

# **Why Run for Office in an Authoritarian Regime? MP Motivations and Role Orientations in Cameroon**

**Yonatan L. Morse**  
**University of Connecticut**

**Norbert Fru Soh II**  
**University of Yaoundé II**

## **Abstract**

Why do people run for legislative office in authoritarian regimes? How do they conceive of their role in the legislature? Legislators in authoritarian settings are assumed to be motivated primarily by a desire to access state soils and must align themselves with partisan interests to secure access to office. However, these attributes are rarely tested empirically and take a fairly homogenous view of MPs in authoritarian settings. This study expands on these issues with an original survey of members of Cameroon's 9<sup>th</sup> National Assembly. The survey confirms the material motivations of most MPs in authoritarian regimes, but also demonstrates strong orientations toward the constituency rather than the party. However, there is also notable variation, in part due to differences in political affiliation but also due to individual and institutional-level factors. Older MPs and those from less lucrative occupational backgrounds tend to be more materially driven, and constituency role orientations increase when MPs are selected under primary systems run in more competitive districts. Closer examination of a subset of MPs also indicates that some MPs conceive of themselves primarily as public servants. While these findings are tentative, they provide a more accurate account of authoritarian legislatures and the diversity of personal experiences that legislators bring.

Key Words: Authoritarianism, Legislators, Cameroon, MP Motivations, MP Role Orientations, Survey Research

DRAFT VERSION: PLEASE DO NOT CITE  
UCONN IRB PROTOCOL #X17-076

## **Introduction**

Legislatures are key institutions that underlie processes of democratic consolidation (Fish 2006) but are also important tools of authoritarian government (Gandhi 2009). A wave of scholarship has noted how legislatures facilitate power sharing agreements, signal credibility to international investors, and provide autocrats with opportunities to monitor and divide their political opposition. An assumption of this literature is that since members of parliament (MPs) have very little control over actual policy outcomes they are primarily motivated by a desire to accumulate a share of state spoils and thus bolster an autocrat's control and survival (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009). Moreover, MPs in authoritarian legislatures are less likely to exhibit independent streaks or buck the ruling power for fear of retribution and losing access. This is especially true in many of the contexts found across sub-Saharan Africa, where even under more democratic conditions legislators often expend considerable resources to secure their nomination for public office and are expected to use their positions of privilege to secure material resources (Koter 2017).

There are two problematic dimensions to this line of research. First, assumptions about the motivation to run for office in authoritarian settings largely go untested. Access to elites, in particular for research that involves questions of sensitive issues like personal ambition, is not impossible, but often constrained due to difficulties of access and concerns of social desirability bias (Morse 2019). These difficulties are significantly more acute in authoritarian settings. Second, MPs are viewed homogeneously, with less explicit theorizing or account for differences in the motivation to run for office or in role orientation. Existing literature on legislative behavior from advanced democracies has recently been expanded to new democracies to note the intersection of individual and institutional level variables that shape what kind of candidates emerge (Siavelis and Morgenstern 2008). Moreover, research from authoritarian settings also suggests that early

socialization experiences can lead candidates to prioritize ideological or expressive benefits (Weghorst 2015).

Better measuring and understanding motivations to run for office and role orientations provides a more accurate portrayal of how authoritarian regimes operate. As noted elsewhere, many of the current accounts of authoritarian institutions tend toward fairly functionalist explanations (Pepinsky 2014). Not only are legislators assumed to be fairly homogenous in their outlooks, but legislatures themselves are seen as institutions that primarily serve the survival of autocratic rulers. This approach flattens what life in an authoritarian legislature actually looks like. In reality, authoritarian institutions are dynamic, fundamentally shaped by other institutions and by the individuals who populate them. While authoritarianism produces strong incentives to comply with presidential directives or the demands of a ruling party, legislatures are also potential sites of conflict and perhaps even internal resistance. For those concerned with democratic consolidation, understanding these dynamics are essential if a legislature is to become a source of horizontal accountability and democratic representation.

In this paper we examine motivations to run for office and role orientations in one of Africa's most enduring authoritarian regimes – Cameroon. While Cameroon has held regular multiparty elections since 1992, by most accounts these elections fail to live up to democratic standards of freedom and fairness. Rather, Cameroon is what scholars now identify as an “electoral authoritarian” regime, and one that is particularly repressive (Levitsky and Way 2010).<sup>1</sup> These features theoretically drive MPs toward material incentives and partisan role orientations. In this sense, Cameroon is what one might consider a hard test of whether there is diversity in MP attitudes toward the legislature. On the other hand, there are factors in Cameroon that provide certain points

---

<sup>1</sup> Freedom House has consistently ranked Cameroon as “Not Free” and assigned the lowest possible scores for civil liberties and political rights.

of leverage. Candidates in Cameroon reflect different occupational backgrounds and there is significant institutional-level variation in terms of electoral competitiveness, socio-economic development, candidate selection, and district magnitude.

The main strategy used to assess MP motivations and role orientations is an in-depth survey of 70 members of Cameroon's 9<sup>th</sup> National Assembly (~40% of the population). This survey uses the strategy of rank ordered questions to create a multidimensional measure of motivations and role orientations. MPs were forced to make concrete choices about statement lists that expressed four different motivations to run for office (material, career, ideological, prestige), and for different role orientations (constituency servant, partisan, public servant, and entrepreneur). This survey instrument gives the researcher flexibility and helps address potential social desirability bias in responses. The paper tests a number of hypotheses regarding motivations and role orientations based on individual and institutional-level variables noted in the existing literature. Since the statistical analysis is confined to a limited range of MPs, the paper also looks more closely at MPs who express the weakest material motivations and strongest constituency servant orientations.

The paper offers some mixed and tentative results. On average, MPs in Cameroon express strong material motivations to run for office and are also oriented toward their constituency rather than partisan networks or public service (as is true elsewhere in Africa). Variation in these motivations is partially due to differences in political affiliation. Opposition party members deemphasize material motivations and are more likely to be partisans and public servants. However, factors like age, occupational background, and selection in a primary system can also push MPs toward stronger material motivations. Likewise, greater electoral competitiveness appears to shape stronger constituency servant role orientations. A closer look at specific subsets of MPs indicates that there is no clear pattern that leads to less materially motivated MPs or

stronger public servants. While there is diversity in Cameroon's National Assembly, this might be more idiosyncratic rather than systematic and requires further research.

The paper proceeds with a discussion of the existing literature on ambition and motivation to run for office and role orientations in legislature, and then identifies some of the expectations regarding these factors based on conditions found in sub-Saharan Africa and in authoritarian regimes. The paper then introduces the case of Cameroon and posits a number of hypotheses based on the specific context of authoritarianism found in Cameroon and a number of individual and institutional-level variables identified from the literature. After discussing the sampling and survey strategy, the paper presents the empirical results and discusses the main findings.

### **Candidate Ambition and Role Orientation in Legislatures**

The aim of this paper is to ascertain whether there are differences in the motivations and role orientations of legislators in an African authoritarian regime, and to establish what the potential origins of these differences are. To address these issues there is a range of literature to draw upon, most of which has been derived from settings found in advanced democracies. As noted below, while this work is informative, it must be adapted to the context found in African authoritarian countries. The prevalence of clientelism, the primacy of executive power, and the authoritarian nature of the regime must all be accounted for. Arguably, these factors predispose legislators in a case like Cameroon toward the pursuit of primarily material gains, and as partisan in their role orientation.

Ambition is a key concept in the literature on legislative careers and the motivation to run for office. Legislative candidates are considered rational elites who seek the most cost-effective means of satisfying their personal ambition (Schlesinger 1966, Black 1972). In most advanced democracies, personal ambition varies and could include more straightforward material-oriented

motivations (Diermeier, Keane, and Merlo 2005, Keane and Merlo 2010), but could also encompass more expressive or non-material motivations such as ideological fulfillment or prestige seeking (Payne and Woshinsky 1972). Differences in the motivation to run for office also leads to variation in the time horizons of elites and their sense of legislative careerism. In seminal work by Joseph Schlesinger, he categorized elite ambition as discrete, static, or progressive (1966).<sup>2</sup> Others have phrased this as the difference between “political careerists” and “career politicians” (Mattozzi and Merlo 2008). Political careerists see the legislature as a key fulfillment of their personal ambition, while career politicians see it as a stepping-stone to higher ambitions.

