1

Introduction

Many politicians across the world deliver material benefits to citizens in direct exchange for political support. Recent news headlines provide a glimpse of this phenomenon. Nepal's former prime minister warned of politicians who pay citizens as if they are "goats and sheep," thereby "plundering the nation for five years by buying voters for one day."[1] The governing party of South Africa charged that a competitor stooped to "swine politics" by handing out piglets nearly a year before the 2014 elections.[2] Bulgaria's prime minister proclaimed vote buying to be "one of the ugliest phenomena in Bulgaria's recent history" as he spearheaded related investigations and arrests.[3] In Thailand, a Human Rights Watch observer claimed "everyone buys votes," and the *Bangkok Post* blamed vote-buying accusations for "fuelling" antigovernment protests.[4] Meanwhile, Brazil ousted scores of politicians for distributing handouts during campaigns, reaching a staggering 1,000 removals in just over a decade.[5]

Perhaps these reports are just isolated instances? On the contrary, recent surveys of 63,000 citizens across forty-four countries attest to the remarkable prevalence of such exchanges. The Latin American Public Opinion Project conducted surveys in twenty-six countries across the Americas and discovered that nearly 12 percent of citizens "sometimes" or "always" received offers

[1] "Madhav Nepal against Vote Buying," *Kantipur*, November 16, 2013.
[2] "Piglets Meant to Pay Off at Polls, Says ANC," *Business Day*, June 11, 2013.
[3] Bulgaria Government Information Service, March 25, 2013. See also: "Bulgarian Prosecutors Investigating 43 Cases of Alleged Electoral Fraud," *Sofia Globe*, May 12, 2013; "Bulgarian Politician Arrested for Vote Buying in Varna," *Sofia News Agency*, July 6, 2013; and "2 Bulgarians Sentenced for Vote Buying," *Sofia News Agency*, May 19, 2013.
[4] "Snap Election Turns the Heat on Watchdogs," *Bangkok Post*, December 15, 2013.
[5] Movimento de Combate á Corrupção Eleitoral (2012).

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of benefits in exchange for their votes. This figure exceeded 16 percent in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Paraguay.[6] Likewise, Afrobarometer uncovered that nearly 18 percent of citizens "sometimes" or "often" receive offers for their votes in the eighteen African countries it surveyed. Remarkably, figures surpassed 30 percent in Benin, Kenya, Madagascar, and Uganda.[7] And these findings are likely to be underestimates, because citizens tend to underreport such offers.[8]

This familiar pattern of exchanges – frequently called clientelism or machine politics – is the central focus of this book. Nearly all politicians promise some form of benefits to voters, so what distinguishes clientelism from "politics as usual?" A key distinction is *contingency*: citizens promise to vote for a politician in order to receive clientelist benefits.[9] In return for these promises, citizens may receive handouts during election campaigns or benefits that continue for years. This contingency contrasts sharply with the "programmatic" politics observed in some countries (especially in many but not all advanced democracies), in which citizens do not have to promise to vote for a politician in order to receive benefits.

Over the years, many scholars have been captivated by the question of how clientelism dies in some countries.[10] This book inverts the question and asks how clientelism survives. Fundamental challenges examined next might be expected to undercut machine politics, but the phenomenon remains remarkably resilient in many contexts. A cross-country survey of 1,400 experts by Herbert Kitschelt (2013) confirms that clientelism persists in more than 90 percent of nations, with "moderate" or "major" clientelist efforts in 74 percent of countries.[11] And far from abating, clientelism proves surprisingly durable. According to the study, over the past decade, politicians' clientelist efforts remained constant in half of countries, and even *increased* in another quarter of nations.[12]

[6] 2010 Latin American Public Opinion Project. Several other countries reached comparable figures. See also Faughnan and Zechmeister (2011).

[7] Afrobarometer Round 3 Survey (fielded in 2005 and 2006).

[8] Addressing social desirability bias often yields far greater prevalence rates (e.g., Gonzalez-Ocantos et al., 2012).

[9] For a discussion of the key role of contingency, see Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007, 10–11) and Hicken (2011, 291–292).

[10] Recent examples examining why clientelism declines (either partially or entirely) include Stokes et al. (2013), Hagopian (2014), Weitz-Shapiro (2012), Lyne (2008), Kuo (2013), Montero (2012), Lloyd (2012), and Pasotti (2010).

