distance himself from nepotism and corrupt practices of the former government.

In 2001, an election was organized. This time, international organizations were able to exert pressure on Jammeh to open the political space to allow previously banned opposition political parties to contest in the polls. Although the political franchise was extended to all
existing parties in the country, the opposition parties, for the first time, tried to unite under a single flag-bearer to compete in the elections against Jammeh. With deposed former-president Jawara still in exile in London, the leadership of his party, the PPP, was headed by Omar Jallow. Sherif Mustapha Dibba and Hassan Musa Camara represented their parties, the NCP and GPP, respectively. The opposition leaders rallied behind a single candidate, and Oussainou Darboe of the United Democratic Party (UDP) was chosen to increase their collective chances of winning the election against Jammeh. However, this effort did not materialize due to disagreement on the chosen leader, and instead, the opposition parties entered single-handedly into the polls.

Table 1 The results of the 2001 presidential election in The Gambia. Source: Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) [www.iec.gm](http://www.iec.gm)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yahya Jammeh</td>
<td>APRC</td>
<td>242,302</td>
<td>52.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oussainou Darboe</td>
<td>UDP/PPP/GPP</td>
<td>149,448</td>
<td>32.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamat Bah</td>
<td>NRP</td>
<td>35,678</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherif Dibba</td>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>17,271</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidia Jatta</td>
<td>PDOIS</td>
<td>13,841</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five candidates contested in the election. Jammeh again appeared with 53% of the votes, while Darboe secured 33% of the votes. Hamat Bah and Sherif Dibba were able to obtain 7.8 and 3.8 percent of the total votes, while Sidia Jatta obtained 3 percent of the votes in the presidential elections. Although there were reports of irregularities in results due to electoral malpractices, as well as reports of the regime using intimidation tactics to suppress opposition parties, (Saine, 2003), Jammeh won the polls, strengthening his grip on power and continuing his domination of The Gambia’s political system.
Having learned a bitter lesson from repeated, humiliating defeats in the polls by Jammeh in both the 1996 and 2001 presidential elections, the opposition parties thought it wise to come together to form a coalition to compete in future elections. This effort was spearheaded by many Gambians living in the diaspora, particularly those in the United States, who in their observation of Gambian politics concluded that no single party could win elections given Jammeh's dominance over the political structure of the country. Therefore, to affect a regime change and remove the dictatorship in Gambia, forming a coalition of opposition party that was externally funded was essential to countering Jammeh's electoral dominance.

Chapter 4

The 2006 Presidential Elections in The Gambia

In 2005, a summit was organized by Gambians in Atlanta, Georgia, United States. There, an agreement was reached that led to the subsequent formation of the National Alliance for Democracy and Development (NADD). In May 2005, NADD presented an opposition united front to compete in the 2006 presidential election (Saine, 2008). In a runoff to the 2006 presidential election, the coalition was not successful and, at once, began to disintegrate due to disagreement among party leaders on the who will be nominated to become position of the flag-bearer. The decision to select Halifa Sallah as the flag bearer was rejected by UDP and NRP executives, who later formed their own coalition, headed by Oussainou Darboe, to compete in the election

Three candidates contested the election: Jammeh for the APRC; Darboe, for the UDP/NRP ticket; and Sallah, for NADD. Amid a divided opposition, Jammeh’s political base
solidified and enjoyed increasing political advantage over the opposition parties. He painted into his campaign a picture of failure and disgrace by the opposition leader’s inability to agree on a single candidate. Jammeh convinced Gambian voters that the opposition leaders could not be trusted to govern the country because, he averred, they could not even put their own houses in order.

Table 2 The Results of The Gambia’s 2006 Presidential Election. Source: Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), www.iec.gm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yahya Jammeh</td>
<td>APRC</td>
<td>264,404</td>
<td>67.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ousainou Darboe</td>
<td>UDP/NRP/GPDP</td>
<td>104,808</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halifa Sallah</td>
<td>NADD</td>
<td>23,473</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Votes Cast</strong></td>
<td><strong>Registered Voters</strong></td>
<td><strong>392,685</strong></td>
<td><strong>670,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the results show, Jammeh secured 67.33% of the votes, while Darboe received 27% and Sallah emerged with 6% of the votes. In this historic vote, the opposition parties learned several important lessons. Given Jammeh’s popularity in the country, a stronger coalition would be needed to compete against Jammeh in future polls. No single party standing alone would be able to defeat Jammeh. There was an urgent need for opposition parties to put their differences aside to support a single candidate.

Darboe, leader of the United Democratic Party, despite forming a coalition with NRP and GPDP, suffered a humiliating defeat in areas of the country considered as opposition strongholds. Also, contrary to the notion of ethnic voting, Africanist scholars noted that
Jammeh’s victory against the opposition in the 2006 Gambia presidential election was not influenced by ethnocentric voting. According to Saine (2008), Jammeh was able to secure a huge margin of votes to defeat the opposition parties in places such as Jarra East, Lower and Central Badibu, as well as Basse and Falladu, places predominantly inhabited by the Mandinkan and Fula ethnic groups, the co-ethnicities of Darboe and Bah, who coalesced and competed in the election against Jammeh. Sallah, who took a third position in the race, had also underperformed among members of his co-ethnic Fula group, paving the way for Jammeh to secure another five-year electoral mandate.

In sum, the evidence here shows that the disintegration of the opposition alliance, namely, the NADD, combined with the failure of the party leaders to strike a compromise to rally behind a single candidate were the primary reasons the opposition did not succeed in defeating Jammeh in the polls and that co-ethnicity was not a factor. Jammeh, despite the fact that he hails from the Jola tribe, an ethnic minority, garnered a remarkably diverse support base in the country, cutting across ethnic, religious, and regional cleavages in the broader spectrum of Gambian society. In fact, “Support for Jammeh appears to be stronger among youth and women, who are a substantial percentage of The Gambian population, and his popularity may have been even stronger among the Mandinka, Fula, Wolof and other ethnic groups than in his co-ethnic Jola” (Saine, 2008, p. 72).

Essentially, Jammeh, unlike other dictators on the continent, continued to respect electoral democratic principles by agreeing to organize periodic elections, which he easily won over disunited opposition parties who could not agree to the formation of a coalition to contest in the elections. Jammeh’s victories instilled public confidence that he was the ultimate choice of
the Gambian people. In an interview on BBC, Jammeh bragged that he would rule the country for a billion years, (BBC, 2011), but neither Jammeh nor anyone could predict that he would later organize an election that he would lose to the opposition. Thus, the 2006 presidential election was a disappointing performance for the opposition parties. However, the significance of the 2006 poll served as a lesson that would instruct the near future for shaping Gambian politics in ways that no one could have ever imagined.

**The 2011 Presidential Elections in The Gambia**

The 2011 presidential election in The Gambia produced no different outcome, aside from the fact that it was the last election to be organized before unexpected regime change took place in the country.

*Table 3 The Results of The Gambia’s 2006 Presidential Election. Source: Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), www.iec.gm*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yahya Jammeh</td>
<td>APRC</td>
<td>470,550</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ousainou Darboe</td>
<td>UDP</td>
<td>114,177</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamat Bah</td>
<td>NRP</td>
<td>73,060</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jammeh, the incumbent, won by 72% of the votes, while Darboe and Bah took home 17% and 11% of the votes respectively. Other opposition party, Peoples Democratic Organization for Independent and Socialism (PDOIS), boycotted the polls, citing irregularities, and arguing that the environment was not conducive to a free and fair election.

These concerns were echoed by the regional block, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which, after concluding a fact-finding mission to The Gambia, decided not to
send election observers. The ECOWAS said that the mission had found "an unacceptable level of control of the electronic media by the party in power and an opposition and electorate cowed by repression and intimidation" (Reuters, 2011). The African Union, the Commonwealth, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) observed the polls and concluded that they were free and fair.

The endorsement by these organizations, excepting ECOWAS, gave Jammeh an internationally accredited stamp of approval to his victory that constitutionally slowed him another mandate to remain the leader for five years. If democracy were measured only on account of organizing elections, it can be argued that Jammeh honored this principle by periodically seeking the electoral mandates of the people, which he handily won due to the lack of opposition unity.

However, the 2016 election that Jammeh organized, against all odds, pitted him against a coalition of opposition that turned the tides. To this point, Jammeh had made unsubstantiated claims that he would never lose an election because he held strong spiritual connections to divine powers capable of swaying public opinion in his favor. However, the result of the December 2016 election not only showed “the weakness of Jammeh’s perceived mysticism of his position of authority, but also powerfully demonstrated that politics in its basic form is a social contract. Only through the people can a regime change be affected… The mystification of the presidency has played out in Jammeh’s favor because it made Gambians believe that elections will never succeed in affecting a regime change. The paradox, however, is that his agreement to conduct a free and fair election in The Gambia backfired, and ultimately led to his downfall” (Sanneh,
Forced out by the ECOWAS military intervention following the election, he currently lives in exile in Equatorial Guinea.

Although the sudden regime change ended the 22 years of tyranny and dictatorship in the country, the most interesting question that surprised many political scientists is that, given Jammeh’s firm grip on the political system, his control of the military and economic system in the country that placed him at an advantage over fractured opposition parties, why would Jammeh organize an election that he could lose? Who are the people who voted in this presidential election, and what were the issues they considered in casting their votes for the opposition coalition parties over Jammeh? Were voters concerned about issues like the economy and human rights abuses, or the ethnicities of the candidates? These questions will be explored in the later section of this dissertation, but, first, there must be an examination of the broader scope of The Gambian economy and its challenges under the Jammeh administration that led to this historic election.

An Overview of Gambian Economy Under the Jammeh Administration from 1994 to 2016

The Gambia has a small economy with very limited natural resources. The country’s economy relies heavily on agriculture, tourism, taxes, and remittances from Gambians abroad. Not only is the country among the smallest on the globe, it is also among the poorest in sub-Saharan Africa. According to the human development index, Gambia ranks 174th out of 189 countries globally as the least developed (HDI, 2019). The World Food Program (2018) shows several economic hardships, ranging from rising food insecurity to poverty and malnutrition among the populace. The unemployment rate in the country for youths, according to Gambia
Bureau of Statistics, was at 13.28% in 2015 and slowly dropped to 12.33% in 2018 (GBOS, 2020).

The economy under the Jammeh leadership faced many challenges, although the Jammeh government does not single-handedly bear responsibility for the lack of economic diversity in the country. The 30-year PPP government under Jawara that preceded Jammeh did not perform well either in setting up a solid foundation for a robust national economy. Following the coup d’État in 1994, The Gambian economy, which was based on foreign aid, suffered a significant reduction due to imposed sanctions by Western donors who put pressure on the military junta to organize elections and hand over power to civilian rule.

The British government led this effort, having realized that a huge portion of the country’s economy was based on tourism. Given that most tourists were holiday visitors from the UK, Great Britain issued a travel advisory for its citizens against visiting the Gambia following the coup. During this difficult transition period, Jammeh had no choice but to seek financial support from non-Western governments such as Libya, Taiwan, and Cuba, as well as Nigeria under the Abacha regime, to cater to the immediate financial administrative needs of the country, while continuing to negotiate the conditions put in place by Western donors before aid would be restored.

Jammeh’s APRC government, having realized the economic challenges facing the country, structured an ambitious economic policy called the Vision 2020 Blueprint. The primary goal of this policy was to transform the Gambian economy by diversifying its ability to generate revenue, encourage competition, and successfully integrate The Gambia into a global economy.
This policy document, among other things, also aimed to boost the agricultural sector to attain national food self-sufficiency (Saine, 2009). However, while Vision 2020 impressed on paper, in reality, it was a far-fetched dream that did not materialize.

The agricultural sector is the largest economic activity in the country, and according to Action Aid (2018), more than 70% of Gambians earn their living through farming. Groundnuts are the main crop grown for commercial purposes; however the value of groundnuts as a cash crop over the years has declined drastically due to a combination of factors, ranging from low prices in the world market, erratic rainfall in the country, and migration of youth from rural to urban areas and Europe in search of non-agrarian and white collar jobs. Gambia has a huge farming potential. Over half of the country is supplied by freshwater from the Gambian River and there is adequate arable land which, in some areas is underutilized and suitable for commercial agricultural activities that could feed the population and stop the importation of foreign rice. The Jammeh government, having tried to lure investment in agriculture, was not able to attract domestic and foreign investors willing to engage in large-scale, private sector-led, commercial agricultural activities. The reasons for this failure will be explored and discussed later.

Another challenge faced by the agricultural sector in The Gambia is that it depends heavily on seasonal rainfall. Rain often lasts for three months but guarantees no adequate water supply to farmers. Farmers have neither the necessary tools nor technical training required for them to explore various methods of irrigation that will ensure continuous availability of adequate water for their farms during the dry season. Most of the agricultural activities center on subsistence farming, a type of farming where families grow food merely for consumption.
The Jammeh government tried several methods of addressing the country's food sufficiency without success. Jammeh's infamous “operation feed yourself” policy goal aimed at mechanizing the agricultural sector. The government imported tractors and fertilizer and distributed them to farmers across the country as a measure to boost the national economy by encouraging grassroots participation in agriculture. In 2011, the national economy was also hurt by an invasion of locusts that destroyed crops throughout the country. The loss reminded the government that agriculture, with all its economic benefits, was a generally unsustainable venture, because of the unpredictable circumstances in rainfall patterns and natural disasters. Jammeh’s Feed Yourself government initiatives failed, despite there being a huge population engaged in agriculture and the availability of land and water. Gambia could not produce enough food to feed its population, and remained dependent for its main staple, rice, on importation from other areas of the world.

Over the years, Gambia has shifted drastically from being an agriculturally based economy to a service one, with tourism rising as a main foreign-exchange earner for the country. Tourism generates as much as all other sectors combined and is a major contributor to employment; however, tourism is also a seasonal activity, as the sector faces short-term economic challenges when European is not wintering. Seventy-five percent of the tourist arrivals in the country are between November and April: it is estimated that “a record number of tourists rose from 57,231 in 2003 to 142,626 in 2007” (Perfect, 2010, p. 56), bolstering Gambia’s place as a major tourist destination in West Africa.

The country’s reliance on tourism has exposed its vulnerability to unpredictable global circumstances. For example, the 2014 Ebola outbreak seriously affected the Gambian economy,
exposing it to the danger associated with basing a nation’s economic future on seasonal tourist operations. Many European countries issued citizen advisories against traveling to West Africa at the epicenter of the outbreak. As a result, Gambia experienced a significant drop in the number of tourists due to Ebola outbreak.

Aside from the fact that the Gambian economy was highly vulnerable to external circumstances, like the Ebola outbreak, one of the problems faced by The Gambian economy under Jammeh was the high number of debts owed to both domestic and international creditors. According to the IMF, the “domestic debt relative to GDP increased slightly to 34 percent of GDP as of the end of 2012, and this was primarily caused by higher government expenditure that surpassed national revenue. The fiscal indiscipline was result of high domestic borrowing, and interest on debt continued to consume a large share of government revenues with a 22½ percent increase in 2012, of which 18½ percent was used to finance domestic debt” (IMF, 2013, p.13).

To address the government deficit and high indebtedness, the IMF and World Bank agreed to include The Gambia with other countries receiving help from the High Indebted, Poor Countries (HIPC) initiatives. Through the HIPC aid, Gambia obtained US$66.6 million in 1999. This money was agreed to be paid partially dependent on the government’s willingness to fulfill the monetary conditions laid out by IMF. “Out of the total commitments, US$8.0 million and US$6.0 million was delivered as interim assistance to the Gambia government” (IMF, 2008, p.8).