Relatedly, candidates also differ in their role orientation toward the legislature, which is often referred to as variation in “legislative type.” The literature is not always clear about what these terms mean. For instance, James Barber categorized American legislators based on their progressive ambition and level of activism within the legislature. What Barber called “advertisers” were legislators who served short terms in office but used their activism in the legislature to build their personal reputations and seek personal advancement. These legislative types tended to be younger professionals like lawyers (Matthews 1984).<sup>3</sup> By contrast, other work has thought of role orientation vis-à-vis the expected services a legislator is supposed to provide. In critical work on African democracies, Barkan et al differentiated between MPs who are primarily “constituency servants” and those who see themselves as “public servants” concerned with oversight and law-making (2010). Another approach, which we consider the most useful and is more clearly distinguishable from the motivation to run for office, examines legislative role orientations through the prism of election prospects. For instance, research from Latin American notes that when parties

---

<sup>2</sup> A more recent application of this literature has contrasted Schlesinger’s notion of “expressed ambition” with the role of “nascent ambition.” This is particularly relevant when considering the role of minority status and gender during decisions about whether to run as a candidate for public office (Fox and Lawless 2005, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> As Matthews notes, Barber’s work is emblematic of an earlier wave in legislative studies on legislative types.

centralize control over candidate selection, more partisan oriented MPs tend to emerge (Siavelis and Morgenstern 2008).

The origins of variation in motivation to run for office and role orientation are considered derivative of mixtures of individual and institutional-level factors, but there is very little consensus over what consistently matters (MacKenzie and Kousser 2014). A candidate's socioeconomic status and occupational background can influence both the choice of partisan affiliation and the specific motivations to run for office (Fiorina 1994, Eggers and Hainmueller 2009). On the other hand, there is a slew of contextual factors that shape the cost-benefit calculation of candidacy (Rhode 1979) and the opportunity structures for certain kinds of candidates to emerge (Norris 1997). First, differences in the formal powers of legislatures, their professionalization, and material conditions can shape their appeal to a range of candidates (Matthews 1984). Second, variation in the strength of parties, their method of candidate selection, and ability to provide campaign financing influences candidacy choices (Norris 1997, Hibbing 1999). Third, diversity in terms of the district magnitude, the presence of term limits, and levels of electoral competition might incentivize different candidates to emerge. For example, there is extensive literature that suggests that legislators are more partisan in their role orientation under closed-list proportional representation systems, when they have to make intra-party appeals in order to secure a position on the electoral list (Czudnowski 1970). By contrast, single member plurality systems encourage candidates who can cultivate a personal vote (Carey and Shugart 1995). However, institutional theories of legislative behavior cannot consistently account for variation in the strategies of individual parties and legislators within the same polity, which is why we must also account for contextual and individual-level factors (Hagopian 2007, 593).

When these insights are applied to many of the settings found in sub-Saharan Africa, including Cameroon, the range of motivations and role orientations considered possible diminishes. The prevalence of clientelism or “neo-patrimonialism” elevates material motivations and constituency-service as key aspects of legislative service. Elected officials are expected to use their access to state spoils to redirect resources back to their constituencies. This is considered a systematic feature of African politics (Chabal and Daloz 1999), shaped by the weakness of political institutions and the dominance of executive figures (van de Walle 2003), as well as by prevalent social norms of mutual reciprocity (Ekeh 1975). Indeed, existing survey research of African MPs in new democracies demonstrates a clear role orientation toward constituency service (Barkan et al. 2010). Given the weakness of many political parties in African democracies, legislative candidates are also expected to expend considerable personal resources on securing their nomination and winning general elections. Consequently, in some cases there has been a distinct growth in the proportion of legislators with backgrounds in private business (Koter 2017).

Under more authoritarian conditions MP motivations and role orientations are further constrained. Since legislators have very little control over actual policy outcomes, they are seen as more consistent participants in processes of “competitive clientelism,” vying for access to state spoils (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009). Likewise, since authoritarian leaders often constrain career paths in business to reduce threats to their survival, MPs seek the material benefits of office not just for their constituencies, but for their own personal consumption (Treux 2014). Under authoritarian conditions, legislative assertiveness or ideological expression is further constrained by the threat of material sanction. Moreover, since a slot on the ruling party’s candidate list essentially secures victory in the general election, most of the drama occurs during the selection process rather than the general election. Consequently, some of the literature on authoritarian



elections concludes that elites must satisfy partisan networks to secure their nomination, and might not be as responsive to the demands of their constituents (Reuter and Turovsky 2014, Weghorst 2015).<sup>4</sup>

The existing literature on MP motivations and role orientations in African and authoritarian settings tends to make certain assumptions that contrast with the existing literature from advanced democracies. First, under authoritarian conditions institutional factors, particularly at the constituency level, are assumed to exert little influence. Rather, the authoritarian contours of the regime are presumed to impact all legislators equally. However, students of electoral authoritarianism have noted key differences in the extent to which elections challenge authoritarian practices (Levitsky and Way 2010, Schedler 2013, Morse 2019). Ruling parties face different degrees of electoral competition, and often face significant opposition challenges, albeit at times limited to certain districts (Letsa 2017). There is also evidence that historical legacies can influence the formal and material powers of legislatures, leading to variation in the political influence legislatures have across authoritarian contexts (Opalo 2019).

Second, the institutional literature makes general assumptions about how candidates are recruited in authoritarian regimes, when in reality there is variation in the institutionalization and internal structures of authoritarian ruling parties (Morse 2019). While most authoritarian parties maintain certain veto privileges, they do not necessarily control all aspects of candidate selection and can devolve nominating and certification authority to local levels of the party. Importantly, not all ruling parties have clear partisan avenues for elite recruitment. Indeed, in many African

---

<sup>4</sup> There are some similarities between dominant party democracies and hegemonic authoritarian regimes. In the former, a single party controls the majority of the seats for an extended period of time. This too can incentivize candidates in certain contexts to emphasize their partisan bone fides. A major difference is the lesser capacity of dominant party democracies to exert material threats on dissenters.

settings ruling parties were historically amalgamations of regional elite-driven entities and lacked grassroots structures or physical infrastructure (Wallerstein 1966). Consequently, legislators are not always recruited from within an established party, but from other spheres like the business community or the civil service. Finally, as Weghorst notes, the material advantages of legislative service accrue unevenly across ruling and opposition parties.<sup>5</sup> Opposition parties might recruit fundamentally different types of candidates who display stronger non-material motivations than ruling party legislators (Greene 2007, Weghorst 2015).<sup>6</sup>

In summary, the literature on MP motivation and role orientation must be adapted to the context of Africa and authoritarianism and requires more nuanced analysis and empirical testing. On average, MPs in authoritarian countries are more likely to exhibit material motivations and partisan role orientations. However, these tendencies are likely influenced by variation across authoritarian regimes in terms of specific features of authoritarianism. Moreover, within authoritarian countries we might find further variation based on individual and institutional-level factors. This paper addresses these issues with an analysis of MP motivation and role orientation in a specific context – Cameroon.

### **Theorizing MP Motivation and Role Orientation in Cameroon**

Cameroon is a hard case for testing theories of legislative motivation and role orientation in an authoritarian setting. The level of authoritarianism in Cameroon is comparatively high. Cameroon has been governed by essentially the same party (the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement, CPDM) since independence and has had the same president (Paul Biya) since 1982.

---

<sup>5</sup> As Weghorst notes, the spoils of office include material goods derived from corruption, the potential for advancement to more lucrative offices, official salaries and fringe benefits, and MP constituency development or slush funds. The former two are limited to ruling party legislators.

<sup>6</sup> The question of opposition candidacy under authoritarian conditions is a central puzzle (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009). Some research suggests that opposition candidates are materially motivated candidates who are trying to gain entrance into the authoritarian regime through co-optation. Others view them as strategic regime defectors, which is often an indication of imminent regime decline (Langston 2006).

In 1992 Cameroon transitioned from a single-party regime to multipartyism, but elections have been persistently unfree and unfair (Morse 2018). Likewise, while Cameroon has a much more liberalized economy today, finance is still heavily concentrated in just four banks and Cameroon ranks low on measures of the ease of doing business. Importantly, the government has used its control of anti-corruption prosecutions, and in particular the Special Criminal Court, for clear political purposes (Stiftung 2018). Cameroon's 180-seat legislature is also objectively weak, with limited control over the policy agenda. According to Fish and Kroening's Parliamentary Powers Index, Cameroon scores a very low 0.25 (Fish 2006). This predisposes legislators in Cameroon toward material motivations and away from role orientations as public servants.

The marginal benefit of holding a legislative seat is also relatively high, which likely predispose legislators toward material incentives. MPs in Cameroon are offered starting salaries of approximately 800,000 CFA a month (~\$1,420), which is low compared to the region and especially countries like Nigeria. However, MPs are also offered a variety of spending funds that increase the value of a legislative seat. MPs can access an annual 8 million CFA for micro projects, 8 million CFA in support funds, and 5 million CFA in personal allowances during parliamentary sessions. Leadership positions in the legislature like a Questor or committee chair are paid considerably more in salary and allowances, ranging from 45 million to 80 million CFA.<sup>7</sup> These benefits accumulate in addition to any wealth an MPs accesses through the consumption of state spoils. Turnover in the Cameroonian legislature is high, and while very few departing MPs appear in higher-level government positions like a cabinet minister, some do return to private sector

---

<sup>7</sup> MP salaries and benefits have been a subject of persistent dispute within the Cameroonian National Assembly. Individual MPs have criticized inequities in salary and benefits within the legislature, and resisted attempts to reduce or freeze pay. See, Divine Ntaryike Jr. "Cameroonian MPs Among Country's Leading Income Earners" *Cameroon Post* (June 11, 2012).

careers in business.<sup>8</sup> Still, as noted in other research, high turnover in authoritarian legislatures is often a way for autocrats to provide more equitable distribution of resources to competing elites, rather than indicative of career motivations (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009).