[11] Expert survey in 2008–2009 of eighty-eight countries (all democratic polities with populations of at least two million citizens). Question: "In general, how much effort do politicians and parties in this country make to induce voters with preferential benefits to cast their votes for them?" Coded as persisting if most of a country's experts indicated "minor," "moderate," or "major" efforts.

[12] Calculated by author using data from Kitschelt (2013). Based on average responses of experts for each country.

1.1 THE PUZZLE

The persistence of clientelism throughout much of the world is striking, given the wide range of challenges that ostensibly threaten its existence. Scholars emphasize that four broad categories of challenges often threaten machine politics: structural changes, institutional reforms, legal enforcement, and partisan strategies. A brief, non-exhaustive overview of such challenges clarifies why the survival of clientelism is an intriguing puzzle.

Structural changes such as economic development may threaten machine politics. Observers long believed that direct exchanges of votes for benefits would wane as countries modernized (cf. Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007, 3; Hagopian, 2014). Although its persistence in some wealthy countries tempered such expectations, many contemporary studies contend that economic development undermines clientelism through poverty reduction. Clientelism is most prevalent in low-income countries, and within countries, politicians tend to distribute selective benefits disproportionately to poor citizens (Kitschelt, 2011; Stokes et al., 2013). Microeconomic theory points to one reason why: the diminishing marginal utility of income suggests poor citizens place relatively greater value on material benefits than on ideological preferences (Dixit and Londregan, 1996, 1114; Stokes, 2005, 315). Risk aversion and time preferences are other frequently cited reasons why poor citizens may be most prone to machine politics.[13] Regardless of why poverty and clientelism are linked, the plausible implication is that economic development should hinder machine politics so long as poverty declines. Yet clientelism has survived (and sometimes even thrived) amid a sharp increase in per capita income across the world over the last century (Maddison, 2001), as well as the halving of global poverty since 1990.[14] Similarly, machine politics endured in most of the world amid other structural changes posited to undermine the phenomenon. Examples include urbanization (which may inhibit clientelist monitoring) and population growth (which may raise the relative cost of clientelism).[15] Given economic development and other structural changes, how does clientelism remain so resilient?

Institutional reforms present another reason why the survival of machine politics is perplexing. Although various political and electoral institutions influence politicians' incentives to pursue clientelism (Carey and Shugart, 1995;

[13] For a discussion about the role of risk aversion, see Desposato (2007, 104) and Stokes et al. (2013, 163–164). For poor citizens' preference for immediate benefits, see Scott (1969, 1150) and Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007, 3).

[14] World Bank Poverty Overview. Accessed November 21, 2017 at www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview. See also "World Bank Says U.N. Goal of Halving Poverty Met," *Reuters*, February 29, 2012.

[15] Increasing geographic mobility may render clientelist monitoring more difficult (Hicken, 2011, 299–300), while electorate growth may favor programmatic politics over clientelism due to economies of scale (Stokes et al., 2013, chap. 8).

Hicken, 2007),[16] the contemporary literature overwhelmingly identifies one institution as clientelism's biggest threat: the secret ballot. With the introduction of the secret ballot, what prevents citizens from accepting rewards and then voting as they wish? Ballot secrecy may undermine clientelism by making it difficult, if not impossible, to verify how citizens vote. Of course, it is widely known that many politicians violate ballot secrecy; for example, Filipinos distribute carbon paper to copy ballots and Italians lend mobile phones to photograph vote choices (Schaffer and Schedler, 2007, 30–31). Without denying the fallibility of ballot secrecy, most researchers concur that the institution hampers some forms of clientelism by increasing monitoring costs (e.g., Cox and Kousser, 1981; Rusk, 1974; Stokes, 2005). Compulsory voting is another important threat to clientelism because it undermines politicians' ability to use benefits to influence *whether* citizens vote. Beyond influencing vote choices, selective benefits often mobilize supporters and demobilize opposition voters (Cox, 2009; Cox and Kousser, 1981; Nichter, 2008). Abstention penalties hinder such strategies: they shrink the pool of nonvoting supporters who can be targeted and make it tougher to induce opposers to stay home on election day (Gans-Morse, Mazzuca, and Nichter, 2014). Many countries have adopted such institutions that are supposedly inimical to machine politics: the secret ballot is one of the most ubiquitous electoral institutions in the world, and nearly thirty countries have compulsory voting (IDEA, 2009; Przeworski, 2012, 98). Given such institutional challenges, how does clientelism survive?