As a tax-based economy, a huge amount of The Gambia’s GDP is generated from taxes. Although, many efforts have been made to synchronize the country’s tax base system, the government has not yet been able to figure out an efficient mechanism to collect taxes nor how
to increase the revenue generation capacity of the state. In a move to solve this problem, the Gambian government introduced a value-added tax (VAT) on imported goods. This taxation policy is laudable considering the loss of revenue in the country due to the unstructured taxes and regulation system. However, the lack of transparency and presence of corruption in public enterprises made it much more difficult for the country to collect taxes effectively.

Other factors existed in the country that made it harder to conduct business and improve The Gambia’s sluggish economy. The presence of a dictatorship made it difficult to attract foreign investors. Jammeh ruled The Gambia with an iron fist. Even though his government claimed to have a free-market policy, government invention to forcefully regulate the market was a common practice. Jammeh occasionally issued statements threatening to shut down businesses that he accused of engaging in objectionable business activities, such as hiking the prices of consumer goods. The rule of tyranny destroyed business confidence and despite the fact that the Gambian environment was lucrative for business ventures, many businessmen/women did not feel confident to invest for fear of reprisal by the government and the potential for loss of their investment.

Similarly, the judicial system under the Jammeh administration was heavily politicized and many investors were aware of the danger of doing business in a country where the judicial system was controlled by the government. On the Forbes (2018) list of the countries for the best business, The Gambia ranked 155 out of 160 countries considered suitable for running a business. Consequently, it was more difficult for the country to attract investors, as the report cited problems such as bureaucratic red tape, corruption and judicial partiality further diminishing investor confidence. A case in point was the government’s abrupt termination of a
sand-mining license granted to an Australian company, Carnegie Minerals, saying that “the company failed to correctly report the quantity and value of its mineral exports from Gambia” (Reuters, 2008).

Finally, the most recent troubling economic challenge faced by the Gambia was the mass exodus of its youth going to Europe searching for greener pastures. The “back way,” as the journey is locally called, is a risky venture, estimated in 2014 to have resulted in more than 5,267 deaths of people trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2016). The Gambia, despite being a small country, has been one of the major sources to irregular migration to Europe. In 2016 alone, the IOM reported that 11,929 Gambians arrived in Italy by boat, a 41% increase from arrivals in 2015 (IOM 2018).

There were many reasons responsible for the large-scale emigration of youths: “the lack of jobs and opportunities in rural and urban areas, the lack of adequate support to farming, which is being badly affected by climate change and because they see a better life in Europe” (Action Aid, 2018). Another factor, political in nature, involved Gambians' fleeing from tyrannical rule and oppression of political opponents by Jammeh. Jammeh’s intolerance of dissent led to many people fleeing the country for fear of their lives and seeking political asylum in Western countries. Evidently, this mix of economic and political factors has restructured the Gambian national economy to a more remittance-based economy, as Gambians abroad constitute a major source of revenue for the country. “These remittances averaged US$181 million a year during 2013-15, equivalent to around 20% of GDP, one of the highest proportions in the world” (Action Aid, 2018). Most expatriate Gambians send money home to their relatives, which, in many significant ways, helped sustain the country’s economy under Jammeh.
In the 2016 presidential election, however, Gambians succeeded in voting out the government of Yahya Jammeh, raising the question as to whether the economy was a contributing factor that led to a regime change. Given Jammeh's poor handling of the country’s economy for 22 years, how much of a factor did the economy play in affecting voting outcomes that favored the opposition coalition parties? To answer this question, independent research was conducted to collect and examine the opinions of Gambian electorates who took part in the 2016 presidential election. An important aspect of the research was to determine the extent to which consideration of the economy was a factor in how voters chose to cast their ballots in the election.

Before proceeding further into an analysis of Gambian voters, it is important to first explore various perspectives on the theory of economic voting and how it affects electoral outcomes in a democratic nation. A dominant view among many scholars in political science is that the economy plays an instrumental role in influencing electoral outcomes in a democratic nation where the polls are generally perceived as free and fair. Voters will reward an incumbent candidate with re-election based on economic performance, while punishing him/her when the economic condition in the country is bad by denying the candidate the vote. Furthering this argument, presented here are three major theoretical frameworks for electoral practice, egotropic, socio-tropic, and communo-tropic, and the investigation of how these various theories inform the importance of economy in an election.

The Electorates' Assessment of an Incumbent Based on Economic Performance
Ego-tropic electoral practice is a kind of voting where an individual allows his/her personal economic circumstances to dictate the votes. It is a situation where a voter's decision to support an incumbent candidate in an election is contingent upon his/her status of income. A voter may support an incumbent's bid for reelection if his/her economic situation is strong and, likewise, will vote against an incumbent candidate when his/her economic circumstances are weak. An ego-tropic voter is a self-assessed electorate whose decision to reward or punish a candidate is primarily based on the evaluation of his/her economic standing as opposed to having a general assessment on how robust or weak the economy is doing for everyone in the society under the current president.

Ego-tropic voting is a myopic electoral assessment where a consideration of the individual's self-economic gains is greater than that of the larger society. Since election is a democratic means that empowers the citizens with a voice to freely choose their leaders, it is also true that the policies that public officials institute differently affect individuals and various groups of the society. Therefore, in deciding how to vote, a person may not be concerned by how well or bad the economy is doing for everyone but rather vote for or against an incumbent based on his/her personal assessment of government policies and how they have aided or abated his/her economic condition.

Socio-tropic voting on the other hand, is a type of voting assessment where electorates primarily examined the general socio-economic situation in the country to determine how government economic policy affects the broader structures of the society, rather than just few individuals. An election serves as a tool to inform the electorates as well as help them assess the economic policies of an incumbent candidate to determine how their administration’s policies
advanced or harmed the economic wellbeing of the citizens. Therefore, if the incumbent has done well nationally on the economy, voters will reward him/her with re-election, while when the national economy is in a bad shape, the incumbent is punished and removed from office. Socio-tropic voting behavior is primarily based on voters' collective assessment of government economic performance, with a view that the economy has a potential to shape the electorates' voting behavior in a country.

Finally, communo-tropic voting is an assessment where an incumbent candidate is punished electorally, not because of his/her handling of the general economic condition in the country, but rather due to a proven electorate's disapproval on the government's handling of an economic policy that affected a specific region in a country. A country’s economy may be strong nationally, but voters who experience a weakening economic situation in a particular area may decide to punish an incumbent on the ballot and hold him/her responsible in solidarity with individuals of the affected region. For instance, “If conditions within a city affects the presidential approval among residents, this would demonstrate a communo-tropic preference” (Rogers, 2014, p. 8).

In sum, the importance of the economy in influencing voting behavior of electorates is a widely accepted concept by many scholars in political science. Equally, various forms of economic voting, such as ego-tropic, socio-tropic and communo-tropic, were explored in this section to deepen understanding of the types of economic assessments Gambian voters considered when they voted in the election. In examining the voting behavior of Gambian electorates who participated in the 2016 presidential election, and given the economic circumstances under Jammeh’s administration, how much of an effect does the economy have, if
any, influenced the votes toward the opposition coalition candidate? Which theoretical framework better explains the voting behavior of Gambians who took part in this historic election? These questions will be discussed later in detail, but first, a layout of the background leading to the presidential election is provided.

The opposition coalition in The Gambia included seven political parties that came together to compete for the elections against Jammeh. These parties, despite their divergent ideological dispositions, agreed on a coalition to pursue two goals: to win the election and remove Jammeh from office. Common concerns, raised by the leaders of the opposition, justifying the need for a single coalition against Jammeh, were that human rights abuses in the country were rampant, the state of the economy was deplorable, and election reform was urgently needed to guarantee a free and fair election. Aside from the fact that Jammeh was a dictator who had ruled the country with an iron fist, using fear and intimidation to silence his political opponents, many opposition leaders accused Jammeh of having received help from his Jola ethnic groups.

The opposition leaders alleged that Jammeh’s government turned a blind eye on ethnic crossovers that allowed foreigners, most of whom came from his co-ethnic Jolas residing in the Casamance region of southern Senegal, to vote in Gambian elections. This raised concerns of ethnocentric voting that had favored Jammeh electorally during the 22 years his regime lasted. Hence, three main issues were raised by the coalition for the 2016 presidential election: the concerns over human rights' abuses; the status of the Gambian economy under Jammeh; and allegations of ethnic voting. Were these issues the most significant factors for Gambian
electorates who took part in the presidential election? First, it is important to explore the issue of human rights in the Gambia during the 22 years of Jammeh’s leadership.

The Scope and Systematic Human Rights Abuses Under the Jammeh Administration in the Gambia

The concept of human rights is a politically charged issue for governments. The primary debate on human rights focuses on two essential but contentious principles: universalism and cultural relativism. While some countries, primarily western cultures, advance the idea that human rights are universal and transcend national boundaries and cultures, others, mainly non-western nations, support a culturally relative approach to human rights consistent with local customs and traditions.

Ever since the proclamation of universal human rights in 1948, members of the United Nations have unanimously agreed to advance the course of human rights and to prevent any form of human suffering wherever it may occur. The UN Declaration of Human Rights notes, “we the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed our faith in fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of the human person and the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom” (United Nations, 1948).

The Gambia not only signed the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights but also ratified the regional protocol enshrined in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. These human rights institutions rely on the tenet that, regardless of differences in cultures and ways of lives, there are shared core principles of human rights that are inherent to all humans. According to Hughes (2011), human rights uphold the principles of human liberty, guarantee
freedom that is irreplaceable, and protect human vulnerability to suffering from oppressive governmental systems. Human rights, which protect individual freedoms, grant equal opportunities for all people to live their lives in full dignity so that they can realize their potentials.

The concept of human rights has two main theoretical perspectives, which also explain various frameworks under which these rights are advanced around the globe: universalists and realists’ approaches to human rights. The universalists describe the individual as consisting of a network of global citizens who are represented by various political systems that transcend national boundaries. Universalists, according to Donnelly and Whelan (2018), comprise multiple actors such as individuals and non-state actors working together to promote and protect human rights. This view of human rights looks to advance broader human rights freedoms irrespective of cultures and to enjoin states with the responsibility to protect fundamental individual freedoms without limitation to cultural differences.

The realists' perspective, on the other hand, examines the issue of human rights as an exercise of power and security, which is the primary factor that dictates the nature of international politics. The realists hold the tenet that, due to the egoistic tendencies of humans coupled with the anarchic nature of the global system, states have no choice but to rely on themselves for protection. Based on this concept, the realist has portrayed human rights as a tool used by powerful nations to exercise their power and dominance over weaker states, essentially, an ideological weapon. As result, many states often reject the universalists approach to human rights in support of cultural relativism that advocates for observing human rights based on existing cultural norms and values of the state.
However, the weakness of the cultural relativists approach to human rights is premised on the fact that oppressive regimes around the world often use culture and national security to justify suppression, abusing the rights of citizens and their political opponents. This was the case in The Gambia under the Jammeh regime.

In The Gambia, human rights under Jammeh's 22 years of leadership were marred by allegations of systematic terrorizing and wide-ranging, state-sponsored human rights abuses of Gambian citizens. These abuses are too many to be documented here, but Jammeh’s leadership depicted a realist’s approach by justifying power to enforce and compel compliance for preserving the survival of the regime against any opposing political force. However, to provide examples, several instances of human rights' abuses are explored here to allow a better examination of how these abuses influenced the electoral outcomes in the 2016 presidential polls that resulted in a regime change in The Gambia.

On November 11, 1994, a few months after the successful overthrow of the PPP government, a counter coup d'état was launched involving senior members of the Gambian armed forces under the leadership of Basirou Barrow. In connection to the coup, 40 soldiers were arrested, detained and summarily executed by the military junta without any trial. This act of "jungle justice" contrasted sharply to the junta slogan of "soldiers with a difference," but it served as a reminder to any soldier who tried to remove the existing government, that they would be executed in cold blood. The murder of the alleged coup plotters began a dangerous trend towards human rights abuses in the country, a time also characterized by fear and intimidation of political opponents. A power struggle between members of the military junta led to the arrest of Sanna Sabally and Sadibou Hydara on allegations of trying to assassinate Jammeh, the
chairperson of the junta at the time. These individuals were arrested, subjected to all kinds of torture and as a result, Sadibou Hydara lost his life under government custody.

The human rights abuses of members of the military did not stop there. In 2006, several soldiers under the leadership of former army chief colonel Ndour Cham were accused of plotting a coup d’état against Jammeh. Bunja Darboe, Wassa Camara, and Tamsir Jasseh, together with civilian associates, were arrested and charged with carrying out a plot to overthrow the Jammeh government. The group was found guilty by the courts and their sentences ranged from 10 years for those accused of concealing treason to life imprisonment for the ringleaders of the coup.

Although the above-named individuals were alleged to have undergone torture and mock executions to extract forced confessions while in detention, they were at least accorded a court trial. Their associates, such as Daba Marena, the former National Intelligent Agency (NIA) director, and some of the soldiers arrested in connection to this coup, were never brought before a court of law, and were widely believed to have been executed by the government. At the time, the state media reported that Marena and the others had escaped while being transported to another prison, but many human rights advocates challenged this narrative, describing it as a cover-up to prevent the public from knowing what actually happened to these individuals.

In 2011, another group of senior military officials and some businesspeople were arrested and charged for trying to overthrow the Jammeh government. Contrary to other alleged coups d’État in the country, this one was widely rumored to be a false pretense for the regime to purge powerful military elites whom Jammeh considered a threat to his government. This group of soldiers included a former Gambian army chief, Lang Tombong Tamba, Kawsu Camara, and two
other business associates, Abdoulie Joof, and Yusuf Essiden, a Lebanese national. They were all sentenced to death by the high court in Banjul.

Jammeh's human rights abuses against Gambians was not limited to soldiers as ordinary civilians had their freedoms curtailed by his repressive regime as well. A case in point occurred on April 14, 2001, when a group of students staged a peaceful protest to demand justice for one of their colleagues who was believed to have been tortured to death by the police. The security forces responded with force and fired live bullets into the crowds, killing 14 students and injuring several others. Due to external pressures, the government launched an investigation to determine the circumstances surrounding the killing of the students. At the end of this inquiry, the Jammeh government decided to offer amnesty to both the victims and perpetrators of the crime. To the surprise of many victims and their families, no single police officer was brought to justice in connection with the death of the students. This incident clearly indicated that the Gambian government was not only complicit in widespread human rights violations of innocent civilians, but also reminded people that the government was willing to brutally suppress the people’s rights to freedom of protest. The demand for justice on behalf of the students from human rights organizations within and outside the country fell on deaf ears. The prevailing atmosphere in the country served as warning to its citizens of a continued, dangerous trend towards selective justice and state-sponsored terror.

In 2009, the Gambian government ran witch-hunting (not a metaphor, here) exercises wherein villages were raided by the government security and arrested many civilians who were accused of having committed acts of witchcraft. It is important to note that animist beliefs are a part of some traditions in the country. Amnesty International estimated that that up to 1,000
Gambians were kidnapped by government-sanctioned "witch hunters" and detained in secret government detention sites (Amnesty International, 2009). These people were forced to drink an herbal concoction that caused them to hallucinate and some died. In a similar bizarre encounter, Jammeh set up a traditional treatment program when he outrageously claimed that he had a cure for HIV/AIDS. In this program, many of the patients who were undergoing scientifically based HIV/AIDS treatment were forced to abandon taking diagnostic medicine for that prescribed by Jammeh. This was a fatal mistake. Most of them died.