On the other hand, there are some features of authoritarianism in Cameroon that provide unique points of leverage. First, while the CPDM controls the vast majority of the legislature (82% of seats as of 2013), there is geographic variation in terms of competitiveness. Paul Biya's stronghold is in the Southern and Central regions of the country, mostly among the Bulu-Beti ethnic groups. By contrast, Northern Cameroon is predominantly Muslim and was the political base of Cameroon's first president Ahmadou Ahidjo. While the north now largely votes for the CPDM, it was once home to a major opposition party called the National Union for Democracy and Progress (NUDP) and there remain competitive districts. Northwest and Southwest Cameroon are traditional opposition strongholds for the Social Democratic Front (SDF) and home to a distinct Anglophone identity.<sup>9</sup> Parts of the Littoral and Western region are also more competitive, in particular due to legacies involving the United Peoples of Cameroon (UPC) agitation against French colonialism and later the Ahidjo government. The presence of an opposition and variation in terms of competitiveness might influence MP motivations and role orientations.

Second, the ruling party in Cameroon is a historically weak institution, which means that partisan lines of career advancements are not readily available. After independence, Cameroon was federal, and divided between an Anglophone state and a Francophone state. Each constituent element had its own political parties, which were gradually abolished and enticed to join Ahidjo's

---

<sup>8</sup> Turnover in Cameroon's legislature has ranged from 80% to 60% since the onset of multipartyism in 1992. The bulk of this turnover occurs during the selection process and not the general election.

<sup>9</sup> After independence, Cameroon was initially a federal system that consisted of a larger French-speaking territory and a smaller English-speaking territory. In 1972, Ahidjo abolished federalism and created a unitary state, which has been the source of longstanding grievances. In the early 1990s the Anglophone regions of Northwest and Southwest were at the center of the pro-democracy movement that led to the inception of multipartyism in 1992.

Cameroon National Union (CNU). In essence, the CNU's party structures were never fully established in many parts of the country, and it remained a highly elitist organization (Bayart 1978). In 1985 Paul Biya rechristened the CNU as the CPDM, which ostensibly signaled a new phase of party construction. However, in reality the reforms to the CPDM were never that substantial. The party held national congresses on an irregular basis and party organization tended to end at the district level (Takougang 2004). In 1992 guidelines were set for local primaries, during which party delegates could nominate candidates and vote on competing lists, but the uneven nature of the party meant that those guidelines were not consistently followed. In 2013, the CPDM finally did away with local primaries and decided to adjudicate all nomination lists within the central committee. Some members of the 9<sup>th</sup> National Assembly were selected on that system, while others were selected using the more haphazard primary system.

Finally, Cameroon uses a combination of single member and multimember districts. These districts were created for the 1992 election but have been manipulated to provide the regime with advantages (Albaugh 2011). First, the 180 seats are systematically malapportioned, which leads to overrepresentation of Biya's strongholds and underrepresentation of urban areas. Second, the election formula in multimember districts gives 100% of the seats to any party that receives over 50% of the vote. Third, the regime has increased the number of single member districts, in particular in opposition areas. For instance, the proportion of seats in single-member districts in the Northwest increased from 0% in 1992 to 60% in 2013. By contrast, the proportion of single-member districts in the Center and South regions has only increased from 0% to 7%-9%. The logic is that larger parties like the CPDM can do better in oppositional areas in single-member districts.

What does this mean for expectations about MP motivation and role orientation in Cameroon? The broader contours of authoritarianism in Cameroon suggest that material

motivations will likely be very strong, but that partisan role orientations might be more muted given the historical weakness of the ruling party. However, these expectations might be mitigated by a number of individual level factors. We hypothesize the following:

*H1: Opposition MPs are likely to exhibit weaker material motivations and weaker constituency role orientations than ruling party MPs*

*H2: Older and more experienced MPs are likely to exhibit weaker material motivations and stronger constituency service role orientations than younger and less experienced MPs*

*H3: MPs from professional and business occupational backgrounds are likely to express weaker material motivations and stronger constituency role orientations than MPs from other occupational backgrounds*

The first hypothesis flows from the comparatively limited access that opposition parties have to state resources. The second and third hypotheses are due to the expectation that the more materially secure an MP, the less they view public office through the prism of material motivations and service to the party. By contrast, younger MPs, especially those from certain occupations, are more likely to see legislative office as an immediate material gain but also have to abide by party guidelines to achieve that gain.

The local institutional variation in Cameroon also gives rise to a number of hypotheses regarding MP motivation and role orientation. We hypothesize the following:

*H4: MPs in more rural districts are likely to exhibit stronger material motivations and stronger constituency servant role orientations than MPs from less rural districts*

*H5: MPs in more competitive districts are likely to exhibit stronger material motivations and stronger constituency servant role orientations than MPs from less competitive districts*

*H6: MPs in more single-member districts are likely to exhibit stronger material motivations and stronger constituency servant role orientations than MPs from multimember districts*

*H7: MPs in selected in primaries are likely to exhibit stronger material motivations and stronger constituency servant role orientations than MPs centrally selected by the party*

The assumption is that imperatives of resource delivery is strongest in rural districts, which tend to be socioeconomically poorer (Wahman and Boone 2018). Likewise, material motivations are stronger when MPs are either institutionally more tied to their constituency through the district magnitude or the selection process, and when they must compete with other political parties for political space.<sup>10</sup> By contrast, an MP who competes in a regime stronghold is not as tied to the constituency, but rather the internal dynamics within the party.

### **Measuring MP Motivations and Role Orientations**

In the following section we detail the main elements of the survey research strategy and survey instrument used to measure MP motivations and role orientations. Given their insularity, elite surveys are generally purposive or convenience samples. Attempts are usually made to make sure that the sample mirrors certain characteristics of the population in terms of age, gender, geography, and education, however, full representativeness can only be approximated. In authoritarian settings, elite access is much more constrained, and it is often difficult to elicit honest responses that do not suffer from some form of social desirability bias (Krumpal 2013). Questioning elites about their motivations to run for office, and in particular asking them to contrast material vs. non-material incentives, can be difficult in authoritarian settings. Elites might want to present public images that are above reproach and might fear backlash for answering questions honestly. In addition, there are significant issues of trust between the researcher and research subject that can hinder responsiveness in surveys and create bias in responses.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> There is considerable disagreement in the literature on the role of swing vs. core voters in decisions about economic distribution and social welfare spending. One perspective sees programmatic appeals as a way to simultaneously attract swing voters while keeping core voters mobilized. Others see programmatic appeals primarily as a method to increase turnout among core voters (CITATION TBD).

<sup>11</sup> Social desirability bias is a problem in all survey research, and in particular in research on sensitive material. The general proscriptions for dealing with social desirability bias suggest staging the interview setting in such a way as to reduce tensions and increase trust. Others use survey list experiments like the randomized response technique (RRT) to capture social desirability bias, but this is usually limited to identifying the prevalence of negative

To create this survey the authors banked on extensive networking within the 9th Cameroonian National Assembly across a period of nearly three years (2015-2018). During this period, efforts to establish formal relationships with the CPDM and the Cameroonian National Assembly were unsuccessful. Instead, the author had to gradually build inroads with key informants in the major political parties. Eventually, through the interventions of key gatekeepers, personal contact information was obtained for 110 MPs, which represents approximately 61% of the national assembly. Responses were obtained from 70 MPs, for a sample response rate of 63% and population response rate of 38%. This response rate is low for work on legislatures, but higher compared to other research on authoritarian legislatures, and is one of the only efforts conducted to date in an authoritarian setting (Weghorst 2015).<sup>12</sup>

To further assess the representativeness of the sample, Table 1 provides a comparison to the known population characteristics of the 9<sup>th</sup> National Assembly. This information was obtained from public records and through additional research by the author. As noted, along most factors the sample is representative in terms of age, gender, religion, education, and occupation. Notably, the sample is also largely representative of the distribution of MPs across Cameroon's major regional distinctions. The sample is slightly more representative of opposition MPs, and concurrently also more representative of MPs with professional backgrounds, more competitive districts, and the Northwest/Southwest region. The bulk of Cameroon's political opposition is found in the SDF, which has traditional roots in the Anglophone regions of the Northwest. Other research indicates that professional backgrounds in law and medicine are key career pathways into

---

behaviors such as drug use or vote buying rather than an outcome like motivation. Moreover, the superiority of RRT to straightforward questioning is still debated.