Heightened legal enforcement poses another key challenge for clientelism. In the case of historic Britain and the United States, Stokes et al. (2013, chap. 8) argue that legal reforms and their enforcement helped eradicate the phenomenon, as did economic development and ballot secrecy. Across the world today, nearly 90 percent of nations prohibit clientelism during campaigns (IDEA, 2012). Although enforcement is often weak, many countries are ratcheting up efforts to identify and punish transgressors, including Colombia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Thailand (Eaton and Chambers-Ju, 2014; Hicken, 2007; Schaffer, 2008). In tandem with such domestic efforts, international election monitoring dramatically increased over the last half-century: nearly 80 percent of national elections are currently monitored by foreign observers (Hyde, 2011, 356). Heightened legal enforcement may thwart clientelism if politicians are unwilling to stomach the increased risk of punishment. In addition, it may render clientelism costlier for at least two reasons: increased campaign expenditures to evade detection, and higher citizen compensation if receiving benefits is punishable by law. In contexts with heightened legal enforcement, how does clientelism endure?

In some circumstances, party strategies may also threaten the viability of clientelism. Whereas Martin Shefter's (1977) seminal work attributes

[16] For a brief overview, see also Kitschelt (2000, 859–862) and Hagopian (2014, 19–20).

parties' adoption of clientelist appeals to their formative years,[17] the dominant paradigm now views party strategies as relatively more adaptable to political incentives and circumstances (e.g., Kitschelt, 2000; Levitsky, 2003b). For example, Phil Keefer (2007) argues that politicians tend to rely on clientelism when they cannot credibly promise to enact policies once elected (see also Keefer and Vlaicu, 2008), implying that politicians may abandon the practice once they acquire such credibility. Moreover, Frances Hagopian (2014, 31) contends that neoliberal reforms motivated some parties to pivot away from clientelism and other distributive strategies – and others to shift toward them – depending on how reforms affected parties' relative competitiveness. A commonality of such studies is that they offer conditions under which parties choose to eschew clientelism. Where such conditions pertain, what explains the perpetuation of clientelism?

This discussion of potential threats to clientelism is not meant to be exhaustive. But a broader point emerges when considering this confluence of structural changes, institutional reforms, legal enforcement, and partisan strategies. As examined extensively in this study, many commonly observed factors might be expected to cripple machine politics. Yet the direct exchange of benefits for political support continues throughout much of the world. Amid so many ostensibly fatal challenges, what mechanisms sustain the patterns of clientelism observed in so many countries?

1.2 THE ARGUMENT

This book argues that citizens play a crucial yet underappreciated role in sustaining clientelism. Despite rising incomes, most of the world's population remains vulnerable to adverse shocks such as unemployment, illness, and droughts. When the state fails to provide an adequate social safety net, this vulnerability motivates many citizens to buttress the stability of "relational clientelism" – ongoing exchange relationships that extend beyond election campaigns. Although relational clientelism is often resilient to many of the challenges discussed earlier, it is especially prone to opportunistic defection, a crucial problem that citizens' actions help alleviate. More specifically, ongoing exchange relationships involve a dual credibility problem: (1) politicians are concerned about whether citizens' promises to deliver political support are credible, and (2) citizens are concerned about whether politicians' promises to deliver benefits are credible. Citizens who depend on these relationships frequently employ two mechanisms to help sustain relational clientelism: they *declare support* to signal their own credibility, and they *request benefits* to screen politician credibility. Citizens who promise to vote for a politician in exchange for material benefits are deemed more trustworthy when they publicly

[17] More specifically, Shefter (1977) suggests parties tend to employ patronage if they mobilized a popular base before bureaucratic professionalization, but could not do so otherwise.

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declare support by displaying political paraphernalia on their homes, on their bodies, and at rallies. Likewise, politicians who promise assistance during adverse shocks in exchange for political support are deemed more trustworthy when they have a track record of fulfilling their clients' requests. Through both mechanisms, citizens often play an instrumental role in the survival of relational clientelism.

1.3 THE ROLE OF CITIZENS

Clientelism is typically depicted as a top–down phenomenon that is firmly controlled by elites. Citizens involved in exchanges are usually viewed as bit actors who do little more than accept offers and follow instructions from politicians and their representatives. Without denying the importance of elites, I reject the common assumption that citizens are relegated to a passive role in clientelism. Instead, this book argues that the purposive choices of citizens often play a fundamental role in the survival of clientelism.