In 2005, a group of Ghanaian migrants who were planning to travel to Europe via Gambian waters was intercepted by a rogue element of the Gambian security forces who accused them of being mercenaries planning to overthrow the government of Yahya Jammeh. These people were rounded up and summarily executed by the Jammeh regime. No proper investigation determined the credibility of these allegations (Saine, 2009, p. 22).

To further oppress and intimidate the citizens, the government set up an elite paramilitary group known as “the Junglers” who ran a wide-ranging network of terror and conducted arbitrary arrest and detention of innocent civilians perceived to be critical to Jammeh’s leadership in the country. This group, linked to many high-profile killings of political opponents, was widely believed to be directly carrying out orders from the President’s office. Also, a similar security agency of the state that oppressed and tortured the regime's political opponents was the infamous National Intelligent Agency (NIA), a state body directly controlled by the office of the President. The NIA also ran detention facilities on its premises where detainees were allegedly tortured to force confession before they were dragged to court.
Jammeh’s war on the free press started just a few months after the military takeover in 1994 when he ordered the closure of the Daily Observer for publishing an article considered critical of his government. The owner, a Liberian national, was deported to his country while several other Gambian journalists connected to the story were arrested and detained. The Jammeh government had a sustained effort to repress media freedom. As a result, many journalists in the country were under constant intimidation, arrest, and detention. Saine (2009) describes the scale of the junta war on press freedom as systematic, state-sponsored violence never seen before in the history of the country. The goal was for the state to censure the press, control the narrative, and prevent journalists from informing the population of government policy.

In 2003, several journalists from the Independent News Paper were arrested and detained at the NIA for publishing an article critical of the government, while others received death threats. In the same year, three unidentified men forced their way into the premises of the Points Newspaper, overpowered the security guard on duty, tied him up, and set the place on fire. The government's tactics of harassment and intimidation of journalists failed to censure the private media houses. In 2004, the chief editor and co-founder of the Points Newspaper, Dayda Hydara, was assassinated in what was widely believed to have been an ambush by members of Jammeh's military hit squad while he was on his way home. Although the government denied any involvement in the killing of Dayda, no independent investigation was launched to determine the cause of death (Amnesty International, 2014).

This incident created a public outcry that prompted international pressure led by the European Union, the United Nations, and the United States on The Gambian government to
investigate the murder and to bring perpetrators to justice. Several human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, also amplified their voices, calling on the government to uphold its commitment to the universal declaration of human rights and to protect freedom of the press in the country. Despite all the pressure ramping up against the regime in Gambia to protect the human rights of members of the media, no commitment was made by the government to protect the freedom of the press in the country. Many of the journalists, in fear for their lives, had no choice but to flee the country to seek asylum either in Europe or America.

Thus, the media was one sector that suffered widespread abuse during the 22 years of Jammeh's administration, characterized by state-sponsored arrest of media practitioners and indefinite detentions without trial, crippling the nation’s access to impartial information. There were also reports of arbitrary arrests of journalists, instances of torture, and frequent disappearances of media practitioners under the state custody, which cast a dangerous and deplorable condition for a free press in the country. Jammeh's intolerance to freedom of the press is evident in a statement he made threatening journalists: “If you think you can collaborate with the so-called human rights defenders and get away with it, you must be living in a dream. I will kill you and nothing will come out of it” (Human Rights Defenders, 2009). Jammeh was intolerant of dissent. His regime sustained an effort to clamp down on freedom of expression by closing down private media houses, dragging journalists to court on charges of libel and sedition, and jailing them for publishing stories critical of the government.

In 2007, the Ghana-based Media Foundation of West Africa filed a lawsuit at the ECOWAS court on behalf of Musa Saidykhan, a Gambian journalist who had accused the
government of torture while in detention by the notorious NIA. The court ruled in favor of the plaintiff and ordered the Gambian government to pay a total sum of US$200,000 to Saidykhan in damages for violating his fundamental human rights. The court also reached similar conclusions relating to human rights abuses carried out against other journalists by the Gambian government, ordering payments to the families of the late Ebrima chief Manneh and Dayda Hydara, who died defending press freedom in The Gambia (CPJ, 2010).

The human rights abuses carried out by the Jammeh administration were not limited only to the members of the media fraternity. The opposition parties also suffered significant arrest, harassment, and intimidation at the hands of the security forces by Jammeh's orders. Jammeh often branded the opposition political parties in the country as enemies of progress who would never be able to defeat him in the election. This may have been true, given his regime's firm grip on every sector of the political system, placing the opposition parties at great disadvantage. However, in the count down to the 2016 presidential election there were several occurrences that would significantly shape the political future of the country.

In 2016, a group of opposition activists from the United Democratic Party (UDP) under the leadership of Solo Sandeng took to the street in a peaceful protest and a show of defiance to promote public awareness of the need for electoral reform in the country. Solo Sandeng and his group argued that the current electoral law placed the opposition at a disadvantage and should be changed to ensure a level playing field for all political parties in the country. They opposed the newly enacted law of first pass the post and advocated for a return of absolute majority of 50 plus one and a runoff if any of the competing parties did not secure more than 50% of the votes.
The protesters had carefully chosen Westfield as a center to launch their demonstration because of its strategic location in the middle of a vibrant urban center in hopes of attracting large crowds and to send a powerful message to the government in support of their proposal on electoral reform. The security forces rounded up the protesters and whisked them away for detention at the infamous NIA office. These individuals in the course of their detention were subjected to all kinds of torture, and Solo Sandeng, the leader of the protest, died in state custody. This incident triggered a response by the international community and human rights organizations demanding that the Gambian government investigate the circumstances surrounding Solo Sandeng’s death and bring the culprits to justice.

As pressure both domestically and internationally continued to mount on the government, a group of opposition supporters primarily from the United Democratic Party (UDP) and under the leadership of the founder Oussainou Darboe led a solidarity protest demanding the unconditional release of Solo Sandeng from custody, dead or alive. Jammeh’s rogue forces again descended on these peaceful protesters, arrested them, and detained them in the state’s central prison. They were later charged for holding a protest without a permit, which, if found guilty, would result in a minimum sentence of three years in prison. During this heightened environment of political tension that occurred in the six months leading up to the 2016 presidential election, the opposition parties were more united than ever to affect a regime change in the country.

However, given the electoral reality on the ground, the opposition recognized that it would be impossible for a single opposition party to win the election over the incumbent without forming a coalition to present a single flag bearer to collectively compete against Jammeh in the polls. Uniting opposition parties in The Gambia to compete against Jammeh had been a
frustrating process in prior elections given their failures to reach agreement on a single individual who could represent the coalition of broad oppositions. This moment presented an opportunity they could not afford to lose particularly given the many Gambians in the diaspora who had promised to fund the campaign of the opposition parties if they agreed to form a coalition. In this deal, six political parties – UDP, NRP PDOIS, GMC, PPP, GDP – and one independent candidate agreed to form the coalition. Through a congress, all parties reached a deal to choose Adama Barrow from the United Democratic Party as the flag-bearer. Barrow was chosen to lead the coalition for a number of reasons. For one, following the arrest and incarceration of Oussainou Darboe, the UDP leader and his party executives by the security forces, Barrow was nominated to head the party on Darboe’s behalf. Secondly, the UDP, being the largest opposition party in The Gambia at the time, was viewed as having a stronger influence among coalition delegates, securing the selection of Barrow to lead the opposition parties to the polls.

Human rights abuses under the Jammeh government were a systematic and widespread practice that aimed at instilling fear and intimidation in the nation’s people. The 22 years of Jammeh’s leadership was a reign of terror for The Gambia, marked by arbitrary arrest, detention without trial, and disappearance without a trace against regime opponents. These events were indiscriminately carried out by the state, affecting all sectors of the Gambian population. Some were able to escape, leaving their country to seek asylum in Europe or the United States. Too many paid the ultimate price through the loss of their lives at the hands of the regime.
Chapter 5

Ethnic Voting On the African Continent

Ethnicity plays a very important role in African elections. Many scholars who have studied the voting behavior of African electorates have indicated that ethnic cleavages critically influence political mobilization of the masses and their voting preferences during elections. Why do African electorates vote base on ethnicity? As complex as the answer to this question appears to be, this section focuses on advancing several underlying factors that shape the voting behavior of African electorates to reflect the cleavage structure. The first premise is that every nation has an underlying political cleavage structure. Given that fact, one must understand the socio-cultural formation of a society where identities are formed and how these identities manifest in the wider political spectrum of the society to create various forms of group solidarity based on either racial, ethnic, or class identities. As a matter of fact, every nation has a unique political culture and distinct historical experience that influence the ordering of a political society.

In Africa, the legacy of colonialism, a historical factor, has significantly shaped the current ethnic division dating back from foreign rule to modern-day, post-independence political structures. The internalization of the externally induced ethnic division, primarily by Britain under the policy of indirect rule, which politically empowers some groups against the others, has led to the establishment of a political culture that influences the electoral behavior of the masses in a way that reinforces the existing political system. Thus, in African countries where ethnic division is prevalent in the society, ethnic cleavages will be used for political gains because they have proven not only to beneficial but also an effective means for voters to secure political goods from the election of a co-ethnic member.
Secondly, a nation's demographic structures may influence voting behavior of the voters in ways that reflect ethnic solidarity in support of a candidate. In studying African countries with a heterogeneous population, such as Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast etc., analysts have shown that the voting behavior of the electorates tends to be formed along ethnic and regional alliances. In their study, Horowitz and Long (2016) have argued that geographical clustering of voters leads to the creation of “ethno-political enclaves,” which enables the electorates to vote within the proposed enclave. Voters in a heterogeneous population are divided along geographical distances based on their locations in the country. A wide regional difference in the country presents serious challenges to voters in accessing information about other political candidates and allowing them to rely on those available in their regions to make informed voting decisions. Due to a lack of information, these voters tend to focus on regional/ethnic cues in support of a candidate and may overestimate their candidates’ chances of a victory, even if such a person has a zero chance of winning nationally in an election.

Finally, another reason ethnicity plays an important role in African politics is that political structures in Africa are riddled with patronage practices that offer rewards for electoral loyalty to some groups in the society while punishing others for lack of support in terms of the benefits they could rightly have. In many African countries, the reality is that access to political goods is linked to political support. The politics of ethnic segregation continue to affect the political structures of the societies by increasing the prospect of inter-ethnic rivalry and conflict among various groups as they compete for limited state resources.

Similarly, many African countries have yet to set up a meritocratic system where individuals are awarded political positions based on their proven qualifications. Given the
absence of such a system, people will naturally be inclined to evaluate their voting preferences based on the existing ethnic cleavage structures of a country because ethnic loyalty is proven to be politically rewarding for those who engage in it. The danger of voting based on cues of ethnicity is that it leads to the formation of political alliances in society based on ethnic identities politicians exploit these social divisions by offering favors to some groups while depriving others access to governmental resources and social advancement.

Thus, the current structures of African political systems reflect intentional ethnic politicization and favoritism, which offers political rewards to some members in the society while denying others access to government services and programs. In their study of ethnic favoritism, Frank and Rainer, (2012) advanced three perspectives to explain why African leaders engaged in ethnic-cleavage politics. First, the concept of altruism denotes a leader’s willingness to extend favors by distributing political benefits, such as constructing roads, building hospitals, and schools, as well as awarding government contracts to certain groups of individuals as a bargaining tactic for their political support and loyalty and as they may constitute an essential political force to help the leader winning an election.

Such a leader may carefully target one ethnic group in a country that forms the majority, different from his/her own ethnic group to use them in building a political base. This candidate may be reluctant to reach out to other groups and strategically focus his or her energy and political capital on winning the support of the majority groups in the country. Thus, altruism, in this sense, is strategic in the sense that it is not meant for the person to feel good about the act of giving; rather this generosity is political in nature, the purpose for which is to rally support from an influential group to win an election.
Voting is a game of numbers: the more a candidate obtains, the greater the chances of electability. Thus, in a political environment that is marked by ethnic division, where tribal affiliations are strong among the voters, a politician may rely on a majority ethnic group as a viable political base that would offer greater chances of winning, assuming the person is able to transform such ethnic loyalties into votes. It is important to note that altruistic political patronage may boost the ego of a politician, especially when using successfully completed developmental programs as evidence of effective leadership in a campaign. However, altruism may be a self-destructive political venture when such gestures do not translate into votes in an election.

Another perspective is that a politician may change from politicking along ethnic lines when a person understands that it is not only dangerous but also morally wrong to single out one ethnic group to distribute government resources yet deprive others. In examining the demographic characteristics existing in many African countries, it is fair to say that no candidate can comfortably win an election by receiving votes from a single ethnic group without support of the other ethnicities. Hence, to maximize a contestant's chances of victory, a leader may not have a choice but to appeal to masses of the electorates in a way that transcends the boundaries of one single ethnic group. Moreover, in places such as South Africa, establishing universal adult suffrage has expanded voting rights to various groups. Blacks, disenfranchised during apartheid, have recently been allowed to vote as a means of promoting broader political participation by all citizens in choosing leadership in the country. Therefore, ethnic politicization and division are less likely to succeed in a democratic state with a pluralistic demographic population. The politics of ethnic division in a country creates chaos and political instability, which, in turn,
creates a fertile ground for the emergence of dictatorship -- as we have seen in Nigeria, Sudan, Cameroon, etc.

Finally, the *quid pro quo* model -- “I do you a favor, and, in return, I expect you to do me a favor” means a leader may strategically implement projects in some areas of the country by specifically targeting members of her/his ethnic group for developmental aid. These are visible political goods, such as constructing roads, building hospitals, accessing electricity etc., with the expectation that these favors will, in turn, transform into votes in an election. The *quid pro quo* model differs from the concept of altruism wherein leaders tend to distribute political goods to the people with whom they have no common ethnic or cultural relationship. Political leaders in this model understand their audiences as a group of people with whom they share similar ethnic background and strong cultural ties and relationships, with the expectation that their political favors will be returned in kind through votes.

How do the demographic characteristics of a nation influence the electoral process, that is, ethnocentric voting more likely to take place in a country with a heterogeneous population than in a homogeneously political society? African countries with a homogeneous population face different challenges, which are often not related to ethnic politicization and division. This is mainly because a homogeneous society has a strong cultural tie that unites the population irrespective of ethnic, religious, and cultural differences. African countries with a homogeneous population are often small countries, and it is occasionally difficult, if not impossible, for politicians to divide and distribute political goods to a section of the population while isolating others. These countries, due to their small sizes, have close, harmonious relationships among various groups in ways that promote solidarity and collective dependence for all.
As a homogeneous political society, The Gambia fits this case study. I am investigating the voting behavior of Gambians to show how the electorates manifested their preferences for a candidate in the 2016 presidential election. Have ethnic cues influenced the electorates' voting preferences in this historic presidential poll? Before I answer this question, let me first outline the ethnic compositions of the Gambian population to examine how Gambians have voted in the past presidential elections.