<sup>12</sup> As in other research, the response rate for opposition parties is considerably high (56%) than for the ruling party (35%). In Weghorst's research on the legislature in Tanzania he was able to obtain a 30.5% response rates.



the SDF (Krieger 2008), which is to be expected since opportunities for advancement in business or government are more curtailed for opposition figures.

**Table 1** Assessing Sample Representativeness on Background Characteristics

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Sample Estimate (n=70)</b>	<b>Population Estimate (n=180)</b>
Age Elected	47	48
% Female	29%	29%
% Opposition	28%*	18%
% Catholic	38%	32%
% Protestant	27%	30%
% Muslim	16%	19%
% Not Specified	19%	n/a
Level of Education (out of 8)	6.7	6.5
% Business	20%	22%
% Government	32%	31%
% Professional	24%	16%
% Education	16%	19%
% Other	8%	12%
2013 Election Result	61%**	66%
% Adamoua/North/Extreme North Region	27%	28%
% Center/South/East Region	20%	27%
% Littoral/West Region	24%	24%
% Northwest/Southwest Region	29%	19%

Note: \*<0.05 \*\*<0.01 \*\*\*<0.001 in a two-tailed t-test

Building on an approach utilized in similar research, the project conceives of four ideal types of MP motivations: *material motivations*, *careerist motivations*, *ideological motivations*, or *prestige motivations* (Weghorst 2015). The first two items essentially encompass different kinds of material-based incentives, with one oriented toward immediate consumption and the latter toward a sense of progressive ambition. For instance, a material motivation might be the desire to access lucrative salaries and fringe benefits, or to secure access to distributive resources. A careerist motivation would include the desire to network with higher ups in the ruling party or the business community. By contrast, the latter two are mainly non-material motivations. An ideological motivation might be to use the legislature to launch investigations into government wrongdoing or to commit to legislation on specific policy issues. A prestige motivation would include using the office to increase one’s visibility in the public eye in order to secure a deeper sense of individual worth.

MPs are also assessed based on four ideal-type role orientations: *constituency servants*, *partisans*, *public servants* and *entrepreneurs*. Constituency servants view their role primarily through the prism of their political supporters. These MPs believe that if they cannot satisfy constituency demands, which in Cameroon are mainly distributive, they are not likely to win their party's nomination. By contrast, a partisan role orientation is when an MP believes that satisfying the demands of intra-party networks is essential for political success. By contrast, a public servant embodies classic notions of the legislator, who exhibits commitments to legislation, representation and oversight. Legislators who are public servants believe that if they are unsuccessful at these tasks, they will not be nominated again. Finally, an entrepreneur is an MP who is primarily invested in their own brand and political image. Other work has categorized entrepreneurs as "extreme independents" (Siavelis and Morgenstern 2008, 23) and it seems relevant to examine in the context of Africa where business backgrounds are increasingly common in national legislatures.

The survey tool used to assess MP motivations and role orientations is ranked choice questioning. For each concept, the MP was presented with four banks of five statements, with each statement corresponding with a specific motivation or role orientation. In each statement bank a single motivation was doubled, giving the respondents the opportunity to double-down. For instance, as noted in Figure 1, a question bank about MP motivation might include two statements that correspond with prestige like attending conferences or making statements in the media. Similarly, a question bank about MP role orientation might be pre-loaded on partisanship and include reference to the party's platform and support from local party members. In total, this means that respondents have a total of 60 points to allocate, and can allocate a up to 24 points to any

single motivation or role orientation (a response of 5 in each question bank and a response of 4 in a question bank where that motivation or role orientation is doubled).<sup>13</sup>

---

<p><b><i>Example of MP Motivation: Prestige Loaded Statement Bank</i></b></p> <p><i>This is a list of reasons for why people might decide to run for parliament. Please rank them according to how important you think they are (5=most important to 1=least importance)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> To make public statements in newspapers and television (<i>Prestige</i>)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> To pass laws that reflect your view of the economy (<i>Ideology</i>)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> To be invited to conferences to speak about politics (<i>Prestige</i>)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> To develop connections with businesses you might want to work in later (<i>Career</i>)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> To obtain a good salary that can support your family (<i>Material</i>)</li></ul>
<p><b><i>Example of MP Role Orientation: Partisan Loaded Statement Bank</i></b></p> <p><i>A legislator needs to develop skills that help them be successful. Please rank the following statements according to how important you think they are for your nomination by your political party (5=most important to 1=least important)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Living up to the party's ideals and platform (<i>Partisan</i>)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Emphasizing your own personal achievements in life and business (<i>Entrepreneur</i>)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Having your name on key pieces of legislation (<i>Public Servant</i>)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Keeping support from local members of your party (<i>Partisan</i>)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Building new roads in your constituency (<i>Constituency Servant</i>)</li></ul>

---

**Figure 1** Sample Statement Banks for Measuring MP Motivation and Role Orientation

The advantage of this approach is that it forces respondents to make tough choices about contrasting perspectives on their motivations and role as an MP. This mitigates some concerns with social desirability bias. Using a Likert scale might have resulted in respondents scoring all non-controversial statements as “strongly agree” and all controversial statements as “strongly disagree.” Instead, in this survey respondents had to make concrete ranking, and were offered differently worded statements that corresponded with similar motivations or role orientations. A further advantage of this approach is that it provides the researcher with the most information and therefore the most flexibility. If we are concerned about response fatigue, whereby respondents have no real extended set of preferences, we can examine the top two responses for each question

---

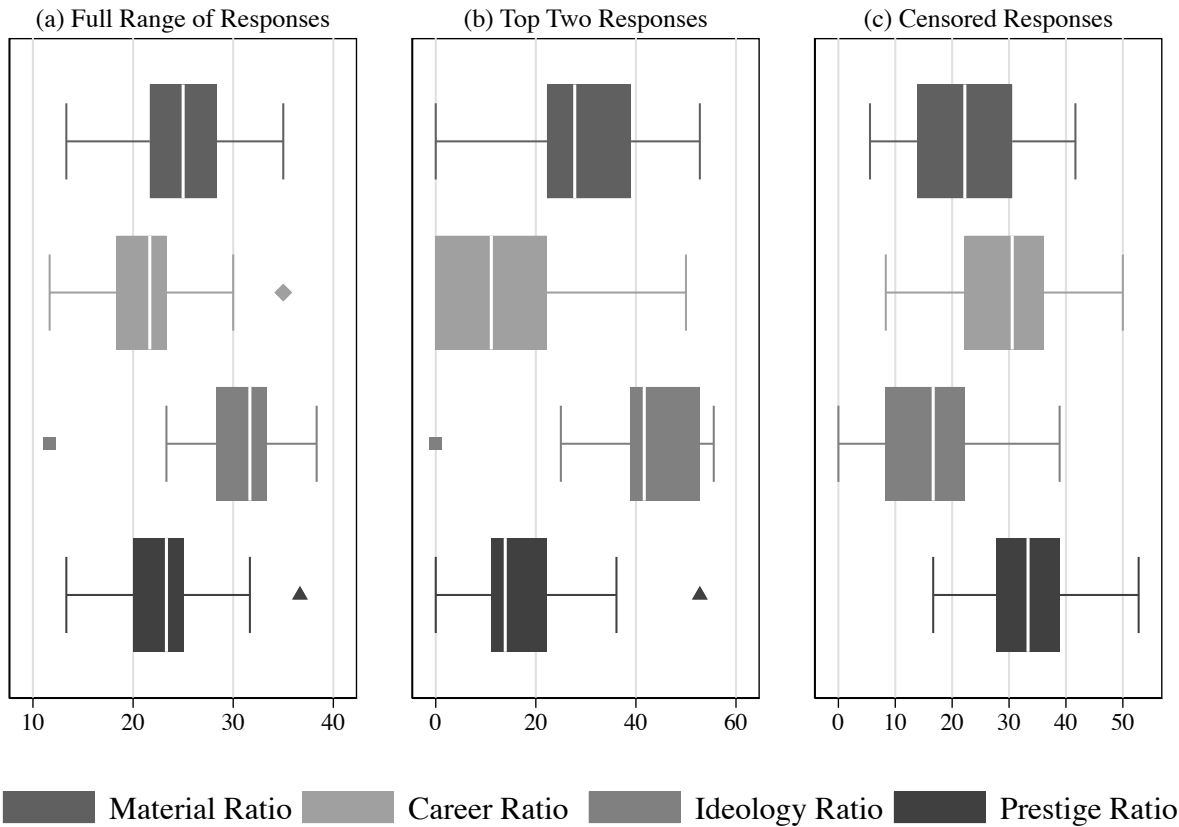
<sup>13</sup> The survey was offered in both English and French and conducted by the PI and a team of two other trained enumerators. Enumerators were instructed to tell respondents to read the entire statement bank first, take a moment to think of the statements and then try to rank them. At times respondents were reluctant to convey a level of agreement with certain statements, in which case the enumerator guided them to rank their top and bottom choices and work backwards from there.

bank. Similarly, concerns about social desirability bias can be addressed by censoring the response range and excluding top and bottom choices (which are likely to exhibit the most bias).