In much of the world, increased voter autonomy enables citizens to make choices that help sustain clientelism. Traditional literature on the topic examined enduring exchange relationships that were highly asymmetric (e.g., Cornelius, 1977; Powell, 1970), and thus provided few options for citizens to engage in political actions of their volition. In contemporary societies, voters typically have far greater independence within exchange relationships than their historical counterparts, who were often locked into patron–client bonds due to land-tenure arrangements (e.g., Hall, 1974; Scott, 1972, 93). Moreover, many countries have shifted from monopolistic to competitive clientelism (Kitschelt, 2011, 16); when exchanges are no longer dominated by a single machine, the potential scope for citizen choice often increases as voters have alternative sources of handouts. Several analysts of clientelism document a decrease in elite control over citizens (e.g., Archer, 1990; Gay, 2006; Scott, 1972), and others discuss the increased power of voters (e.g., Hilgers, 2012; Piattoni, 2001; Taylor-Robinson, 2010). Nevertheless, the broader literature – including nearly all formal and quantitative research on the topic – tends to give short shrift to the implications of heightened voter autonomy. Studies of clientelism almost invariably focus on the strategies of politicians and their representatives, and generally offer few insights about how the choices of citizens might also influence exchanges. By contrast, the present book puts voter choice into stark relief, and argues that actions chosen by citizens frequently bolster the stability of ongoing exchange relationships.

Across the world, many voters have a powerful motivation for undertaking such actions – elites often help their clients cope with vulnerability. The concept of vulnerability employed in this book encompasses both poverty and risk, given that both low average income and high uncertainty can reduce a citizen's

welfare (Ligon and Schechter, 2003).[18] Although poverty has declined in many countries in recent decades, many people remain susceptible to various sources of uncertainty, including unemployment, illness, and drought. Nearly a half-century ago, James Scott linked the survival of patron–client ties in Southeast Asia to a lack of institutionalized ways in which citizens could ensure their livelihood (1972, 101–102). While Scott did not focus on the role of citizen choices, his insights remain relevant. Citizens often strive to sustain relational clientelism if the state does not mitigate their vulnerability; for example, if social policy fails to provide income during bouts of unemployment, health care during illness, or water during droughts. Much of the world's population remains underserved or excluded by social policy, as the welfare systems of both developed and developing countries have embarked on diverse trajectories (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 1996; Haggard and Kaufman, 2008). Although legislation in many countries promises a wide range of social policy benefits, actual delivery to citizens often falls short due to various factors ranging from administrative constraints to political targeting (Mares and Carnes, 2009, 94). And contrary to the notion of a welfare state facilitated by an insulated modern bureaucracy (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 13), evidence from around the world demonstrates that anti-poverty benefits and even health care are frequently allocated on the basis of political criteria (e.g., Cammett, 2011; Diaz-Cayeros et al., 2016). When citizens deem social policy to be inadequate or politicized, they are often motivated to sustain ongoing exchange relationships with politicians who mitigate their vulnerability.

1.4 RELATIONAL CLIENTELISM

Although scholars rarely consider the role of voter choice in clientelism, substantial research emphasizes how some elites provide assistance through ongoing exchange relationships – a phenomenon I term "relational clientelism" (Nichter, 2010). A prominent study by Robert Merton, for instance, argued that political machines (i.e., clientelist parties) in the United States once played an important "social function" by dispensing "all manner of assistance to those in need" (1968, 128; see also Banfield and Wilson, 1963, 126). Drawing analogies between such patterns in the early United States and in developing countries, James Scott similarly explained that the machine's handouts "symbolized its accessibility, helpfulness, and desire to work for the 'little man' " (1969, 1144). Decades later, Judith Chubb emphasized that Italy's Christian Democratic Party doled out clientelist favors as part of "a much more continuous relationship than that produced by the dispensation of benefits just prior to elections" (1982, 174). And along the same vein, Steven Levitsky explored how Argentina's Peronist party frequently delivered assistance to constituents (including the

[18] For a more extensive definition and formal analyses of vulnerability, see Ligon and Schechter (2003). Vulnerability is examined thoroughly in Chapter 4.

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clientelist disbursement of food and medicine) through an extensive network of "base units" (Levitsky, 2003b, 186–190; see also Auyero, 2001). The present book builds on this influential line of research and demonstrates how citizen actions help sustain such ongoing patterns of relational clientelism.