The Gambia has eight major ethnic groups: Mandinka, Fula, Wolof, Jola, Serer, Sarahule, Manjago, and Aku. The estimates from the 2013 Population and Housing Census have shown that the Mandinka form the dominant ethnic group (36%), followed by the Fula (22%), the Wolof (14%), the Jola (11%) and the Sarahule (8%), whereas 9% represents the Serere, Aku, Manjago, as well as other groups of foreigners residing in the country (GBOS,2014). Since The Gambia attained independence from Britain, the country has always been known to abide by a multiparty, democratic system. Although periodic elections were organized that allowed all ethnic groups to take part in the electoral processes, the voting behavior of Gambian electorates has never been studied until recently. Before I examine regional voting outcomes in the country, let me first illustrate the locations of Gambian ethnic groups according to regions of the country.
The above figure shows the distribution of ethnic groups by proportion according to regions of The Gambia. While there is no region exclusively inhabited by one ethnic group, a distinct pattern of distribution around the country shows a high concentration of one ethnic group over the others. The Wolof, for instance, are located along the North Bank Region, the Sarahule ethnic group dominates the residents of the upper region, the Jolas are heavily concentrated in
the West Coast Region, and the Fula in the Central River Region; the Mandinkas, the majority ethnic group, are widely distributed around the country.

One major challenge to electoral democracy in Africa has been the fragmented regional/ethnic concentration, which is usually a catalyst used by politicians to engage in pitting one group against the other during elections. The Gambia's demographic characteristics, despite showing a much greater disparity in ethnic concentration across regions of the country than elsewhere in Africa, have presented a special vulnerability to ethno-centric voting behavior among electorates. Evidence from The Gambia's past presidential elections appears to contradict any evidence of ethno-centric voting. To justify this claim, I deem it necessary to explore three major presidential elections that were organized by the Jammeh administration.
Figure 1: The Results of the 2001 Presidential Election in the Gambia.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Mean of Bah</th>
<th>Mean of Darboe</th>
<th>Mean of Dibba</th>
<th>Mean of Jammeh</th>
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<td>Kuntaur Admin Region</td>
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<td>Basse Admin Region</td>
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Source: IEC

Figure 1 shows a distribution in the 2001 presidential election over eight administrative regions of the country. Five major candidates had competed in this election: each of them hailed from different ethnic groups in The Gambia. Jammeh, the incumbent, was from the Jola ethnic minority. Bah was Fula, which is the second ethnic majority, while Dibba, Darboe, and Jatta were from the Mandinka, the majority ethnic group. Although ethnicity has been presumed to have influenced voting preferences in Africa, the results of this election indicate clearly that ethnicity was not a major factor in Gambian voters’ support for a candidate.
Even though Jammeh was from the Jola ethnic minority, which is heavily concentrated in the West Coast region of the country, he was able to defeat his rivals in all other regions, which were heavily populated by the Fula, Mandinka, and Wolof. The 2001 presidential election is significant in that this was first democratic election to be held in the country since the military coup d’état. 2001 was the year when the electoral franchise was expanded to allow the participation of the pre-coup parties, which had been previously banned by the military from taking part in the first organized presidential election.
Figure 2 shows the regional distribution of votes among the three main candidates, who competed in the 2006 presidential election. While Ousainou and Halifa were from the Mandinka and Wolof ethnic group respectively, Jammeh was from a Jola ethnic minority. The results showed an overwhelming regional support for Yahya in ways that transcend ethnic and linguistic
barriers in the country. This also proves strongly that Gambian voters are less concerned about the ethnicities of the candidates. If ethnicity had been an issue for Gambian voters, I argue, it would have been impossible for Yahya to win an election in the country, given that the Jola ethnic group is demographically in the minority.

Therefore, to understand the voting behavior of the masses of Gambian electorates, evaluating their voting patterns in the past presidential elections is crucial to determining the charge of ethnic biases in voting preferences. However, the evidence from the 2006 presidential polls has also shown that ethnicity was not a factor in the voting of Gambian electorates. The evidence shows a landslide victory for Jammeh cutting across all major regions and breaking all ethnic barriers in the country.
Figure 3 shows the regional distribution of votes for the 2011 presidential election in The Gambia. This election, as history would have it, became the last presidential election that Jammeh would win over the opposition. One surprising sign is that Jammeh’s proportion of votes in the major regions of the country appears to be much wider than in earlier elections, which showed a strong political dominance in popularity of his party over the opposition. Also, given regional variances in ethnic distribution of the Gambian demographic population, ethnicity does not appear to have caused a major hindrance to Jammeh, expanding his base of political support. As the results in Fig. 3 show, Jammeh defeated Darboe and Bah in their ethnic-
dominated regions like Janjanbureh, Basse, Kuntaur, and Mansakonko administrative regions that are heavily populated by Mandinka and Fula ethnicities.

Based on the evidence presented by the Gambian political development and by my investigation of past electoral behavior, it is obvious that, while ethnicity has shaped voting choices elsewhere in African countries, the voting preferences of the Gambian electorates show contrast. Gambian voters are less concerned about the ethnicities of the candidates than they are for the issues they cared about; they will vote for a candidate who delivers political goods that will benefit the entire society and not just a selective few based on ethnic or tribal affiliations. Having explored the voting behavior of Gambians in the past presidential elections and having established that the peoples' votes were not influenced by cues of ethnicity, the central question this dissertation addresses becomes: Why did Jammeh lose the 2016 presidential election in The Gambia?

In The Gambian election, the opposition coalition, after many years of trial and failure, managed to affect a regime change in the 2016 presidential election. The change raised several important questions that defy conventional wisdom: Why would a dictator organize an election only to lose it? What issues did Gambian voters consider when they voted in this election? Six months after this historic vote in my country, I conducted a nationwide survey to examine the opinions of Gambians who took part in the polls. I wanted to determine whether the election was based on issues more so than on ethnicity. The results and the implication of this study are extensively discussed in this paper.
Chapter 6
Methodology and Results of the 2016 Presidential Elections in the Gambia

In this project, I used field survey data and conducted direct interviews of Gambian voters who took part in the 2016 presidential election six months after the end of this historic vote. This dissertation investigates three main factors: Jammeh’s handling of the national economy, the alleged human rights abuses by his administration, and whether the Gambian electorates had based their voting preferences based on ethnicities of the candidates. These three main variables are crucial to understanding the surprising electoral outcome in the country wherein a coalition of opposition parties successfully defeated a dictator in an election that he organized.

This study has two main goals: to explore the voting behavior of Gambian electorates who took part in this election and to investigate the issues they had voted upon that led to a regime change in the country. Did ethnicity play a role in Jammeh’s loss in the 2016 presidential election, and, if so, to what extent did it favor the opposition coalition candidate, Adama Barrow? Also, if the election was based on issues, how much of a factor was the status of the Gambian economy, as well as mounting allegation of human rights' abuses during Jammeh’s leadership in the country influenced the behavior of voters in this presidential election?

For this project, I conducted a nationwide survey of the Gambian electorates in six major administrative regions in the country. I enlisted the support of five students from the University of The Gambia and gave them two days training exercise in accordance with standards research procedure on how to administer field survey without harming subjects. This training included translating survey questionnaires into local language for participants who could not read and
understand English language, how to seek their consents, and to ensure that voters responses remain anonymous throughout this exercise. In this exercise, I randomly selected five polling stations, and I administered questionnaires to a randomly selected total of 944 people who had voted in the 2016 presidential election. This survey could not cover every single polling station, but by random sampling, I am confident that these data are comprehensive and that the results from this survey are extensive enough to draw a generalized conclusion.

The main hypothesis in this inquiry was to assess whether the condition of the Gambian economy, alleged human rights' abuses under the Jammeh administration, or ethnocentric voting contributed to a regime change in The Gambia.

**H1: The condition of the economy in the country contributed to Yahya Jammeh's losing 2016 the election in The Gambia.**

Why did I choose the economy as a unit of analysis? I focused on the economy and evaluated the effects it has on the voters' feeling of the candidate due to the importance the economy had in this election. Therefore, using the theory of spatial voting, I argue that political parties would strategically organize and focus on issues, which they have an advantage to galvanize public opinion in support of their policy positions. Gambian opposition-coalition parties had one primary goal: defeat Jammeh.

Hence, in order to achieve this goal, the opposition leaders had to focus on exposing the weakened status of the economy and to make a case for how Jammeh’s failed economic policies had created a worsening economic crisis in the country, which resulted in a high rate of unemployment, especially for youths. The group also promised to transform the country’s economy and create more employment opportunities for Gambians, many of whom were
migrating in mass to Europe through a risky and dangerous journey, locally known as “The Back Way.”

H2: Yahya Jammeh’s Human Rights’ record contributed to his loss of the presidential election in The Gambia

On the issue of protecting fundamental human rights of Gambians, Jammeh’s government was widely accused by human rights’ organization such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch to have engaged in a state-sponsored abuse of the rights and freedoms of Gambians. Jammeh had ruled the country with an iron fist, including jailing and killing journalists for writing articles critical to his government. He had ordered arrest and detention of political opponents; his elite paramilitary is accused of carrying out indiscriminate torture and enforced disappearance of innocent Gambians. He ruled the country through fear and intimidation of the masses.

Jammeh ruled the country for 22 years and periodically agreed to organize elections. One important distinction was the scale of human rights’ abuses of opposition-party executives in the 2016 presidential polls compared to all other elections in the country. The death of Solo Sandeng while in government custody and the arrest and detention of the United Democratic Party and its supporters a few months into the presidential polls galvanized a sense of support and unity among opposition parties in the country. This unification resulted in the formation of the coalition of opposing political alliances to jointly compete in the election against Jammeh. The opposition parties were, for the first time, able to set aside their political differences to jointly compete in the election as a united front using Jammeh human rights’ violations in their campaign platform in canvassing votes.
H3: Ethnocentric voting contributed to Yahya Jammeh’s loss of the presidential election in The Gambia.

Finally, I will examine the concept of ethnicity and how that has factored into the voting choices of Gambian electorates. Votes based on ethnic cues have been studied for a long time by many scholars; they have previously studied the voting behavior of African electorates and concluded that ethnicity plays a significant factor in voting choices. While it is true that electorates in many African countries tend to respond to cues of ethnic identities, the voting behavior of the Gambian electorates have never been examined. This research addresses this gap.

The results and analyses are discussed below.

Figure 4: PERCENT OF THE TOTAL VOTES FOR THE THREE CANDIDATES

*Figure 4 Percent of the total votes for the three candidates*
Figure 4 shows the percentage of votes for the three candidates in the presidential election. Among the people in the survey, 49% indicated that they had voted for Adama Barrow, the leader of the opposition-coalition parties; 39% of respondents said they had voted for Yahya Jammeh, the incumbent. Only 15% voted for Mama Kandeh, who stood as an independent candidate in the race. These results are not the actual representation of the exact electoral outcome as presented by the Independent Electoral Council but are limited to the opinions of the people who took part in this research project. My finding shows that the election resulted in a simple-majority win for the opposition leader over the incumbent. This is strikingly like the outcome of the polls in the general election as presented by the Independent Electoral Council (IEC, 2016). Jammeh lost the election to Adama Barrow, and this research has in no ambiguous terms dismissed all speculations advanced by some of APRC supporters, who have argued that the votes were manipulated and rigged against Jammeh by biased officials of the electoral commission in favor of the opposition. Thus, the credibility of my research relies strongly on the similarity to official election results as presented by the IEC, which showed a lead in the polls by 43.3% of votes for Barrow, who secured a 3.7 margin of victory over Jammeh, the incumbent, who had obtained 39.6% of the votes. Kandeh received 17.1% of the total votes.
Figure 5: MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE IN THE ELECTION

Gambians were asked to show the most important issue they considered when they voted in the presidential election (Figure 5). Given the significance of the economy, human rights’ abuses and Jammeh's policy of unilaterally changing The Gambia into an Islamic State prior to the election, I consider it necessary to present these issues to gauge the opinions of Gambian voters. Among all other issues presented in the survey, 61% of the people stated that they based their votes on the economy of the country, whereas only 22% of the people stated that human rights concerns were the primary issue for them. On the policy of transforming Gambia into an Islamic state, only 2% of the participants expressed support, while 5% of the people showed that none of these issues was a factor in their votes. Although the economy emerges as the issue most often mentioned by voters in the survey, as the No. 1 issue that they had considered when they
voted, it is not clear which of the candidates they had voted for or against in relation to the question of the economy in the country.

Figure 6 The second most important issue in the election

Participants were asked to indicate the second most important issue (after the economy) that they considered when they voted in the last presidential election (Figure 6). On the issue of human rights, 61% percent of the people stated that they based their votes on human rights' considerations, while only 25% of the people voted in favor of the economy. Also, 2% of the participants based their votes on the candidate’s ethnicity, whereas only 4% voted in favor of Gambia's becoming an Islamic State. Essentially, the pattern of issues is changing from the economy to human rights and to ethnicity as questions have been presented on a scale of importance. Human rights appear to dominate the second framing of questions, but it is also not
clear how the voters evaluated their support for a candidate in this election based on this issue. To address this problem, I utilized a crosstab to show the distribution of the electorates' support of a candidate based on the issues identified in the survey.

\textit{H1: The condition of the economy in the country contributed to Yahya Jammeh’s loss of the election in The Gambia.}

![Figure A](image_url)

\textit{Figure A 1 Most important issue in the election}

Figure A summarizes the survey results based on how respondents voted when they also indicated that the economy was the issue of greatest importance. For those who indicated that the economy was the most important issue, 29\% voted for Barrow. The statistical inference to be drawn from this result is that the people who voted for Barrow were convinced that the Gambian economy would be better for them under the Barrow administration than under the incumbent
Jammeh administration. In contrast, Jammeh received 27% of the respondents’ votes who had indicated that the economy was the first issue they had considered in the election. Only 11% of the voters supported Kandeh on the basis of that the economy was identified as the most important issue.

The results indicate that consideration of the economy has emerged as an important factor in influencing the electorate choices for all the three candidates in the 2016 presidential election. However, it is also fair to conclude that the results suggest a more polarizing outcome, mainly between the supporters of Jammeh and Barrow on this issue. The results indicate that, while the condition of the economy may not have favored the people who voted for Barrow, Jammeh’s supporters appear to have been satisfied with the status of the economy under his administration.

Why are Gambian voters polarized on the issue of the economy and how has this polarization factored into their voting preferences of candidates in the 2016 presidential election? The Jammeh administration undertook some measures of economic policy in the country that might have benefited certain sections of Gambian voters.

Jammeh, himself, operated a network of business enterprises called the Kanilai Family Farm, where basic commodities; food, clothing, and agricultural products; were sold to Gambians in a much lower price range compared to market prices. These goods were occasionally distributed to the people free of charge. Rice, the main food in the country, was widely used by the government to strengthen its political base. Critics have argued that this small-scale social policy of donating essential food commodities to the populace deflected from the state's inability to create a sustainable economic policy that would benefit Gambians in the long term. Under Jammeh, the country continued to experience increased unemployment. One
sector particularly impacted was the youth who were emigrating in large numbers to Europe in search of ‘greener pastures.’ Jammeh’s administration may have failed to establish a robust economic policy to improve their livelihoods especially. So, while his government’s redistributive policies, e.g. providing short-term food aid to the local populations, were popular among some Gambians, who according to the survey favored Jammeh’s handling of the economy, did not benefit all.