### **Aggregate Measures of MP Motivations and Role Orientations**

We turn first toward the aggregate measure of MP motivation to see whether the general theoretical expectations from Cameroon correspond with the survey results. Figure 2 reports box plots for each of the individual MP motivations, and the individual panels describe different scoring techniques. Panel (a) presents the full range of ranked responses and describes what percentage of the total points (60) was allocated to a specific motivation. Panel (b) addresses the potential for response fatigue and only looks at the distribution of the top two choices, or scores of 5 and 4, across the four motivations (this time allocated from the 36 available points). Finally, Panel (c) presents the distribution of a censored response range of only rankings 2, 3, and 4 (out of a total of 36 points available) in order to detect possible social desirability bias.

Considering the full range of responses, Cameroon MPs ostensibly express strong ideological motivations to run for office (mean=30.8%). This includes strong agreement with statements about the value of working with other political parties to achieve legislation or the need to exert stronger oversight of the executive branch. Ideological motivations are followed by material motivations, such as the desire to obtain a good salary or deliver constituency-level resources (mean=25.0%). This is followed by prestige concerns like the desire to make public appearances (mean=23.4%) and career ambitions like making connections with key businesses for future employment (mean=21.0%). Considering just the most strongly expressed preferences, the ideological and material motivations become more strongly pronounced. Notably, in both scoring schemes the range of responses is quite wide, which is further explored in the next section.



**Figure 2:** Box Plot of Four Different MP Motivations (Full Range of Responses, Top Two Responses, Censored Responses)

There is strong reason to suspect such strong ideological motivations among Cameroon’s MPs. The strength of authoritarianism in Cameroon and the weakness of the legislature raises the possibility that this response is due to social desirability bias. In a censored sample, the score for ideological motivations drop sharply, while the scores for career and prestige motivations rise. However, the scores for material motivations do not actually change that much in the censored sample. This indicates that respondents are not consistently pushing material motivations to the lowest possible ranking, but rather frequently scoring them between 2 and 4. We conclude from this that social desirability bias is likely manifest in the expression of strong ideological motivations rather than weaker material motivations. In other words, the MPs in the survey are more concerned about conveying a sense of mission as a legislator than hiding their material

motivations to run for office. Consequently, for the rest of the analysis we consider MPs who are more or less materially oriented rather than those who are more or less ideological.<sup>14</sup>

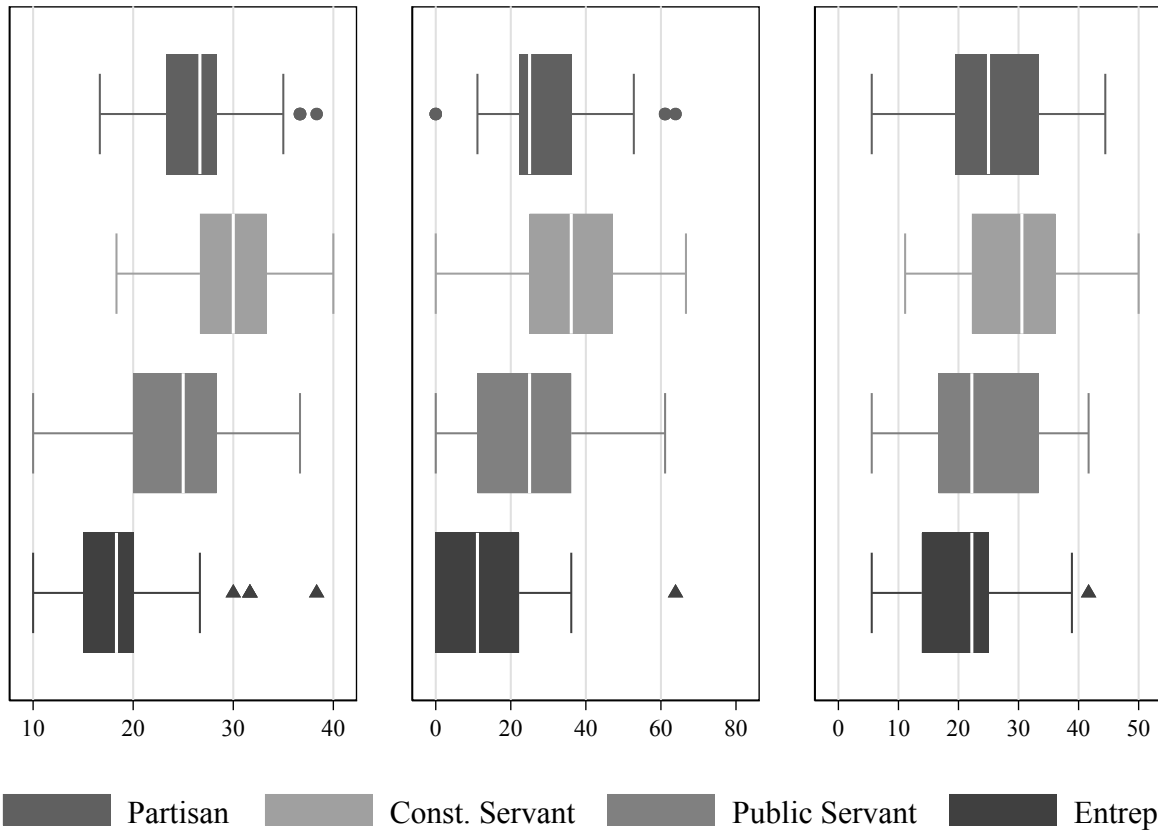
Figure 3 reports similar outcomes for our measure of role orientation. Contrary to some expectations regarding the impact of authoritarianism, Cameroonian MPs appear in line with other findings from Africa and exhibit stronger constituency servant role orientations (mean=30.4). Constituency servants express stronger support for statements like an MP must get development funds allocated to their constituency. Constituency servants are followed by partisans (mean=27.0), which would include agreement with statements like an MP must listen to the views of party leaders or an MP must donate finances to the party. The bottom two role orientations are public servant (mean=24.4) and entrepreneur (mean=18.4). Public servants would agree with images of the MP as someone who investigates government wrongdoing and consults experts before passing legislation. An entrepreneur is an MP who thinks that personal achievements and name recognition are important factors in their electoral success. These preferences become slightly more pronounced in the sample that only scores the top two choices. As with the measures of MP motivation there is significant variation within each category of role orientation.

The emphasis on constituency rather than public servant role orientations is a bit surprising given MP's emphasis on ideological motivations. It could be that constituency servant is the socially desirable role orientation that MPs want to present, and that this model of a legislator corresponds with their ideological motivations. It could also be that the framing of questions regarding role orientation is less sensitive than questions regarding ambition and motivation. We assume that a partisan or entrepreneurial role orientation are less socially desirable. However, there is little evidence to support this, and in fact the scores for entrepreneurial role orientations double

---

<sup>14</sup> There is a negative correlation between material motivations and ideological motivations (corr=-0.48).

in the censored sample. If respondents were consistently “punishing” the entrepreneurial role orientation with the lowest possible score, its aggregate should drop in the censored sample.<sup>15</sup> From this we conclude that we can assess variation in constituency servant orientation with less risk of bias.



**Figure 4** Box Plot of Four Different MP Role Orientations (Full Range of Responses, Top Two Responses, Censored Responses)

### Exploring Variation in MP Motivations and Role Orientations

While Cameroonian MPs appear to be materially driven and express stronger constituency service role orientations, the above results mask considerable intra-sample variation in responses.

The literature on legislators highlights a set of individual-level and institutional-level variables,

<sup>15</sup> Consider a hypothetically biased response where the five entrepreneurial statements receive a full range of scores that looks like this – “1, 1, 1, 2, 1” for an aggregate score of 6. If we dropped the low scores the aggregate should drop to 2.

which we have hypothesized will have an impact on the extent to which MPs express material and constituency service orientations. In this section, we offer some preliminary insights into these factors and find support for a number of our hypotheses. Given the small size of our sample, a word of caution is needed regarding any statistical findings. Moreover, as noted above we have more confidence in the survey findings regarding material motivations than ideological motivations, which are likely influenced by social desirability bias. For these reasons, we also supplemented this analysis with a closer examination of the subset of MPs who fall along the extremes of some of our measures.