While my focus on relational clientelism thus rests on considerable precedent, it diverges substantially from the more recent literature's depiction of exchange relations. The vast majority of studies published on the topic over the past decade fixate on "electoral clientelism" – a far more episodic phenomenon that exclusively provides benefits during election campaigns.[19] This strand of research depicts politicians and their representatives as providing campaign handouts to citizens who are unlikely to vote for them in an imminent election, in exchange for promising to act as instructed. A prominent example is Susan Stokes's (2005) work on vote buying in Argentina, which contends that the Peronist party targets weakly opposed voters during campaigns and induces them to switch their votes. Another example is my work on turnout buying, which argues that politicians target nonvoting supporters and induce them to show up on Election Day (Nichter, 2008; see also Cox, 2009). Studies of electoral clientelism are silent about the role (or even existence) of clientelist handouts in the years between election campaigns. As with the overall literature, these studies also generally relegate citizens to a passive role. Citizens only receive clientelist benefits if targeted during campaigns, and their only choice tends to be whether to accept nonnegotiable handouts offered by elites. In sharp contrast to this recent wave of research, the present book considers patterns of clientelism during *and* after campaigns, and argues that citizens' choices play a crucial role in sustaining ongoing exchange relationships.

In order to clarify the distinction between relational clientelism and electoral clientelism, Figure 1.1 describes their key defining attributes. As shown in the upper box, both forms of clientelism share the first attribute: the provision of material benefits is contingent on a citizen's political support.[20] In exchange for benefits, a citizen promises that he or she will provide (or has provided) political support. Next, the lower box shows a second attribute regarding the timing of benefits. A fundamental distinction emerges: only with relational clientelism do these contingent benefits extend beyond election campaigns. By contrast, electoral clientelism distributes benefits *exclusively* during campaigns. With respect to this second attribute, two points deserve emphasis. First, relational clientelism need not suspend assistance to clients during campaigns. Thus, in order to determine whether a campaign handout constitutes electoral or

[19] Examples of studies exclusively focusing on electoral clientelism include: Aidt and Jensen (2016), Bratton (2008), Gans-Morse et al. (2014), Gonzalez-Ocantos et al. (2012), Gonzalez-Ocantos et al. (2014), Jensen and Justesen (2014), Larreguy et al. (2016), Morgan and Várdy (2012), Nichter (2008), Rueda (2016), Stokes (2005), and Vicente (2014).

[20] For a discussion of contingency in clientelism, see also Kitschelt (2000, 849–850), Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007, 10–11, 22), Hicken (2011, 291–292), Robinson and Verdier (2013, 1), and Stokes et al. (2013, 7).

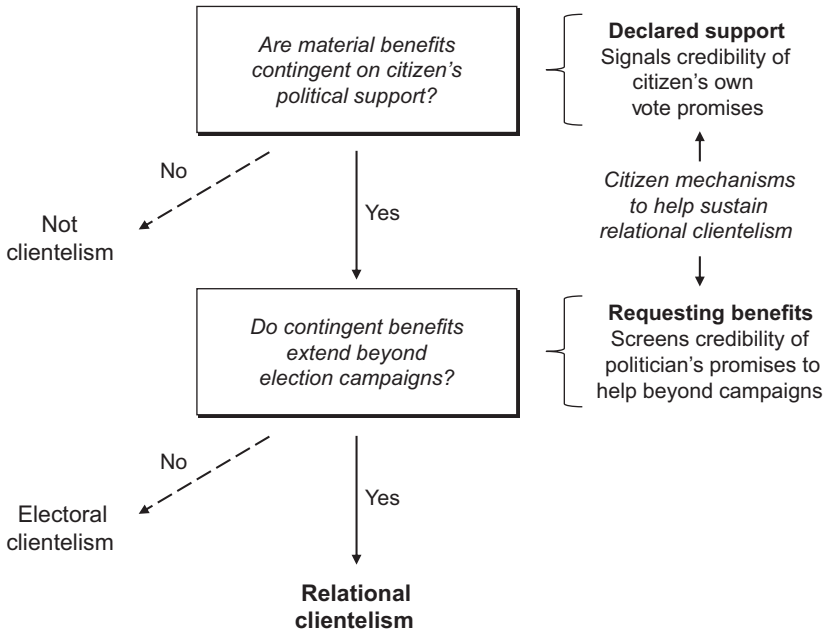

FIGURE 1.1 *Relational clientelism: Defining attributes and citizen mechanisms*

relational clientelism, it is necessary to ascertain whether a citizen's receipt of contingent benefits also extends beyond campaigns. Much of what scholars interpret as electoral clientelism is actually relational clientelism, because most studies fail to make this distinction. And second, relational clientelism does not necessarily provide a steady flow of benefits. As shown extensively in this book, much of relational clientelism involves periodic claims for assistance during adverse shocks, which can strike at any moment, including both election and non-election periods.