Given the importance voters attached to the economy, Jammeh lost the election, in part, because of his handling of the economy that favored some groups while depriving others, possibly driving voters to support to the opposition camp. This is also consistent with Hypothesis 1, which states that the condition of the economy in the Gambia contributed to Jammeh’s loss.

*H2: Yahya Jammeh’s human rights record contributed to his loss of the presidential election in The Gambia.*
The results of the second hypothesis (Figure B) shows human rights as the second most important issue Gambian voters considered in the presidential election and the candidate for whom those respondents cast their votes. For voters who indicated that human rights was the second most important consideration in the election, 35% of the participants in the survey voted for Barrow, 19% for Jammeh and 9% for Kandeh.

The result demonstrates that a fairly large number of people who voted for Barrow were increasingly concerned about human rights abuses under the Jammeh administration, more so than for those who supported Jammeh on the same issue. The conclusion I draw from these results is that Barrow's supporters were by far more dissatisfied with the Jammeh administration's handling of human rights during the 22 years of his rule, while for Jammeh
supporters, the alleged human rights abuses under his administration did not negatively influence their votes. Regardless of the disagreement held by the Gambian electorates on this issue, most of the respondents who voted for the opposition have indicated human rights' abuses as the second most important issue determining their votes.

The issue of human rights posed a shift in voters' support, overwhelmingly in favor of the Barrow, the opposition candidate. The results indicated that the number of people who were concerned about human rights violations under Jammeh outnumbered those who supported him based on the same issue in the election. This result indicates a clear indictment by the voters on Jammeh’s poor handling of human rights in the country. Based on this result, it is fair to conclude that Jammeh lost the election, mainly because of the human rights' abuses carried out on the population by his government during his 22-year reign in The Gambia. This finding also supports the second hypothesis: Jammeh lost the election because of his poor handling of human rights in The Gambia.

_H3: Ethnocentric voting contributed to Yahya Jammeh’ loss of the presidential election in the Gambia._
Figure 7 illustrates the survey respondents’ votes based on their own ethnicity for the three candidates who ran in the presidential elections. Jammeh is from the Jola ethnic group, Barrow from the Mandinka, and Kandeh of the Fula ethnic group. Since the presidential contenders were from different ethnic backgrounds across the country, did ethnic considerations influence Gambian voters in their support for candidates in this election? To answer this question, the distribution of votes is sorted among the three contenders and evaluated according to the survey respondent’s ethnic identification.

The results indicate an increasing support for Barrow by those who had identified themselves as belonging to the Mandinka ethnic group. Jammeh also received outstanding support from people who had identified themselves as belonging to the Jola ethnic group. The
results show that the Mandinka and Jola overwhelmingly voted for candidates who represented their ethnic backgrounds. Ethnocentric voting alone, however, did not generalize voting behavior of the entire Gambian population. In fact, more Fulas voted for Jammeh than for Kandeh, who hails from the Fula ethnic group. Also, Jammeh received more votes from the Mandinka ethnic group in the election than from any other ethnic group beside the Jolas, despite the fact that Barrow, who is Mandinka, was in the race. Finally, Kandeh received more votes from the people who identified themselves as Mandinka than those from his own ethnic group.

Therefore, it is evident that the Gambian electorate was drawn to issues and their perceptions of human rights and the economy were stronger factors that determined their voting preferences more so than ethnocentricity. Although the electorate was polarized on the issue of the economy in the country under Jammeh, their views on human rights clearly conveyed their disapproval of the Jammeh administration and resulted in his loss in the 2016 Gambian presidential election.
In the above regression analysis, I compared Gambian voter's support for Barrow and Jammeh, the two leading contestants in the 2016 presidential elections. I also examined votes of those identifying with either the Mandinka or Jola ethnic groups relative to their candidate preferences and determined that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between being Mandinka and voting for Barrow. Likewise, there is a negative and statistically significant relationship between being from the Jola ethnic group and voting for Barrow. These
results show that the predicted probability of voting for Barrow is 15 percentage points higher for voters who identified as Mandinka than for other voters. Similarly, the predicted probability of voting for Barrow is -1.1% percentage points lower for voters who identify as Jola than other voters. There is a remarkable difference in preferences of votes between Jammeh and Barrow. While Mandinkas have shown favorability in voting for Barrow, Jolas demonstrated a strong preference for Jammeh.

Given Jammeh’s claim that the election was rigged against him by the opposition coalition, I asked Gambian voters opinion on the outcome of the 2016 presidential polls. There is a positive correlation between people who perceived the election was fair and their support for Barrow. The predicted probability of voting for Barrow is 1.9 percentage points higher for those who believe the election was fair. Additionally, on a seven point scale, I asked Gambian voters to indicate if they held the opinion that the country would be a democracy having successfully ousted Jammeh through the ballot box, abruptly ending his 22 years rule of tyranny and oppression in the country. As I argued elsewhere, organizing a successful election is not a guarantee that a country will be a democracy. Regime change has renewed Gambian voters’ optimism that the country would become a democracy, and this belief holds strongly among voters who supported Barrow in the election. For every one-unit increase in the opinion that the Gambia will be a democracy the predicted probability of voting for Barrow increases by 18% percentage points.

Finally, using a five point scale, I examined voters' trust for The Gambian security services during the political impasse in siding with the people and upholding the democratic votes. There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between voters' trust for The
Gambian security and their support for Barrow. With a one-unit increase in the number of voters who indicated trust in The Gambian security, the predicted probability of voting for Barrow increases by 13%, holding all other variables at their constant values.

Table 5 Multinomial Regression Analysis for the 2016 Presidential Election in The Gambia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Regression Analysis Using Barrow as the Baseline</th>
<th>Regression Analysis Using Kandeh as the Baseline</th>
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<td>Fula Ethnic Group</td>
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<td>Number of Observation</td>
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*** indicates p value < 0.05

In this section, I used a multinomial, logistical regression analysis to examine the three main issues Gambians have voted on in respect to the three candidates participating in the 2016 presidential election. The results are consistent with my hypothesis as I argued that the election
was issue-based and that the economy and human rights abuses were the main issues Gambian people have voted on in the election. On the question of the economy, Gambian voters were not only polarized, but there is no statistical relationship between vote choices on the economy. Hence, the regime change in the country cannot be attributed to a vote choice based on the economy. On the issue of human rights, however, there is a negative and statistically significant relationship between voters who were concerned about human rights abuses and their choices of votes. The predicted probability of voting for Barrow on the question of human rights is -.70% points higher than those who voted for Jammeh. In the same vein, voters who were concerned with human rights abuses in the 2016 presidential election were -1.4% less likely to vote for Kandeh or Jammeh in comparison with Barrow. Concern with human rights reduced the probability of voting for Jammeh or Kandeh. This finding supports the compelling argument that the 2016 presidential election in the Gambia was an indictment of Jammeh's poor handling of human rights in the country. Gambian voters who were concerned with human rights abuses in the country during his leadership have overwhelmingly voted against him in support of the opposition candidate, Barrow.

Given the importance of ethnic cleavages and its potential in affecting voting outcomes in African elections, I examined the votes based on the three main ethnic groups, the Mandinka, Fula, and Jola ethnic groups, evaluating how they voted for the presidential contestants who each hail from these three ethnic identities. The results show that a person who identified as a Mandinka is -1.33% percent less likely to vote for Jammeh and more likely to vote for Barrow (who is Mandinka). Similarly, for those who identified as Jola, the predicted probability of voting for Jammeh (who is Jola) increases by 2.84% relative to Barrow. Finally, there is a
positive and statistically significant relationship between being a member of a Fula ethnic group and voting for Kandeh (who is Fula) than Barrow. For an individual who identifies as Fula, there is a 1.71% increase in the predicted probability of voting for Kandeh over Barrow. Also, there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between being a Jola and voting for Jammeh over Kandeh and Barrow. For those who identified with the Jola ethnic group were 1.06% less likely to vote Kandeh and Barrow, than they are for Jammeh.

In sum, while Gambians who participated in the 2016 presidential election were split on the question of who would be best at handling the country’s economy, their responses on human rights show an overwhelming dissatisfaction with Jammeh’s government given the human rights abuses in the country, showing that this is one of the main reason why Jammeh lost the election. Although there was evidence of ethnic-based voting with Mandinkas supporting Barrow, Jolas voting in favor of Jammeh, and Fulas showing preferences for Kandeh, the results show that ethnicity was less of a factor than the issues for the Gambian electorates’ choice led to the regime change. There were also instances of cross-ethnic voting as shown with the Jolas preferring Kandeh to Barrow. Statistically, the results show that the election was primarily issue-based more so than ethnic considerations and the choices of Gambian voters on these issues that significantly impacted the outcome of the presidential race.
Figure 8 denotes a measure of the scale of agreement among Gambians on the question about whether the country will be a democracy following the abrupt end of the 22 years of Jammeh dictorial rule in the country. Democracy is a process that involves a complex form of governance. A country’s ability to hold peaceful and transparent elections signifies the fulfilment of one essential democratic principle, that of guaranteeing the voters the freedom to decide who will govern them. However, caution requires that the determination of a country’s democracy isn’t based on a single election that successfully ousted a dictator. In the case of The Gambia, the tyrant may be disposed, but the institutional mechanism in which Jammeh had relied upon to
abuse the rights of Gambians, such as the army, the police, and the infamous state secret agents (NIA), remain present and operational in the country.

Given this reality, the survey participants were asked whether The Gambia would become a democracy given the departure of Jammeh. The results here indicate 48% of Gambians strongly hold the opinion that the country will be a democracy, while only 11% had an opposing view that Gambia will not be a democracy following the end of Jammeh regime. Overall, the majority of the survey participants were optimistic that the country will be headed towards a democracy. Others, however, were cautious to arrive at this conclusion, perhaps for obvious reasons given the lack of institutional reforms that reflect democratic ideals. The Gambia’s experiment towards democracy is a process that will not only stand the test of time, but would also serve as a motivation for other countries to emulate, especially those currently experiencing dictatorial rule. In the midst of fear and intimidation, Gambian voters have defied all odds to electorally effect a regime change. The political events in The Gambia have sent a clear signal to voters everywhere that when the people are given the freedom to choose in a free and fair electoral process, the victory of the opposition over an incumbent government is possible. Election is a competition and the credibility of the polls will rely on the premise that both incumbent and opposition parties have equal chances of winning or losing.
The primary issues faced by Gambians under the Jammeh regime, are re-examined in respect to their influence on the voting decisions of the Gambian electorates. Clearly, Jammeh’s firm grip of power and intolerance of dissenting views created so many underlining problems and voters, fearing reprisal, could not openly discuss them given the climate of state sanctioned terror. This question was posed differently but close enough to the issues Gambian voters had considered in their choice of candidate in the election: what were the biggest problems in Gambian politics under the Jammeh’s administration? Consistent with the second hypothesis, 58% of the people indicated that human rights abuses were the biggest problem during the 22 years of Jammeh’s leadership, whereas 20% of Gambians stated that unemployment was the main problem. While the opinions of Gambian voters split on the question of the economy, an
overwhelming number of respondents indicated that they were concerned over the human rights abuses that were carried out under the Jammeh administration. Also examined was the variable of ethnic conflict, exploring whether there were underlying inter-ethnic grievances in the country. This exploration was based on the account that Jammeh, in one of his campaigns, had made disparaging remarks about the Mandinka ethnic group whom he accused of organizing a series of coup d’états that aimed to overthrow his government. Also, Jammeh had declared The Gambia as an Islamic state, prompting fears that the country’s Christian minorities would have their rights violated and increasing the prospect of religious conflicts in the country. The results of the survey indicated an estimated 5% of the people believed ethnic conflict to be a problem during the Jammeh regime, whereas 8% of voters had considered religious conflict as a bigger problem for that time period.
Figure 10 summarizes participant response to the question of what the priority of government intervention should be under the Barrow administration. Like any new government that comes into power, there are many sectors that must be addressed to improve the lives of the people. However, with limited resources, the government must prioritize areas to focus its policy formulation and intervention. Government policy will be effectively implemented when the opinions of the people dictates public policy. Based on this fact, Gambian voters were asked their priority preferences for the newly established Barrow-led government to focus. An estimate from the participants in the survey shows that 32% of Gambians wanted the Barrow-led government to focus its resources on reducing the unemployment ratio in the country, with 28% of the people indicating that the government’s priority should be on justice and reconciliation.
and to address those whose fundamental rights were violated by Jammeh’s regime. Also, since most of the Gambians sustain their livelihoods through farming, a noticeable 15% of Gambians want the new government to consider investing in agriculture. While an estimated 11% of respondents had preferred the government to invest its resources on providing quality and affordable education in the country, 11% indicated that they want the government to provide more resources to improve the health care system in the country.

Figure 11 illustrates the support for political parties in the Gambia, recognizing that the opposition parties consolidated in a coalition that successfully defeated Jammeh’s party. It is important to determine how much support each political party has among Gambian electorates, when broken down into single units. Exercising caution to the fact that party support is fluid and
not static and because of the rapid changes that could occur due to voters’ realignment and cross-carpeting in partisan position, the results presented here represent responses from six months after this historic vote in Gambia. The results show that 35% of Gambian voters said they supported Jammeh’s party, APRC, while 25% percent of the people said they supported the UDP party. Also, a fairly large number of Gambian electorates, 23% of the people in the survey, identified themselves as independent, or not being a supporter of any political party in the Gambia. This result is significant and also concerning for the future of Gambian elections in two ways: The APRC lost the election to the opposition coalition parties, but despite being defeated in the polls, six months post-election, the party still appears to be leading in the number of people who consider themselves members of the APRC.

The inferences garnered from this finding are that despite Jammeh’s party lost in the election, the APRC continues to be popular among Gambians. This evidence supports how closely contested the election was, as shown in Figure 4, and consistent to the analyses in Figure 13, where Gambians opined that the formation of the coalition was one of the main reasons why the opposition was able to defeat Jammeh in the polls. Therefore, if this trend holds moving towards the next election, this research predicts that, without a coalition approach, the APRC party will not only win the election, but also will continue to dominate the political landscape of the Gambia for a foreseeable future. Equally, the formation of the opposition parties was primarily to defeat Jammeh in the polls and the goals were achieved. The current political climate has witnessed the emergence of many newly formed parties that are preparing to contest for the 2021 presidential elections. Surprisingly, Barrow, the current president who led the coalition to victory as nominated by the UDP ticket, has since broken ranks with the UDP party.
founder and its members to form a new party, the National People’s Party (NPP). The other parties who came together and formed the coalition have also splintered and are all operating independently from one another.

Figure 12: WILL BARROW KEEP HIS PROMISE TO GAMBİANS

Figure 12 summarizes responses to the question of whether Barrow will honor his promise to step down after three years in government. Barrow was selected as the flag bearer of the opposition coalition to lead them in the elections against Jammeh. Part of the conditions laid down by these parties were that if Barrow wins, he would serve a three-year term and then step down to allow another election to be organized in which he would not participate. Interestingly, this agreement contradicts the Gambian constitution, which provides a five-year mandate for the president to serve in office before another election would be organized. The reason for this short-
term voluntary mandate, according to coalition participants, was to level the ground for all parties to compete in the next election. Based on this promise, the Gambians surveyed were invited to gauge their opinions on the likelihood that Barrow would honor the agreement made with other parties to step down at the end of three years. At the time of this study, 35% of the people indicated that Barrow would keep his promise and step down at the end of his three years in honor of the coalition agreement, while only 18% of the respondents disagreed with this statement.