Table 2 reports the results from an Ordinary Least Squared (OLS) regression, with each model varying MP motivation and role orientation. As noted in Model 1, opposition MPs exhibit weaker material motivations than ruling party MPs, which confirms one of the major hypotheses of this study and comports with findings from other authoritarian settings (Weghorst 2015). As expected, we also find that less lucrative occupations, which we term as “other,” are significantly more motivated by material incentives as compared to business elites.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, MPs selected in primary systems are more materially driven than MPs selected centrally by the party. We find less support for the notion that political experience (time in the legislature), rural constituencies, electoral competitiveness, or district magnitude influences material motivations. Surprisingly, we find that the age when elected influences material motivations in the *opposite* direction we expected. Younger MPs are actually less materially driven than older candidates, which could be explained by their lower social status at the start of their careers. Without a material basis, younger

---

<sup>16</sup> These occupations include school teachers, taxi drivers, small scale traders, and secretarial/administrative positions.



MPs are less certain about their political careers, which could lead them to emphasize different motivations to run for office.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, there is little that correlates with any of the other motivations explored in Models 2-4. As expected, opposition MPs demonstrate higher ideological scores than regime MPs, but the F-score for Model 3 is not statistically significant. Consequently, the finding that MPs from single member districts are more ideologically motivated cannot be accepted at face value. There is some evidence that career motivations are more pronounced among professionals compared to more generic job positions. This might be because legislative service is a career endpoint for many government civil servants and that business elites are already advanced in their careers once they arrive in the legislature. For less lucrative occupations that are contained in the “other” category, career opportunities outside of the legislature are more constrained. By contrast, professionals – which includes doctors, lawyers, and academics – have the most opportunities for career advancement outside of the legislature.

Models 5-8 report the OLS results for MP role orientations, which again only unevenly confirm the hypotheses set out earlier in the paper. Contrary to expectations, partisan role orientations are more pronounced among experienced legislators and among MPs with a business occupational background. A potential explanation is that it is not that partisanship declines over time, but that partisanship is in fact a key factor in longer-lasting legislative careers. Likewise, given constraints on business in Cameroon, one way that aspiring business elites demonstrate loyalty to the regime is through partisanship rather than strong constituency affiliation. On the other hand, as expected, opposition MPs are more partisan given their weaker ties to constituency service, although that is not picked up in the constituency servant role orientations presented in

---

<sup>17</sup> In unreported models we interacted opposition affiliation with age, occupation, and selection process. In each model these variables maintained their independent significance, but the interactions were not significant.

Model 6. In addition, electoral competition is a key factor that explains variation in role orientations, and it is significant in both Models 5 and 6. The higher the degree of electoral competition, the more constituency-oriented an MP becomes, while the stronger the regime's electoral grip the more partisan an MP becomes. Other factors do not appear to differentiate degrees of constituency service role orientations, which is a strong orientation among the bulk of Cameroonian MPs.

1 **Table 2:** OLS Regression of MP Motivations and Role Orientations

	Motivations				Role Orientations			
	(1) Material	(2) Career	(3) Ideology	(4) Prestige	(5) Partisan	(6) Const.	(7) Public	(8) Entrep.
Age Elected	0.11*	-0.06	-0.05	0.01	0.05	0.06	-0.04	-0.09
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Time in Legislature	-0.05	0.12	-0.04	0.00	0.27**	0.03	-0.42***	0.14
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.08)	(0.10)	(0.14)
Government Occupation	-3.17**	-0.79	1.28	2.80*	1.77	-1.30	1.02	-0.99
	(1.20)	(1.33)	(1.24)	(1.37)	(1.13)	(1.06)	(1.18)	(1.39)
Business Occupation	-4.34**	1.54	2.15	1.12	3.23*	-2.09	-1.86	0.85
	(1.39)	(1.47)	(1.40)	(1.22)	(1.38)	(1.31)	(1.40)	(1.21)
Professional Occupation	-3.28**	3.46**	-0.50	0.58	2.07	-1.21	-2.87*	2.16
	(1.40)	(1.30)	(1.24)	(1.34)	(1.49)	(1.29)	(1.22)	(1.15)
Opposition Party	-2.88**	-0.18	2.53*	0.16	2.72*	-2.12	1.31	-2.12*
	(1.26)	(1.09)	(1.07)	(1.25)	(1.24)	(1.13)	(1.25)	(1.05)
Population Density, log (department)	-0.41	0.23	0.01	0.22	-0.08	-0.39	1.01***	-0.56*
	(0.29)	(0.30)	(0.28)	(0.30)	(0.27)	(0.24)	(0.28)	(0.26)
Election Result	-0.05	-0.00	0.03	0.00	0.08*	-0.13***	0.01	0.03
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Single Member District	-0.53	-1.21	2.50*	-1.08	2.82*	0.57	-0.80	-2.34
	(1.05)	(1.13)	(0.95)	(0.87)	(1.13)	(0.96)	(1.14)	(1.21)
Primary Selection	2.62*	-1.93	-0.28	-0.39	-1.55	0.27	4.44**	-3.10*
	(1.27)	(1.28)	(1.00)	(1.50)	(1.22)	(1.17)	(1.34)	(1.41)
Constant	21.21***	26.62***	29.66***	23.72***	16.51**	35.62***	17.69**	30.97***
	(5.00)	(5.10)	(4.01)	(5.04)	(5.04)	(5.04)	(5.88)	(4.82)
Observations	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70
R-squared	0.23	0.21	0.16	0.11	0.21	0.23	0.34	0.24
Prob>F	**	*	-	-	*	***	***	**

2 *Note:* Ordinary Least Squared Regression for survey data. Standard errors in parentheses \*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05. Omitted category for occupation is  
3 “Other”. All models include unreported controls for gender and education.

Models 7 and 8 present some interesting results regarding the less pronounced role orientations of public servant and entrepreneur. Time in the legislature is correlated with weaker public servant role orientations. This might be due to some process of adaptation and learning that some MPs go through as they realize the limitations of the ability of an MP to engage in public service in Cameroon. As noted previously, MPs elected at a younger age also tend to be less materialistic, which would correspond with this idea that early enthusiasm becomes tempered by legislative realities. Interestingly, MPs from less rural districts and those elected in primaries also express comparatively stronger public service orientations. By contrast, MPs from more rural districts and those elected in primaries are more likely to express stronger entrepreneurial role orientations (emphasizing their personal accomplishments in life). This raises the possibility that popularly elected candidates in more urban environments respond to a more educated electorate that demands stronger public service. However, the rural-urban distinction does not appear to shape motivations or decrease constituency servant role orientations.

There are limitations to this smaller-n statistical analysis, and the results also indicate a certain degree of indeterminacy. Therefore, we also look at a subset of exemplar MPs that either indicated strong preferences for or strong aversions to specific motivations and role orientations. We choose to focus on variation in material motivations and in partisan and public servant role orientations. This is because ideological motivations are so strongly pronounced in our sample and likely reflect bias, while very few respondents indicated primary support for career or prestige motivations (6.4%). Similarly, an overwhelming number of respondents indicated constituency servants as their primary role orientation (57%) and very few indicated it as their least pronounced role orientation (3%). On the other hand, nearly 20% of respondents ranked material considerations, as well as partisan and public servant role orientations, as their top or bottom

motivation. This sub-sample reflects the MPs that are most amenable and most averse to these motivations and role orientations.

Table 3 presents the results for these subsets of MPs, and further differentiates between the full sample and ruling party MPs. The top part of the table reasserts many of the findings from the regression analysis but does not reveal any clear-cut factor that differentiates MPs. The least materially motivated MPs are younger and are more likely to be opposition members, while the most materially motivated MPs are more likely to come from less lucrative occupational backgrounds and more likely to have been selected in a primary. Similarly, partisans are younger, in more lucrative careers, and more oppositional but are more likely to be selected from uncompetitive districts in primaries as compared to the least partisan MPs. Clear public servants are more oppositional, urban, and selected in primaries as compared to MPs with the lowest public servant scores. However, the only factor that appears to clearly differentiate is the odd fact that the least partisan MPs were all elected from the ruling party in multimember districts and through a centralized selection system. Looking at the smaller range of regime MPs the least materially motivated MPs in are all employed in comparative more lucrative careers, competed in fairly safe constituencies, and were selected through a primary to compete in a multimember district. All of the partisan ruling party MPs were employed in lucrative careers and elected in very safe constituencies. Public servants are also predominantly urban and elected in multimember districts.