Most of the extant literature elides the crucial distinction between relational and electoral clientelism. On the other hand, much research emphasizes important differences between the broader concept of clientelism and other modalities of distributing benefits, such as programmatic politics, pork-barrel politics, and constituency service. Within Figure 1.1, these other forms of distributive politics are situated in the upper box's left branch, as each lacks the contingency that is a hallmark of clientelism. With programmatic politics, parties or candidates offer policy proposals to voters, and employ a codified approach when implementing policies (Kitschelt, 2000, 850). While these policies may favor broad swathes of citizens, benefits are distributed without regards to how or whether a potential recipient voted. With pork-barrel politics, elites target particular geographic districts with non-excludable benefits such as hospitals or roads (Golden, 2003, 200). This non-excludability of benefits inhibits contingent exchange;

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residents in targeted districts cannot be precluded from receiving benefits based on their voting behavior. Two other forms of distributive politics similarly lack contingent exchange, and thus should also not be confused with any type of clientelism. With constituency service, politicians provide personalized assistance to residents of their districts, without using any political criteria to favor particular individuals (Fenno, 1978). Finally, with nonbinding favoritism, elites target recipients based on their political stripes, but without requiring votes in return; instead, benefits are distributed to generate goodwill during future elections. Unlike these various forms of distributive politics, citizens involved in relational and electoral clientelism promise political support in exchange for benefits.

The major challenges discussed earlier threaten both of these forms of clientelism – electoral clientelism (in which benefits are limited to campaigns) and relational clientelism (in which benefits extend beyond campaigns). But as explored in Chapter 3, relational clientelism is often more resilient to each category of challenges: structural changes, institutional reforms, legal enforcement, and partisan strategies. For example, even when economic development reduces poverty, continued vulnerability often leaves citizens reliant on ongoing exchange relationships with politicians during adverse shocks. Ballot secrecy fails to cripple relational clientelism because it does not rely on monitoring vote choices of opposing voters; citizens enmeshed in ongoing relationships prefer to vote for politicians who have a proven track record of providing them help. Likewise, relational clientelism is not scuttled by compulsory voting because it does not rely on mobilizing nonvoting supporters (or demobilizing opposition voters). Heightened enforcement of anti-clientelism laws typically focuses on election campaigns, yet much of relational clientelism occurs once the campaign season is over; moreover, benefits are channeled to supporters who are less likely to report their politicians' handouts to authorities. And as demonstrated in the context of Brazil, relational clientelism remained resilient even as some leading parties may have pivoted away from clientelism. Broadening the study of clientelism to consider such ongoing relationships – rather than just campaign handouts – is thus central to understanding how the phenomenon survives major challenges.

Although relational clientelism is more resilient than electoral clientelism to many challenges, it involves more complex – and potentially debilitating – issues pertaining to the trustworthiness of promises. This book argues that citizens buttress the stability of relational clientelism by undertaking actions that alleviate such credibility problems. These voter choices are fundamental to the survival of clientelism, because credibility underpins the viability of contingent exchanges. As discussed earlier, all forms of clientelism involve contingent exchange, in which citizens promise political support in exchange for benefits. Clientelism is effective to the extent that citizens fulfill such promises, so politicians are concerned about the threat of opportunistic defection. Thus, a common feature of both electoral and relational clientelism is

that the credibility of a citizen's promises affects the actions of politicians. More specifically, politicians evaluate whether a citizen's promises to provide political support are trustworthy when deciding whether to provide clientelist benefits. The credibility of these promises is affected in part by the extent to which opportunistic defection can be monitored and punished.[21] When citizens cannot credibly promise to provide political support, they are relatively unlikely to receive assistance through ongoing exchange relationships – or even episodic payoffs during elections – from clientelist politicians.