![Figure 13. THE MAIN POLITICAL EVENT IN THE GAMBIA](image)

Participants were asked to indicate what the main political event in the Gambia was that contributed to Jammeh’s loss of the election (Figure13). There were several events that happened that could explain why Jammeh lost the election, such as the regime cracking down on the UDP
supporters who went to the street to protest for electoral reform. As discussed earlier, this group was led to the street by Solo Sandeng to protest the unfair electoral laws put in place by the Jammeh government to control the opposition and to make it difficult for them to win an election. The government moved swiftly by detaining and torturing the UDP supporters, leading to Solo Sandeng’s death in the custody of the Jammeh regime. This event was followed by another protest by the UDP opposition party led by Oussainou Darboe. Along with the leaders and members of the party’s executives, they demanded the release of Solo’s remains and other protesters who were remained under the state custody. The government responded by arresting and jailing the UPD party executives, some of whom were believed to have been tortured in detention. This event led to the subsequent formation of the coalition of the opposition parties to compete in the election against Jammeh.

Also, there were other developments in the Gambia related to migration, where a mass exodus of Gambian youths embarked on dangerous journeys attempting to reach Europe by crossing through the Mediterranean Sea. This journey, locally referred to as the “Back Way” while highly risky, is indicative that young people believe that better economic opportunities exist for them outside of The Gambia, in Europe, Kora and Darboe (2017). Among these social and political developments in Gambia, 45% of Gambians stated that the formation of the opposition coalition against Jammeh’s party in the election was the main political development that led to Jammeh’s defeat in the election, while 32% of the people stated that jailing of the UDP opposition supporters was the main reason why Jammeh loss in the 2016 polls. Nineteen percent of the people surveyed indicated that the death of Solo while in the regime custody was
the main political event that led to the downfall of the Jammeh’s regime. Only 5% thought that the mass exodus of youths contributed to Jammeh’s downfall.

Figure 14 The successes of the Jammeh regime in The Gambia

Surveyed voters were asked to indicate what some of the Jammeh administration achievements were in the Gambia during the 22 years of his leadership (Figure14). It is important to point out that, even though Jammeh's legacy in the Gambia was polarizing among voters, many people supported some of his policies. As the results above clearly illustrate, 50% of the people indicated that infrastructural development was Jammeh’s main achievement, while 25% mentioned education as one of the Jammeh administration’s successes. Why did the voters give Jammeh such a high rating on infrastructural development? Jammeh spearheaded massive
infrastructural projects in the country, building roads that connected major towns and regions. Jammeh constructed major referral hospitals and through his partnerships with the government of Cuba, supplied medical doctors in Gambian hospitals to facilitate the nationwide health care delivery. Before Jammeh came into power, under the 30 years of Jawara’s leadership in The Gambia, across the entire country, there were only three high schools and no university. Within a short period of time, Jammeh’s administration had built many high schools across every region of the country and made government scholarships available to students whose parents could not afford to send their children to school. His government also provided free basic and secondary education for girls to help discourage early marriage in the country. Jammeh established the first university in the country and provided government funding for over half of the students who were studying at the University of The Gambia. He built bridges across the country earning him the title ‘Babili Mansa’, a Mandinka term meaning bridge builder. Given these developmental gains in the country, it is not surprising that Gambian voters highly rate Jammeh’s performances in the infrastructural development of The Gambia.
The outcome of the 2016 presidential elections could have plunged the country into a civil war. Jammeh, who had initially accepted defeat, later changed his mind and threatened to nullify the results until another election was organized. He claimed that the opposition rigged the election against him. Jammeh’s refusal to abdicate power to the newly elected government led to a military intervention by the regional forces of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to uphold the electoral outcomes and restore democracy in the Gambia. Given this contentious political impasse in the country, some Gambians argued that the Gambian military would force Jammeh to step down and honor the vote by December 19, when his term constitutionally expired. Based on this assessment, the voters’ trust in the Gambian security forces was evaluated through this survey question (Figure 15), asking them whether they
believed the Gambian army would defend the electoral verdict of the people during the impasse and force Jammeh to leave. The voters opinions of the Gambian security forces were polarizing with 24% of the people in the survey stating that they never trusted the security forces to protect the vote, whereas, 25% of the people indicated trusting the Gambian security forces to do their job.

Figure 16 summarizes the expectations Gambians had for the Barrow’s government. Voters were asked to compare what they expect from this government compared to Jammeh’s regime. Sixty-five percent of the voters stated that things would be much better under Barrow’s administration and another 10% indicated that it would be somewhat better. Fifteen percent
combined, believed that the government would be either somewhat worse or much worse based on survey responses. While again it is important to remember that that this survey was taken six months after this historic vote, and that the opinions of voters could change at any moment, it is clear that the Gambian voters expressed strong favorable opinions of the Barrow government, with the expectation that things will be better under him than they were during the 22 years of Jammeh’s leadership.

Figure 17 illustrates Gambian respondents’ indication of whether they received their political news through social media. Kora and Darboe (2017) have argued that unlike any previous election, the emergence of social media (e.g. WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook) has
contributed to Jammeh’s loss of the election. This belief is premised on the fact that with the advent of social media, the Jammeh’s government lost its ability to censor and control information in the country. Gambian voters, for the first time, were not only able to access independent political news of events happening in the country, but the internet facilitated voters’ access to political news outside the country, which the government could no longer hide.

Given this reality, the voters were asked to indicate from which medium they received their political news. Examining the effect social media had on voter access to political information, 44% of the people indicated that they had received political news from social media, while 45% of the people said that they did not receive their political news from social media but through local radio networks. Gambian voters were polarized on the effect of social media in effecting a regime change in the country. Although, some indicated that political information they received through social media had influenced their voting preferences, other did not believe that social media had played a role in affecting their voting decisions.
Gambian voter respondents were asked to state whether the Independent Electoral Council (IEC), the agency responsible for organizing elections in The Gambia, was fair in the conduct of the 2016 December presidential elections (Figure 18). This question was asked mainly because Jammeh had complained that the IEC had connived with foreign powers to rig the elections against him. He demanded a recount and threatened to dissolve the IEC. Voters responding to this question showed that 38% of the people said they did trust that the elections results reported by the IEC were accurate and that the commission was not biased against Jammeh, whereas 63% of the people indicated they did not trusted the IEC and that results reported weren’t accurate to the electoral outcome, essentially supporting Jammeh’s claims that the vote was rigged against him.
Figure 19: CANDIDATES VOTES BY REGION IN THE GAMBIA.

Figure 19 summarizes the votes for each candidate by the six major regions of The Gambia. Examination of regional voting is an essential facet of this study, recognizing that the distribution of votes for the three candidates provides additional insights to Gambians’ voter behavior. First, across the six regions, a single, particular ethnic group inhabits none. While the Mandinka ethnic group is spread widely throughout the country, there is a significant presence of the Mandinka ethnic groups in the Lower River Region, and some parts of the North Bank Region. The Fula ethnic group is also sparsely spread out around the country, and more heavily concentrated in the Central River Region and the Upper River Region. The Wolofs are found in the North Bank, Greater Banjul Area and some parts of the Central River Region, while the
Sarahule ethnic group is predominantly inhabiting the Upper River Region. The Jolas are the main ethnic group in the West Coast Region of The Gambia.

Examining regional responses of the voters has shown that an overwhelming number of the people in the North Bank Region (NBR) have voted for Barrow over Jammeh and Kandeh. Jammeh, despite holding the advantage of incumbency during the election, has the lowest number of votes in the NBR compared to any other region in the country. Interestingly more people voted for Jammeh than for Barrow and Kandeh, in the West Coast Region (WCR), where Jammeh’s hometown is located. In the WCR, the proportion of votes for the were significantly lower compared to any other regions. While Barrow defeated Jammeh and Kandeh in all other of the five administrative regions, it is not clear whether Barrow’s victory was, in some way, influenced by the support from his Mandinka ethnic group. Given that no region is entirely occupied by one single ethnic group, and recognizing that there are some areas with higher presence of certain ethnic groups, the survey evidence of voters strongly supports the argument that ethnic voting was not the main reason why Jammeh lost the 2016 presidential election.
Figure 20 displays the age demographic of Gambian voters in the last presidential election. The highest median of voter age ranges from people who are between 18 to 40 years respectively. This result clearly shows that young people, age 40 and less, participated more in this election those older than 40, paralleling a demographic reality in the country with young people constituting 40% of the population. The Gambia, like many developing countries, have stunning low life expectancy ratios compared to more developed countries. This reality results in young people being a major political force in influencing electoral outcomes in the polls, provided that a party manages to energize them to vote. This survey provides clear evidence that the Barrow victory was strongly influenced by the mass participation of the youth whose votes resulted in a regime change. The irony here is that the youth comprise the groups facing serious
problems of unemployment in the country and are the same groups emigrating in mass, risking their lives, to go to Europe in search of greener pastures.

Conclusion

Studying the voting behavior of a group of people is a difficult exercise because the issues that influence voting choices vary and, at the time, could not be fully captured with a single analysis. In Africa, many scholars who have studied the voting behavior of the electorates have concluded that ethnicity is a factor in the way in which the people vote in elections. In this dissertation, I have advanced various factors as to why ethnicity is significant in African politics. Key among these reasons are: The concept of functionality, the idea that people tend to respond to ethnic cues in politics because they expect some kind of reward, the legacies of colonialism in African countries, and the effects of the colonial policy of divide-and-rule in which European powers intentionally empowered some ethnic groups while depriving others from political power, and, finally, the differences in political culture among African nations that have homogenous and heterogeneous populations and how they both respond differently to ethno-linguistic politics.

Through understanding why ethnicity is salient in African politics, I argue that analysts must explore historical effects, the politicization of the existing cleavage structure, and demographic characteristics of African nations, and must investigate how all these factors contribute in various ways to structuring the identity politics of most African countries. While I have no doubt that ethnic cleavages powerfully influence the voting behavior of electorates in
some African countries, this is not true for all other African nations. Research that aims at generalizing that African citizens vote based on ethnicity is likely misleading.

Hence, the evidence of this findings on the Gambian presidential elections strongly supports the argument that the election was issues-based: One of the most important issues that influenced the results in favor of the opposition was human rights abuses under the Jammeh administration. Even after controlling for ethnicity, human rights is a significant predictor of voting behavior and results has indicated that those who were concerned about human rights were more likely to support Barrow, than Jammeh. Ethnicity, although important for some, did not influence the overwhelming majority of Gambians who participated in this election. On the question of the economy, Gambian voters were split and as indicated by the survey results views of the economy did not help distinguish Barrow voters from those who voted for Jammeh. The electorates' support for human rights surpassed their considerations of ethnicity as well as the Islamization policy of Gambia under the APRC government, and that Jammeh lost the election primary based on human rights abuses. However, with Jammeh finally off the political spectrum in The Gambia, significant challenges remain in consolidating recent electoral gains to establish solid foundations for a thriving democracy to ensure good governance. My survey results indicated that most Gambians were optimistic about the prospects of their country under the new administration. This attitude is consistent with the emergence of a movement in The Gambia in support of the electoral outcome with the slogan, “Gambia has decided.”

It is one thing to decide. Fulfilling the promises upon which Gambians have decided is another. Therefore, politicians must deliver or run the risk of going back to the old way of doing business, a move that will contradict the wishes and aspirations of the people, who, despite a
climate of fear and intimidation, successfully effected a regime change that ended the rule by tyranny in The Gambia. The results of the Gambian election had a surprising outcome: they violated two theoretical assumptions often advanced by many scholars, who saw ethnocentrism as measures to examine voting behavior in developing democracies. Paul Collier (2009) argues that a dictator will agree to organize an election only when he is confident that he will win. Collier also noted that, in African elections, votes are often based on loyalty to ethnic identities rather than issues. Although these dynamics often play out in some African societies, clearly Collier’s arguments do not hold for The Gambia where a dictator had organized an election and lost.

Likewise, if votes were based on ethnicity more so than on issues, it is tempting to argue that in a free and fair election, Jammeh would not have been able to sustain the electoral victory for the 22 years that his regime lasted based on the theory that he came from one of the minority ethnic groups in the country. Clearly, the ethnic factor was less of a cause for a regime change in The Gambia than voters’ concerns about the economy and human rights abuses under the Jammeh administration.

Finally, having presented my evidence in the study of the voting behavior of Gambians, this dissertation has branched away from the existing consensus of ethnic voting many Africanists scholars wield to study elections in Africa. I am confident that voters in Africa, like those in advanced countries, despite the challenges of limited information and educational attainment, have the capacity to evaluate their voting decision based on the issues they care about, which ought not necessarily fall along a country's existing structures of ethnic cleavages.
It is true that ethnic cleavages exist in Africa as a distinctive multi-cultural make-up of the society; however, when politicized, a dangerous weapon is created that increases ethnic conflicts and divisions in many African countries. In The Gambia, we had a dictator who had ruled the country with an iron fist by oppressing all forms of dissent to his regime. If ethnicity strongly dictates the votes in the country, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for Jammeh, being from a minority Jola ethnic group, to win any elections in The Gambia, let alone rule the country for over two decades. On the contrary, it could have also been that Gambian electorates might have shied away from politicking along ethnic lines because of Jammeh's heavy-handedness and for fear of political reprisal by his dictatorial regime.

While this possibility is far from the scope of this dissertation, my conclusion remains that issues of human rights and economy, albeit quietly, stood out among Gambian voters more than considerations of the ethnicities of presidential aspirants who took part in the election. Whether this trend will continue into the future of Gambian politics in the post-Jammeh era will require the test of time. So far, the evidence of political development in Libya, and other countries where a dictator was ousted either through elections or popular rising of the masses, has shown increased ethnic tensions and chaos, creating a fertile ground for radical extremism and violence against innocent civilians.
Chapter 7

Examining Issue Voting in the 2018 Local Government Elections in The Gambia

Following the two years after the presidential elections, Gambians went to the polls again for the local government elections and this time around it was a contest for mayors of the two major cities. Banjul City Council (BCC) and Kanifing Municipal Council (KMC) are the cities constitutionally allowed to organize mayoral elections in the country. Consistent to the inquiry of the voting behavior of Gambian electorates at the national level, this study also examined the voting decisions of Gambians at the local government levels to determine whether voters have evaluated the choices of their candidate based on the ethnicities of the contestants or more so by the issues the candidates had promised to address if elected.

In this regard, a survey was conducted six months after the local government elections and the findings compared with the results of the presidential election to examine similarities as well as differences between local and national elections. Having taken into consideration that the city of Banjul and Kanifing municipality are faced with some common challenges, it is also true that the problems facing these cities are in some ways distinct and require different approaches. Based on this fact, the survey questions were carefully designed to capture these unique similarities as well as differences, drawing heavily drawing from the investigator’s study on the mayoral contestants as they presented the problems facing these cities and how they promised to address them.

Most importantly, these particular local government elections were historic in terms of the number of contestants who competed in the mayoral polls. This was primarily base on the fact that Jammeh, who held a firm grip on the political system in the country, had been removed,
injecting a new breed of political enthusiasm in the country. Many people who were previously afraid to contest for local government during the Jammeh era, came out in numbers to compete in these elections. In essence, the downfall of Jammeh brought a renewed interest in Gambian politics in ways not previously observed. Also, this crowded political field was much more representative of the country’s ethnic diversities, even more so than the presidential election, making it much more interesting for political analysis.