**Table 3:** Subset Examination of Exemplar MPs Along Certain Motivation and Role Orientation Scores

	<b>Material Motivation Highest</b>	<b>Material Motivation Lowest</b>	<b>Partisan Orientation Highest</b>	<b>Partisan Orientation Lowest</b>	<b>Public Servant Orientation Highest</b>	<b>Public Servant Orientation Lowest</b>
<i>All MPs</i>						
Age Elected	52.2	47.3	46.5	50.8	47.0	47
Time in Legislature	10.1	8.5	10.6	5.4	8.4	10.8
% “Other” Profession	33%	8.3%	12.5%	40%	25%	15%
% Opposition	22%	42%	31%	0%	58%	23%
Population Density	1091	1142	478	661	2179	108
Election Result	54%	61%	68%	54%	55%	65%
% SMD	11%	17%	5%	0%	25%	23%
% Primary	44%	25%	50%	0%	58%	38%
N	9	12	16	5	12	13
<i>Ruling Party MPs Only</i>						
Age Elected	50	46.9	46.2	50.8	48.6	45.6
Time in Legislature	10	7.1	11.6	5.4	9	11.3
% “Other” Profession	29%	0%	0%	40%	40%	20%
Population Density	1397	1881	669	661	5085	118
Election Result	56%	69%	75%	54%	60%	69%
% SMD	14%	0%	18%	0%	0%	30%
% Primary	57%	14%	55%	0%	40%	50%
N	7	7	11	5	5	10

It is worth looking even close at a number of ruling party exemplars that buck expectations the most from an authoritarian context like Cameroon. We first identify MPs who exhibit the weakest material motivations and the strongest partisan identifications. In our sample these are identified as CM4 and CM25. CM4 was an early party activist in one of the CPDM’s urban southern strongholds and was president of the local youth wing. When he first ran for office in 2002 at the age of 31, he was pushed by the youth wing of the party. Since entering the legislature, he has also undertaken significant national responsibilities within the party and seen as a key organizer in the southern region. CM4 also rates prestige motivations above ideological and career motivations and ranks constituency service as his weakest role orientation. Respondent CM25 entered the legislature at the age of 51 after nearly twenty years as a barrister in the business center of Douala. CM25 was likewise active at local levels of the party, in particular with the women’s

wing. She rates prestige as the primary motivation that led her to run for office, and also rates constituency service as her weakest role orientation.<sup>18</sup>

We can also identify MPs with weak material motivations and the strongest senses of public service. Once again, our sample identifies two respondents – CM6 and CM17. CM6 was elected in 2013 at the age of 51 from a heavily urban constituency and regime stronghold. She had a lengthy career in government service and was added to a multimember electoral list as part of a women’s quota implemented in 2013. She rates career motivations more strongly than material or prestige motivations and ranks constituency service as her second most pronounced role orientation. CM17 comes from the same constituency, after a career as a business executive. He was more of a party activist than CM6 and held a position on the central committee long before he was elected to parliament. Unlike CM6, he was elected in a primary in 2007. CM17 likewise rates career motivations above material and prestige motivations and ranks partisanship above constituency service.

TBD

## **Conclusion**

This paper has offered one of the first attempts to examine motivations to run for office and MP role orientations in an African authoritarian setting. Much of the literature from African and authoritarian politics has made assertions about the strong material motivations that drive individuals to seek office, and this literature tends to see MPs as strongly beholden to partisan networks for their success. Given the difficulty of gathering quality data on MPs in authoritarian settings, these assumptions have only been empirically tested among a small range of cases. Moreover, much of the literature on authoritarian politics does not address the potential for

---

<sup>18</sup> In fact, CM4 and CM25 are the only two respondents who rate constituency service as their weakest role orientation.

legislatures to become contested arenas that are populated by individuals with diverse motivations and role orientations. There is now extensive literature from advanced democracies about the impact of individual and institutional-level variables on the kinds of candidates that emerge to run for office. Moreover, emerging literature from electoral authoritarian settings has begun to explore variation in MP motivations and behavior (Weghorst 2015, Reuter and Turovsky 2014).

This study contributes to this literature with novel survey data from the case of Cameroon, a longstanding and fairly repressive authoritarian regime. The paper confirms the strong material motivations of most MPs, but contrary to expectations MPs in Cameroon also view themselves primarily through the lens of constituency service. This corresponds with survey findings established in Africa's new democracies (Barkan et al. 2010). The study has also confirmed findings from other African authoritarian regimes that suggest that opposition MPs are more likely to seek non-material benefits from higher office. While we cannot conclusively say that opposition MPs chase ideological benefits in Cameroon, they do express lower levels of material motivations. Likewise, opposition MPs are likely to be somewhat more partisan in their orientation, which is to be expected if they are not as equipped as a regime candidate to deliver constituency resources. Opposition MPs likely emphasize partisan bone fides as an alternative to constituency service.

The study has also tried to assess whether standard variables in studies of MP motivation and role orientation can explain some of the intra-sample variation. The answers to this question are mixed. Statistical evidence suggests that at the individual level, as expected, less lucrative occupational backgrounds influence the propensity toward material motivations, but age appears to be a factor that actually increases material motivations. On the other hand, more experience in the legislature corresponds with stronger partisan role orientations, which seems to indicate that while MPs express constituency service as their role orientation, the more successful ones can



better navigate partisan networks. As expected, at the institutional level candidates selected in primaries are more materially motivated, and higher levels of electoral competition increases the salience of constituency service role orientations over partisanship. Candidate selection processes have not apparent influence.

Importantly, a closer examination of exemplar MPs, and especially those with the lowest levels of material motivations, exposes more questions than answers. While opposition MPs are overrepresented in this subset of MPs, there are also a significant number of ruling party MPs. There are no clear discerning factors that explains the propensity toward lower material motivation or stronger public service role orientations. Weak ruling party material motivations can be found among MPs of different ages and experiences in the legislature and from rural and urban constituencies. All ruling party MPs with weak material motivations were selected in multimember districts and in constituencies where the ruling party has won over 60% of the vote. However, they also exhibit a variety of role orientations and alternative motivations to run for office. We focused on non-material partisans and non-material public servants and found that some were motivated by prestige and others by career ambitions. Closer examination of their career trajectories opens up the possibility that where specific types of legislators emerge from might be more idiosyncratic, and merits closer interrogation of the individual MPs.

Nonetheless, a key takeaway from the paper is that even under the most difficult of circumstances there are MPs who buck theoretical expectations about authoritarian regimes. This sheds new light on the authoritarian legislature and presents it more accurately as an arena of contradiction and tension. While authoritarianism in Cameroon is empirically quite strong and the legislature extremely weak, individual MPs do emerge seeking something else than just immediate material benefits from office. This is particularly true for opposition parties, but importantly also

for the ruling party. Better understanding these MPs provides new insights into how authoritarian institutions function, and where there are potential pockets of legislative efficiency, policy agenda setting, and even political resistance. In the aggregate authoritarian institutions like ruling parties and legislatures might serve to elongate authoritarian tenure. However, in their actual daily practice they are home to a diverse body of individual legislators, reflective of unique life experiences, operating within structural and institutional constraints.

## References

- Albaugh, Erika. 2011. "An Autocrat's Toolkit: Adaptation and Manipulation in 'Democratic' Cameroon." *Democratization* 18 (2):388-414.
- Barkan, Joel D., Robert Mattes, Shaheen Mozaffar, and Kimberly Smiddy. 2010. *The African Legislatures Project: First Findings*. Center for Social Science Research: University of Cape Town.
- Bayart, Jean-François. 1978. "The Birth of the Ahidjo Regime." In *Gaullist Africa: Cameroon Under Ahmadu Ahidjo*, edited by Richard Joseph, 45-65. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Black, Gordon S. 1972. "A Theory of Political Ambition: Career Choices and the Role of Structural Incentives." *The American Political Science Review* 66 (1):144-159.
- Carey, John M., and Matthew S. Shugart. 1995. "Incentives to Cultivate a Personal Vote: A Rank Ordering of Electoral Formulas." *Electoral Studies* 14 (4):417-39.
- Chabal, Patrick, and Jean-Paul Daloz. 1999. *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Czudnowski, Moshe M. 1970. "Legislative Recruitment under Proportional Representation in Israel: A Model Case Study." *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 14:216-248.
- Diermeier, Daniel, Micahel Keane, and Antonio Merlo. 2005. "A Political Economy Model of Congressional Careers." *The American Economic Review* 95 (1):347-373.
- Eggers, Andrew C, and Jens Hainmueller. 2009. "MPs for Sale? Returns to Office in Post War British Politics." *American Political Science Review* 103 (4):1-21.
- Ekeh, Peter. 1975. "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17 (1):91-112.
- Fiorina, Morris. 1994. "Divided Government in the American States: A Byproduct of Legislative Professionalism." *American Political Science Review* 88:304-316.
- Fish, M. Steven. 2006. "Stonger Legislatures, Stronger Democracies." *The Journal of Democracy* 17 (1):5-20.
- Fox, Richard L., and Jennifer L. Lawless. 2004. "Entering the Arena? Gender and the Decision to Run for Office." *American Journal of Political Science* 48 (2):264-280.
- Fox, Richard L., and Jennifer L. Lawless. 2005. "To Run or Not To Run for Office: Explaining Nascent Political Ambition." *American Journal of Political Science* 49 (3):642-659.
- Gandhi, Jennifer, and Ellen Lust-Okar. 2009. "Elections under Authoritarianism." *Annual Review of Political Science* 12:403-22.
- Greene, Kenneth F. 2007. *Why Dominant Parties Lose Mexico's Democratization in Comparative Perspective*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Hagopian, Frances. 2007. "Parties and Voters in Emerging Democracies." In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, edited by Carles Boix and Susan Stokes. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Hibbing, John R. 1999. "Legislative Careers: Why and How We Should Study Them." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 24 (2):149-171.
- Keane, Micahel, and Antonio Merlo. 2010. "Money, Political Ambition, and the Career Decisions of Politicians." *American Economic Journal: Microeconomics* 2:186-215.
- Koter, Dominika. 2017. "Costly Electoral Campaigns and the Changing Composition and Quality of Parliament: Evidence from Benin." *African Affair* 116 (465):573-596.