In investigating the voting preferences of Gambian voters in the local government elections, several questions were raised to guide the study: What were the issues the electorates had considered in the 2018 mayoral election? Who are the participants in this elections, and what are the issues have they voted on in this election? Did the ethnicities of the candidates influence the choices of the voters or were they more concerned with issues and voted based on those issues in support of their candidates?

**Methodology**

In the city of Banjul, nine people contested for the position of mayor. A numerical variable was allocated to each of the candidates and coded as follows: Rohey Lowe 1, Abdoulie Bah 2, Alagie Jah 3, Abdoulie Saine 4, Musa Njie 5, Paul Bass 6, Lizzi Eunson 7, Ebou Faye 8, and Adama Ba 9, respectively. Nine candidates also participated in the mayoral election in the Kanifing municipal council. For the purpose of analysis, numerical values were allocated to each candidate and coded as follows: Talib Bensuda 1, Bakary Badjie 2, Sherif Gomes 3, Rambo Jatta 4, Papa Njie 5, Adama Bah 6, Dawda Njie 7, Modou Jenkins 8, B Seghore 9.
The survey was distributed to a randomly selected number of people (N=206) who participated in the mayoral elections. This number of voters was selected based on the small size of city of Banjul compared to the Kanifing municipal council. Five locals were trained to collect this survey data, including how to present the questions and the required follow-through for proper research protocol. This included seeking consent by the participants, informing them that their participation was voluntary, and that in the event that one felt uncomfortable answering a question he/she could freely withdraw from the research without any problem. Also, training underscored the understanding that many voters were illiterate in the English language, requiring interpretation of the survey into the two most frequently spoken local languages in the country, Wolof and Mandinka to ensure participants fully understood the context of consent, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time prior to answering survey questions.

In this election, the candidates have raised several issues that are facing the two cities, which they promised to address if elected. The survey identified some of these problems and presented them to the voters in order to gauge their opinions on which issues influenced their votes in support of a particular candidate in the race. The city of Banjul and Kanifing share many common challenges. In this analysis the issues were coded as follows: ethnicity 1, education 2, revenue generation and collection 3, jobs for the youths 4, drainage system 5, garbage collection 6, sea erosion 7, road infrastructure 8, recreational facilities 9 and for those who indicated none of the above, 10.

While the challenges facing the city of Banjul and Kanifing municipality seem endless, the primary reason the above issues were included in the examination of voter choices is to first explore the extent to which ethnicity is perceived to have influenced the voting decisions of
some electorates. This advances the notion that if the voting choices are somewhat influenced by their cues of ethnicities, one would assume that the impact of ethnic voting would be much stronger in local government elections than the national election. This is premised on the understanding that the candidates in the local government election are not only more closely associated with the voters but also are more personally confronted with issues that affect people’s lives on a daily basis. The local leaders have a more direct relationship with the communities they represent and are occasionally well known to the people they serve. Would Gambian voters reflect on their ethnic cues when deciding their choice of a candidate in the local government election?

The two cities also are melting pots in terms of the diversity of ethnic representation in the country. The saying that ‘all roads lead to the city’ presents a real life experience in most African metropolitan areas, where opportunities for economic advancement is centered more in the cities than in rural areas, resulting in mass emigration of people from rural to urban centers in search of greener pastures. This problem also shapes the demographic characteristics of the cities, reflecting multi-ethnic diversities, in which all ethnic groups from across The Gambia appear to be highly concentrated. The ethnic diversity presents an opportunity for a robust analysis of the voting behaviors of a diverse section of Gambian voters and to determine whether cues of ethnic identities, or others issues unrelated to ethnic identities influences the choices of voters in the local government elections. This question will be examined later in this analysis.

The second issue examined is the educational opportunity available in the municipalities to address the needs of the citizens. In the Gambia, the education sector is mainly controlled by the central government. The local governments Banjul and Kanifing, however, have built schools
to complement the efforts of the central government, and to address the educational needs of their residents. Also, the most common schools operated by these municipalities in The Gambia are the skills centers, where vocational training is provided to those who have not completed school training them to acquire skills in the informal employment sector, as a way to address the rise in unemployment.

The third issue, the revenue generation and collection within the municipalities, is based on the need for Banjul and Kanifing to generate revenue through the collection of taxes from markets, neighborhood shops and compound taxes given they are not funded by the central government. Both cities do not have an electronic tax collection system that will facilitate their revenue generation and rely on municipal police to go from one business to another to enforce tax compliance for the city. This process is not only labor intensive but is riddled with corruption that has created significant loss of revenue for both local municipalities. How to effectively address this problem was a policy agenda the mayoral aspirants laid out in their convention speeches and will be further analyzed through evaluation of the voters survey responses.

Fourth, unemployment has been one of the biggest problems confronting the two cities. Despite the fact that local governments have limited resources they could use to create more jobs compared to the central government, all mayoral contestants noted that the increased unemployment of youths in both cities was a serious problem. The candidates for the mayors have weighed in on this issue with the promise that they will devote resources to create employment opportunities for young people. Also, this election coincided with the mass exodus of Gambians youths who were taking risky journeys to travel to Europe through Libya in search of better economic opportunities then could be at home. The journey, commonly known as the
back way, has resulted in estimates of over 35,000 Gambians arriving in Europe through irregular means between 2014 and 2018, according to the International Organization for Migration (2018).

Environmental health challenges are also problematic for these cities. One examined in this study was the drainage system, a major problem for both the city of Banjul and Kanifing municipality. The rural-urban migration has increased the population growth in urban areas and created substantial demand and congestion on the drainage systems of the two cities. This, coupled with the poor infrastructural planning, has blocked the free flow of water, sending sewage into the streets and creating a health hazard to local inhabitants. Similarly, growing population and urbanization has also caused challenges for the collection and safe disposal of garbage. Local municipalities lack resources to buy waste disposal equipment to effectively collect and dispose of garbage that is generated daily in the cities. Solid waste continues to pile up in the streets as residents have no alternative safe way of disposing of their wastes, further endangering the health of the populace.

Another environmental problem facing both municipalities is sea erosion. While the advancing sea levels have affected some part of the Kanifing municipality, especially in the coastal towns of Bakau, Tanji and Sanyang, the city of Banjul is located on an island that is believed to be under sea level elevation. Banjul has lost significant land base due to advancing water from the sea and in the 2005 the government of The Gambia contracted a company from Holland to address the problem. Similar efforts were made by the hotel owner associations in the country to plant coconut palm trees along the banks of the sea as a way to combat sea erosion of the shoreline. The road networks connecting the two municipalities are in bad shape, especially
during the rainy season and both cities lack recreational facilities for their residents to enjoy. All of these issues were presented to voters responding to the survey and their responses analyzed to determine which of these issues were important to in their choice of mayoral candidate. In this study, two main hypothesis are presented to investigate whether the local election was issue based or ethnicity based.

H1: In the 2018 mayoral elections in the Gambia, the electorates have evaluated their votes for candidates based on issues rather than on the ethnicity of candidates.

Consistent with the notion of ethnic voting, this hypothesis explores the voting decisions of Gambians to determine the basis upon which they made their electoral choices for a preferred candidate. Also, given the fact that at the local level voters are confronted with more immediate issues which directly affect their daily lives, one would assume that their needs associated with those issues would outweigh any ethnic identity considerations. This assumption is because on the sense that having a dysfunctional local government level impacts voters’ lives more significantly than it at the national level. This is not a diminishment of the importance of the national government’s ability to address the collective needs of the citizens, but given limited resources and in some cases, the central government may discriminate and channel its resources to places and regions of the country that are electorally viable while neglecting demands from others. The challenges faced by local governments compared with the central government, is that they cannot discriminate and intentionally exclude others from benefitting from public goods. Local government is held to different standards because it is not only closer to the people, but also must deliver basic services to them at the grassroots level. Based on the important role local
government plays in addressing the needs of the people, this hypothesis will explore which issues are of greatest concern to the voters for the local government to address.

**H2: In the 2018 mayoral elections in the Gambia, the electorates evaluated their votes based on the ethnicities of the candidates more than on the issues the candidates promised to address.**

This hypothesis will explore whether the Gambian electorates were responding to cues of ethnicities when they voted in the local government mayoral races. Unlike any other election in the history of local government, this poll has attracted many candidates who came from various ethnic backgrounds in the country to compete for the offices of mayor. Given the diversity of the contestants’ ethnicities, what were the most important issues the voters considered in these elections? We asked three ranked choice questions to guide this hypotheses. The reason for doing so is that there is a sensitive identity issue, and the investigator believed that survey participants were likely to dodge this issue when answering questions. Ethnicity in Africa, like race in the United States, is a divisive issue that many people tend to shy away. Just as a white voter in the US is less likely to openly indicate that he/she is supporting a candidate because the person is white for fear of being considered racist, in Africa, a voter may be reluctant to say he/she is supporting a candidate because of the shared ethnic identities. By asking the questions in three different areas, we expected to better capture the true issues that the voters cared about when they participated in the voting processes. We are confident that having presented a wide range of issues to voters and allowing them to decide on these issues, that their stated preferences were an honest reflection of their true choices in the polls.
Mayoral election in the Banjul City Council (BCC)

Figure 21. The Results of the Local Government Election in Banjul.

Figure 21 shows the distribution of votes among the candidates who participated in the election of the city. Rohey Lowe received 26% of the votes, while Abdoulie Bah, the incumbent seeking re-election had 17% of the votes. Adama Bah and Lizzi Eunson obtained 16% and 17% of the votes respectively. Ebou Faye had 11% of the votes, while Abdoulie Saine managed to emerge with 9% of the votes. Alagie Jah, Musa Njie, and Paul Bass all received less than 5% of the total votes in the election. Banjul, despite being the capital city of The Gambia and the seat of the central government power in the country, has always had a history of voting out the incumbent in the mayoral race.
Banjul voters are a well-informed electorate who, despite the 22 years of Jammeh’s regime tactics of instilling fear and intimidation in voters throughout the country, has remained firm in their choices to independently elect mayors who are not nominated by the ruling party. The example shown here of the incumbent party losing to the opposition in the mayoral election in Banjul had been a repeated occurrence throughout the Jammeh era, where Jammeh’s party chosen candidate was defeated in the polls by an independent candidate. Following, Jammeh's departure in the 2016 presidential election, Banjul voters made history again by electing its first-ever female mayor.

Figure 22 First issues for voters in Banjul

As stated earlier, many challenging issues face the city of Banjul. Like any other city in The Gambia, Banjul has many problems that cannot be captured in totality. For this study, nine
key issues were examined and presented to the survey respondents who participated in the mayoral election (Figure 22). In pursuance to the hypothesis of issue voting, participants in the survey were asked to identify one of the most important issues they had considered when they voted in the mayoral elections for the Banjul City Council. Given the range of issue alternatives identified by candidates in their manifestos as problems facing the city of Banjul, the survey invited voters to identify which of these issues was more important to them.

One of the primary issues Banjul voters considered in the election was employment opportunities for youth, and a resounding 40% of the participants in the survey indicated that jobs for younger Gambians was the most important issue they considered in choosing their mayoral candidate. Another primary issue that emerged for Banjul voters was the road infrastructure network in the city, with 18% of the survey participants indicating that they were concerned with the poor road network in the city and that their vote supported a candidate based on this issue. Fifteen percent of the Banjul voters supported candidates who had promised to improve the quality of education in schools of the city. Support for garbage collection, fixing the city drainage system, improving the city’s revenue generation capacity, and combating sea erosion, each fell below 10% as issues influencing voters’ preference for a mayoral candidate.
Voters were asked to evaluate the issues they considered as the second most important when they participated in the election (Figure 23). The reason for inviting these choices to vary as first, second, and third, enabled a better evaluation of the consistency of the choices the voters were making in the election but especially, a way to explore whether their preferences were influenced by cues of ethnic identities rather than concrete policy issues. In Banjul, 29% of the people who participated in the survey indicated that their second most important issue was improvement of the roads networks in the city of Banjul, including fixing broken streets, roads, and pedestrian walking areas and enhancing gutters to facilitate the free flow of sewage waste out of the city.
As discussed earlier that the city of Banjul is under sea level and despite numerous efforts taken by the government to construct roads networks within and outside of the city, the roads in Banjul usually have a very short life span before cracks develop. Most the roads that were built have washed away during the torrential rainy season as the soil becomes too wet to support the pavement. Support for youth’s employment remained high among participants as a second choice as well, with 27% of the voters indicating that they supported the creation of employment opportunity for the high number of jobless young people in the city of Banjul. There is a noticeable increase in support among the voters on garbage collection in Banjul with 19% of the participants in the survey indicating that garbage collection was the second most important consideration for them, whereas only 15% of the voters had expressed their concerns on fixing the drainage system of the city.
The final question invited voters to identify what the third most important issue was that they had considered when they voted in the Banjul mayoral election. Surprisingly, the two issues that garnered the highest responses for voters are uniquely linked. The need to rebuild the crumbling road network in the city was identified by 28% of the people, indicating they had voted in support of improving roads in Banjul. As with the roads being in bad shape, the same is true for the drainage system, which is mostly linked to the road network around the city of Banjul. An estimated 25% of the participants in the survey stated that the poor drainage system in the city was their third most important consideration when they voted in the election. The voters in Banjul consider the dilapidated drainage system as one of the primary causes of floods in the city during the rainy season. On the issue of garbage collection, 18% of the people...
considered it the third most important issue, while 15% of the survey participants considered improving the quality of education in schools around the city as their third most important issue.

Youth employment, while dominant as an issue voters have considered for their most- and second-most important issues, had 10% among the voters as a third most important issue.

![Figure 25: Support for political parties among voters in Banjul](image)

In this section, the support for political parties among the voters in Banjul is investigated. Despite there being a coalition of parties that defeated Jammeh in the 2016 presidential polls, by the time of the 2018 survey, the coalition was no longer in place as political parties that participated in its formation splintered into their respective parties. Although since the departure of the Jammeh regime in the Gambia there has been a resurgence of new political parties, this research is limited to parties that were in place during Jammeh’s regime and that have a
noticeable presence in the country. The parties include the APRC, UDP, GDC, PDIOS, GMC, NRP, GPDP, PPP, and a whole section of the Gambian voters who this research identifies as “independent” and have sworn no affiliation to any of the parties.

For Banjul, 25% of the people surveyed had indicated that they support the APRC, whereas 20% of the people in the survey said they supported UDP. An estimated 38% of voters in Banjul indicated that they were independent and have no affiliation with any of these parties, and about 9% of the people said they support PDIOS. Support for the rest of the parties among the people of Banjul falls below 5%. Also, Barrow, who is the current president at the time of this survey, was still a member of the UDP party, but has recently broken ranks with his old party to form his own party, the National People’s Party (NPP), and is preparing to run for office in the upcoming presidential elections. Although this survey could not capture the popularity of Barrow’s new party, surveyed voters were asked to indicate the candidates they expect to vote for in the next election and the results from that may enable inferences.