- Krieger, Milton. 2008. *Cameroon's Social Democratic Front: Its History & Prospects as an Opposition Political Party (1990-2011)*. Bamenda: Langaa RPCIG.
- Krumpal, Ivar. 2013. "Determinants of Social Desirability Bias in Sensitive Surveys: a Literature Review." *Quality & Quantity* 47 (4):2025-2047.
- Langston, Joy. 2006. "The Change Party of the Institutional Revolution: Electoral Competition and Decentralized Candidate Selection." *Party Politics* 12 (3):395-413.
- Letsa, Natalie Wenzell. 2017. "'The People's Choice': Popular (il)legitimacy in Autorcratic Cameroon." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 55 (4):647-679.
- Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan A. Way. 2010. *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- MacKenzie, Scott, and Thad Kousser. 2014. "Legislative Careers." In *Oxford Handbook of Legislative Studies*, edited by Shane Martin, Thomas Saalfeld and Kaare W. Strom. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Matthews, Donald R. 1984. "Legislative Recruitment and Legislative Careers." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 9 (4):547-585.
- Mattozzi, Andrea, and Antonio Merlo. 2008. "Political Careers or Career Politicians?" *Journal of Public Economics* 92 (3-4):597-608.
- Morse, Yonatan L. 2018. "Electoral Authoritarianism and Weak States in Africa: The Role of Parties Versus Presidents in Tanzania and Cameroon." *International Political Science Review* 39 (1):114-129.
- Morse, Yonatan L. 2019. *How Autocrats Compete: Parties, Patrons, and Unfair Elections in Africa*. New York, Ny: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, Pippa, ed. 1997. *Passages to Power: Legislative Recruitment in Advanced Democracies*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Opalo, Ken Ochieng' 2019. *Legislative Development in Africa: Politics and Postcolonial Legacies*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Payne, James L., and Oliver H. Woshinsky. 1972. "Incentives for Political Participation." *World Politics* 24:518-546.
- Pepinsky, Thomas 2014. "The Institutional Turn in Comaprative Authoritarianism." *British Journal of Political Science* 44 (3):631-653.
- Reuter, Ora John, and Rostislav Turovsky. 2014. "Dominant Party Rule and Legislative Leadership in Authoritarian Regimes." *Party Politics* 20 (5):663-674.
- Rhode, David W. 1979. "Risk-Bearing and Progressive Ambition: The Case of Members of the United States House of Representatives." *American Journal of Political Science* 23 (1):1-26.
- Schedler, Andreas. 2013. *The Politics of Uncertainty: Sustaining and Subverting Electoral Authoritarianism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schlesinger, Joseph A. 1966. *Ambition and Politics: Political Careers in the United States*. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally.
- Siavelis, Peter M., and Scott Morgenstern. 2008. "Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Latin America: A Framework for Analysis." In *Pathways to Power: Political Recuitment and Candidate Selection in Latin America*, edited by Peter M. Siavelis and Scott Morgenstern. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Stiftung, Bertelsmann. 2018. Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index: Cameroon. Germany: Bertselmann Stiftung

- Takougang, Joseph. 2004. "The Demise of Biya's New Deal in Cameroon, 1982-1992." In *The Leadership Challenge in Africa: Cameroon Under Paul Biya*, edited by John Mukum Mbaku and Joseph Takougang. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.
- Treux, Rory. 2014. "The Returns to Office in a 'Rubber Stamp' Parliament." *American Political Science Review* 108 (2):235-251.
- van de Walle, Nicolas. 2003. "Presidentialism and Clientelism in Africa's Emerging Party Systems." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 41 (2):297-321.
- Wahman, Michael, and Catherine Boone. 2018. "Captured Countryside? Stability and Change in Sub-National Support for African Incumbent Parties." *Comparative Politics* 50 (2):189-216.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1966. "The Decline of the Party in Single-Party African States." In *Political Parties and Political Development*, edited by Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner, 201-214. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Weghorst, Keith R. 2015. "Legislative Candidacy in Electoral Authoritarian Regimes: Evidence from Tanzania." *Working Paper*.

## Supplementary Materials

### Appendix 1: Summary Statistics

### Appendix 2: Correlation between MP Motivations and MP Role Orientations

### Appendix 3: Regression Analysis Using Top-Two Choices

#### Appendix I: Summary Statistics

	Mean	SD
Material Motivation	24.94	4.59
Career Motivation	20.95	4.55
Ideological Motivation	30.79	4.22
Prestige Motivation	23.43	4.13
Constituency Servant	30.37	4.50
Partisan	27.01	5.09
Public Servant	24.41	5.21
Entrepreneur	18.35	5.43
Age Elected	46.93	9.06
Time in Legislature	9.49	5.81
% Opposition	28.57%	4.55
% Business	20.63%	4.07
% Professional	23.80%	4.29
% Government	31.74%	4.69
% Other	23.8%	4.29
Population Density	807.05	1861.85
Election Result	61.38	15.29
% SMD	28.57%	4.55
% Primary	47.6%	5.03

#### Appendix II: Correlation between MP Motivations and MP Role Orientations

	Constituency	Partisan	Public	Entrepreneur
<b>Material</b>	0.49	-0.25	-0.14	-0.01
<b>Career</b>	-0.15	0.04	-0.08	0.16
<b>Ideology</b>	-0.25	0.35	0.18	-0.27
<b>Prestige</b>	-0.13	-0.09	0.08	0.12

### Appendix III: Regression Analysis Using Top-Two Choices

	Motivations				Role Orientations			
	(1) Material	(2) Career	(3) Ideology	(4) Prestige	(5) Partisan	(6) Const. Servant	(7) Public Servant	(8) Entrep.
Age Elected	0.30 (0.15)	-0.21 (0.13)	-0.19 (0.13)	0.10 (0.13)	0.22 (0.15)	0.05 (0.15)	0.01 (0.15)	-0.32* (0.14)
Time in Legislature	0.06 (0.22)	0.05 (0.22)	0.06 (0.22)	-0.17 (0.23)	0.78** (0.26)	-0.15 (0.21)	-0.63 (0.36)	0.21 (0.28)
Government Occupation	-11.73** (3.52)	0.74 (3.56)	6.12 (3.60)	4.87 (2.93)	4.70 (4.10)	-5.76 (3.82)	-0.79 (3.86)	1.35 (3.44)
Business Occupation	-5.07 (3.11)	-5.23 (3.06)	3.52 (3.33)	6.78* (3.21)	1.93 (3.23)	-6.06 (3.23)	2.09 (3.84)	1.95 (3.51)
Professional Occupation	-7.44* (3.64)	6.42 (3.67)	-0.69 (3.07)	1.71 (2.71)	3.00 (4.04)	-3.81 (3.61)	-8.39* (4.02)	6.72* (3.09)
Opposition Party	-6.23 (3.18)	-1.06 (2.75)	6.34* (2.71)	0.95 (2.78)	7.01 (3.52)	-7.39* (3.17)	5.70 (3.58)	-3.75 (2.56)
Population Density, log (department)	-0.94 (0.73)	0.19 (0.78)	-0.11 (0.79)	0.87 (0.74)	0.17 (0.77)	-2.36** (0.74)	2.67** (0.77)	-0.21 (0.62)
Election Result	-0.11 (0.09)	-0.05 (0.08)	0.10 (0.08)	0.05 (0.07)	0.28* (0.12)	-0.43*** (0.09)	0.15 (0.08)	0.00 (0.08)
Single Member District	-0.77 (2.80)	-7.68** (2.75)	9.50*** (2.33)	-1.05 (1.99)	6.44 (3.37)	-1.48 (2.97)	-0.82 (3.40)	-2.85 (2.96)
Primary Selection	6.51* (3.25)	-2.64 (2.86)	-3.19 (2.99)	-0.68 (3.32)	-4.42 (3.46)	5.35 (3.47)	5.11 (4.22)	-5.63 (3.21)
Constant	24.69 (15.44)	36.10** (12.83)	32.94** (12.28)	6.26 (11.02)	-13.03 (15.42)	72.30*** (13.08)	-0.42 (14.87)	35.70** (13.21)
Observations	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70
R-squared	0.23	0.23	0.22	0.15	0.17	0.26	0.23	0.14
Prob>F	**	*	**	-	-	**	***	*

Note: Ordinary Least Squared Regression for survey data. Standard errors in parentheses \*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05. Omitted category for occupation is "Other". All models include unreported controls for gender and education.