An important observation on support for political parties among the people of Banjul shows surprising popularity with the APRC party and even with Jammeh out of the country and in exile in Equatorial Guinea, it is evident that his party remains popular among the people of Banjul. The UDP came in second in terms of support among the people of the city and this was likely possible because of the incumbency the party was enjoying at the time with Barrow in the office. Now that Barrow has formed his own party, this research suggests that there would be a split in support between the NPP and UDP in Banjul, resulting in favoring the APRC in any future election.
In Figure 26 the survey participants indicated the candidates they will vote for in the next presidential election. A range of potential presidential candidates were provided in the survey to gauge the voters’ opinions and included: Jammeh, Barrow, Kandeh, Darboe, Bathily, Bah, Sallah, and Fatty, and also an option for voters to indicate “none of these candidates”. For Jammeh, 23% of the voters who took part in the survey said they will vote for him; similarly, 23% said they will vote for Barrow. Jammeh and Barrow are statistically tied in terms of support among the surveyed voters in Banjul, while support for Kandeh is at 18% among the people of Banjul. An estimated 14% of the participants said they will vote for Darboe, while 13% of the people said they support Sallah. Ten percent of the electorates in Banjul indicated that they have
no preferences for any of these candidates and wouldn’t be voting for them in the next presidential election.

Figure 27: Priority Areas for Barrows Government

Figure 27 summarizes survey respondents’ identification of the issue areas that the Barrow government should consider for priority intervention. Several issues were presented to the survey participants, ranging from employment, quality education, improving health care services in hospitals, agriculture, to combatting corruption in government. Reducing corruption in government and improving transparency in government institutions is the issue that 58% of voter respondents in Banjul identified should be the Barrow’s government priority, particularly given concerns that there is too much corruption under Barrow’s current leadership in the country. For those who supported government intervention on reducing unemployment, 21%
stated that they think Barrow’s government should focus more on creating jobs, while 17% of the people indicated that they prefer the government to prioritize the agricultural sector. Banjul voters, in more clear terms, appear to understand that no meaningful interventions will succeed in a government that is riddled with corruption. They have indicated that the Barrow’s government must be transparent and reduce corruption before they can address the issues of unemployment, agriculture, and improve health services in the country.

Mayoral election of the Kanifing Municipal Council (KMC)

![Figure 28 The results of the local government election in Banjul](image)

*Figure 28 The results of the local government election in Banjifg*

In the Kanifing municipal elections, nine candidates competed for the office of mayor. Out of this group of aspirants, Talib Bensouda, the candidate representing the UDP won the election with 50% of the votes, while Rambo Jatta of the APRC, came in second with 19% of the
votes. The results also show that Papa Njie and Adama Bah were statistically tied, each receiving 9% of the votes, whereas Backary Badjie, Dawda Njie, Modou Jenkins, Sherif Gomes, and B. Senghore obtained less than 5% of the votes. Mayor Bensouda's rise to power was fueled by the strong backing of the UDP party which, at the time of election, enjoyed a brief advantage of incumbency in President Barrow’s administration where key government positions were held by members of the executives of the UDP, including the vice presidency. However, by the time of this survey, there was a gradual divorce between Barrow and the party executives of the UDP through what is believed to have been an apparent power struggle. Barrow has since left the UDP, and recently formed his own party, the NPP. Barrow is now preparing to contest in the next presidential elections. The local government elections may have favored the current mayor of the Kanifing Municipality to remain in office. It is unclear, however, whether Bensouda will be able to retain his seat in any future elections given the recent split within his party and the potential weakening of its dominance in the region that may empower the support base of other parties to win the next election.
Consistent to my investigation of the primary issues which the voters have chosen in support of the candidates in this election, the Figure 29 shows that 62% of the survey participants said that the number one issue they had considered when they voted in this election was the employment for young people. This result mirrors that of Banjul, showing that the majority of people who participated in the polls were increasingly concerned about the rising unemployment rate for youth in the two cities. The voters’ support for the creation of jobs for the masses of young people trumped all other issues considered when they voted. While 18% of voters responding indicated they voted in support of an efficient revenue generation and collection in the municipality, voter’s support for all other issues was below 5%.
The second primary issue the voters of the Kanifing Municipal Council indicated was the collection of garbage with 24% of survey participants indicating that they voted for their candidate based on their position on the collections of waste generated by residents of the area. Waste collection and safe disposal have been a serious challenge for Kanifing municipality given that over the years, the city has not only increased in population density but has also expanded geographically and many areas that were not previously inhabited are now occupied. The city has not only had limited resources to purchase waste disposal trucks but has had difficulty securing a safe site for landfilling and recycling wastes generated by the city.

The current dumpsite is located in the middle of a town called Bakoteh, where residents have always complained of the toxic smoke that is generated by the wastes and how it impacts
their health and well-being. This issue was attributed to the poor planning of the city, as the future growth in population and related developmental challenges for this urbanized area were not considered when the dumpsite was located. Poor city planning is not limited to The Gambia, but it is a problem for many African cities. Youth employment also ranked highly among voters of the KMC, with 18% of them indicating that unemployment was the second issue they had considered when they voted.

The voters were split on their positions on revenue generation and fixing broken road infrastructure within the municipality as both issues were identified at 16%, a statistical tie, albeit slightly higher support of the former over the latter among the respondents. Equally, voters were polarized in their support of improving the drainage system in the city and building recreational facilities in the city as both issues were identified by 9% of respondents as the second issue they considered when they voted in the elections. Support for candidate’s ethnicity, the quality of education, and combatting coastal erosions were lower than 5% among the KMC voters.
When voters were asked to indicate the third issue they had considered in their support of the candidates in the mayoral election of the KMC, 23% indicated that they would prefer building the city’s crumbling road infrastructures, while 20% supported establishing recreational facilities in the city. As a third choice, 19% of respondents supported effective and efficient garbage collections and disposal mechanisms to be put in place within the city, whereas 13% of the voters supported improving the city drainage system to facilitate the flow of water, especially during the rainy seasons. Employment, as the third most important issue, was identified by 10% of participants, while support for revenue generation and collections in the city was identified by 8%. Also, the voter's support for quality education as the third most important issue was 5%,
while those who had indicated their votes were based on ethnic consideration and combatting sea erosion were lowest among the KMC voters.

Figure 32 shows the results of survey respondents in the KMC indication of the party they support in The Gambia. The UDP was identified by 38% of the survey respondents as the party they supported, while 21% of the voters said that they support PDOIS. Also, 18% of the people indicated that they support the GDC, whereas support for the APRC, the party of former President Jammeh received 9% of support in the KMC. Over 15% of the voters who participated in the survey are independent, while support for the remaining political parties is below 3% of people who participated in this survey. The findings on support for political parties in the KMC differ from that of Banjul, where the UDP and APRC were closely tied in percentage of support.
Banjul also had a higher percentage of voters who identified as independent and not supporting any particular political party than in the KMC.

Another important observation that could explain the surge in the numbers of support for the UDP among the people of Kanifing was the fact that, at the time of the survey, the party was enjoying the advantage of incumbency. As I noted earlier, Barrow ran for presidency on the UDP ticket. The recent power struggle within the party, however, has resulted in a split that is likely to decrease the strong political support base previously enjoyed by the UDP before the breakup. Barrow has formed a new political party and it is not clear how the support base of his political party would hold into the future.

Figure 33 Barrow’s government priority in Kanifing
As the excitement of the Barrow government has begun to dwindle among many Gambians who have defied all odds of a dangerous political environment by voting out Jammeh’s tyrannical dictatorship, participating voters were asked to indicate what priority interventions should be the focus of the Barrow’s government. This was another way of learning the opinions of voters who made this change possible, and the evidence here, like in Banjul, shows that 41% of the people had the opinion that the Barrow’s regime is way too corrupt and the priority of his administration should be to reduce corruptions and improve transparency in government. Similarly, 22% of the voters had indicated that the Barrow’s government priority should be the reduction of unemployment in the country, while 12% of the voters in the KMC preferred that the government focus on improving the agricultural sectors of the economy. On the question of improving the health care services in the country, 11% of voters were in support, while 9% of the people supported government invention to improve the quality of education.

Clearly, corruption and unemployment are two strongly correlated issues and voters’ opinions on this issue appear to be consistent. A corrupt government cannot deliver any meaningful results that will reduce unemployment, as resources that are misused or stolen are often the ones public officials were supposed to use to help create jobs for the masses. Hence, the importance of voters’ attachment to issues of transparency in governance is to ensure that public officials are first and foremost held accountable before they can deliver programs that will create employment for the people.
Figure 34 illustrates the survey respondents’ indication of the candidate they expect to vote for in the next presidential election, with the assumption that all the above candidates are on the ballots. Among the voters in the Kanifing municipality, 28% of the people in the survey said they will vote for Oussainou Darboe in the upcoming presidential elections, while 27% of them indicated support for Halifa Sallah. Darboe and Sallah appear to have gained support among the people of the KMC above that of the current, incumbent president. Also, 19% of the people said that they would vote for Kandeh, whereas 18% of voters indicated that they will vote for Barrow, the current president. Support for the former president, Jammeh, is very low, with only 8% of respondents indicating that they will vote for him in the next election. The support for the rest of the candidates across the surveyed voters in the KMC is below 3%. It is recognized that these numbers are subjected to change.
Conclusion

In conclusion, this study advanced three major questions to guide research in investigating the issues that were important to voters of the Kanifing Municipality and Banjul City Council, when they participated in the 2018 mayoral elections in their respective areas. For voters in the KMC, the issue that concerned them most was the increased unemployment among the youths. As the results appear to show, the people's support for a candidate was primarily influenced by strong considerations of the youth’s employment in the municipality. The second most important issue aside of unemployment was the collection of wastes generated by residents and their safe disposal as increases in population and expansion of the urban settlement have made it difficult for the city council to effectively undertake this exercise given limited available resources resulting in uncollected garbage everywhere in the streets. Finally, fixing the dilapidated road network within the municipality emerged as the third most important issue for many of the voters in the KMC region.

Similarly, the voters who participants in the mayoral elections in Banjul, have highlighted three main primary concerns. First, voters were worried about the high rates of employment in the city for young people, second, the need to fix the road network in the city, and thirdly, the poor drainage system of the city, causing frequent flooding during the rainy season. The study shows that these issues were more important to the people of Banjul than the ethnic backgrounds of candidates who participated in the election. A similar conclusion is also made on the study of voters in the KMC, as the survey results discussed above show that the people care more about the issues than the ethnic identities of the contestants in the elections. Hence, it is fair to conclude in support of the hypothesis that voters in both elections cast their votes based on issues
and that ethnic identities did not influence the voting decisions of the either people of Banjul or KMC in the mayoral elections.

There is a striking similarity of the 2018 local government election study with the results of the 2016 study of the presidential elections in The Gambia, in which Jammeh lost to the opposition coalition parties. In both sets of elections, Gambian voters have demonstrated that they were more concerned with issues than with the ethnicities of the candidates in elections. Just as concluded that Jammeh lost the election based on his poor handling of human rights, more than ethnocentric voting, the study of local government elections also indicates that decisions of Gambian voters were primarily based on social issues identified above.

In their determination of the second and third most important issues, differences emerged between the voters in Banjul and those in the KMC. While voters in the KMC have stated that their second and third preferences were waste collection and building road networks within the city, the voters in the mayoral election in Banjul have repeatedly noted the importance they attached to fixing the road infrastructure of the city as their second and third most considered issue when they voted in the local government election.

The number one issue that emerged as the most important considerations for the voters of Banjul and KMC, was the employment of the youths. Employment is a politically charged subject given the fact that many people's lives are dependent on it to improve their economic status, but the local government in the Gambia has limited resources to effectively undertake robust job creation activities compared to the central government. With corruption being identified as the biggest hurdle for the lack of government intervention to reduce unemployment
in the country, the burden of government inaction has posed serious safety challenges to local
governments in the Gambia, particularly in the urban area, where government policy failure to
address youth employment results in increased rates of crimes such as theft and related banditry
activities. The rise in unemployment is relatively linked to a mass exodus of Gambian youths to
Europe who are using dangerous route through Libya crossing the sea to enter Europe, most of
whom are believed to be economic migrants seeking a better economic future. In The Gambia,
this journey is commonly known as the “Backway” and while some have managed to make it,
many others lost their lives in the process.

The 2016 presidential election in The Gambia was issue-based, and ethnicity even
though was important for some voters, was not the major factor that had influenced the voting
behavior of the people who participated in it. For those who supported Jammeh, 27% of them
had indicated that he did well on the economy for them, whereas 29% of people who supported
Barrow said that they expected that he will do well on the economy. Kandeh received 11% of
support on this same issue. While the economy has emerged as an important factor in this
election, the response Gambian voters have had on the issue of the economy is polarizing
between those who supported Jammeh and Barrow. Hence, Jammeh’s defeat cannot be attributed
to economy or ethnicity as a factor more so than human rights. On human rights, there is a big
difference between those who voted for Barrow and Jammeh and by extension Kandeh. There is
a strong predictor of votes in favorability to Barrow on considerations of human rights than
Jammeh. One of the most important issues that influenced the results in favor of the opposition
candidate was human rights abuses. Even after controlling for ethnicity, human right is a
significant predictor of voting behavior. On the question of ethnicity, even though most people
would not admit it, there is evidence of ethnic voting between people who identified as Mandinka, Fula, and Jola respectively. Mandinkas are more like to vote for Barrow, Jola for Jammeh, and Fulas for Kandeh. These findings are also consistent with the studies of elections in many African countries Porsner(2004), Collier, (2009).

Examining the voting behavior of a group of people is a complex undertaking as issues that influences the voting preferences of the people are many and unlimited. However, in the African continent, many studies of elections and voting behavior by many scholars appear to indicate that African voters tend to care more about ethnic considerations than they are on other issues. This study does not dismiss that fact as evidence presented here in the Gambia presidential elections has indicated ethnic-based voting among the Mandinka, Jola, and Fula ethnic groups consistent with previous studies. However, one unique contribution these dissertations advance with regards to The Gambia, and African politics, in general, is that ethnicity is not the only factor that influences voting perspectives of the people in the continent. Gambian voters, by extension Africans in general also care about issues, such as the economy, human rights, and the need for the government to address other social services like roads, garbage collection, education, and health care, etc.

If voters use ethnicities are cues to supporting a candidate, it is because ethnicity is functional in the political processes and provide certain kinds of benefits to the people. The results of this study have not only triggered a new way of thinking in studying elections in Africa but have also exposed one fundamental flaw of using one single issue, ethnicity as a monolithic factor shaping the voting choices of African people. The idea that somehow African voters
behave differently from those in the west, and that they care more about supporting their ethnic candidates in an election regardless of the issues presented to them is likely to be misleading.

Henceforth, this study contributes to an ongoing academic debate geared towards understanding the issues that influenced the voting preferences of African voters and to determine which of these social cleavages are influential in a political system, and which ones are not. Thus, the question as to whether the Gambia’s case offers a unique example of the voting perspectives that is different from that of many African countries would be an interesting study in the future. For now, this dissertation is limited in scope and could not fully address this question. As stated above, in the Gambia a dictator had organized an election, which he loss to the opposition. Jammeh’s regime was oppressive and whether being a dictatorship he was able to suppress ethnic politics in the country or was The Gambia’s homogeneous makup makes it less prone to ethnic politics? These questions can only be answered in a matter of time. For now, one fact remains, the dictator is gone, the rule of fear and intimidation he uses towards his critics is also gone with him. While democracy is a process, and a country cannot be classified as democratic based on holding one single election, and Gambia is yet to pass that threshold. From all indications, The Gambia is presumed to be a democracy at least for now, and the next presidential election that is scheduled to take place towards the end 2021 will be first test of the countrys democratic gains. What will happen from now and then will undoubtedly dictate the direction of the country.

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