Even though credibility problems plague both forms of clientelism, they prove to be doubly pernicious for relational clientelism. Whereas the credibility of citizens' promises is crucial for all forms of machine politics, relational clientelism also relies on the credibility of *politicians'* promises. Relational clientelism involves promises of benefits beyond campaigns, and citizens may doubt whether a given politician will actually fulfill such promises after an election. In the case of Brazil, a recent national survey found that 82 percent of respondents believe most candidates do not fulfill promises they make during campaigns.[22] Given this risk of opportunistic defection in relational clientelism, citizens' actions are affected by a politician's credibility. Electoral clientelism is fundamentally different because it does not involve promises of favors outside of the election season. Citizens receive all benefits during campaigns *before* voting. Hence, citizens do not face the risk of opportunistic defection and their actions are not affected by a politician's credibility. As explored extensively in this book, the dual credibility problem facing relational clientelism – in which both citizens and politicians are concerned about the trustworthiness of promises – poses a key threat to the viability of ongoing exchange relationships.[23]

1.5 THE MECHANISMS

The choices of citizens play a crucial role in alleviating this dual credibility problem, thereby helping to sustain relational clientelism. This book focuses on two key mechanisms by which citizens can attenuate credibility problems: *declared*

[21] For an analysis of how monitoring and punishment can affect credibility (not involving clientelism), see Lupia and McCubbins (1994, 99–100). The effect of monitoring on electoral clientelism is examined in Chapter 2. Other factors also affect credibility, such as information about a citizen's reciprocity (Finan and Schechter, 2012; Lawson and Greene, 2014).

[22] Survey conducted by research firm Vox Populi on behalf of the Associação dos Magistrados Brasileiros in July 2008. Included 1,502 respondents across all regions of Brazil.

[23] To the best of my knowledge, only Nichter (2010) and Hanusch and Keefer (2013) distinguish the credibility issues faced by different forms of clientelism. On the other hand, the general discussion of credibility problems is common in the clientelism literature. Most focus on citizen credibility (e.g., Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007; Stokes, 2005) or elite credibility (e.g., Keefer, 2007). Studies by Robinson and Verdier (2013, 1) and Finan and Schechter (2010, 1) mention the "double" credibility problem involving citizens and elites.

support and *requesting benefits*. Declared support mitigates concerns about whether citizens in ongoing exchange relationships are trustworthy. When citizens publicly pledge their political support, they signal the credibility of their vote promises. In addition, citizen requests allay concerns about whether politicians involved in relational clientelism are trustworthy. By requesting benefits and screening out unresponsive politicians, citizens can ameliorate their own concerns about the trustworthiness of politicians' promises to help during adverse shocks. As shown in Figure 1.1, each of these mechanisms alleviates credibility issues stemming from the two defining attributes of relational clientelism discussed earlier. Chapter 3 thoroughly elaborates how and why declared support and requesting benefits mitigate citizens' and politicians' concerns in enduring clientelist relationships. Subsequent chapters provide substantial evidence of both mechanisms in Brazil and in several other countries. Before providing a further synopsis of the logic of these mechanisms, it should be underscored that they are by no means the only ways in which citizens can reinforce ongoing exchange relationships. Nevertheless, evidence of both mechanisms corroborates the central argument of this book – the choices of citizens often play an instrumental role in the survival of relational clientelism.

When citizens declare support, it is commonly assumed that their exclusive motivation is to express political views or to provide free advertising for preferred candidates. Without a doubt, many voters across the world have such objectives in mind when they place campaign flags and banners on their homes, wear partisan paraphernalia, or hold signs at rallies. But for citizens involved in ongoing exchange relationships, declaring support also enables them to convince politicians that their promises of political support are trustworthy. As explained earlier, citizens are relatively unlikely to receive clientelist benefits unless their promises are credible, and they recognize that politicians may otherwise be unsure whether to believe them. They can pledge their support privately to politicians and their representatives, but this action may be interpreted as mere cheap talk. To distinguish themselves from insincere promisers of political support, citizens can signal the credibility of their vote promises through public declarations of support. This mechanism mitigates an important information asymmetry that remains largely unexplored in the clientelism literature: citizens have superior information about their own preferences. By declaring support, citizens transmit information about who they prefer to win in an upcoming election, thereby signaling whether they are likely to fulfill their promises to vote for politicians with whom they have ongoing clientelist relationships. To be sure, citizens in such relationships who prefer that a competitor wins also have an incentive to feign trustworthiness by declaring support. But for these citizens, who are relatively unlikely to fulfill their vote promises, declaration is often too costly: in addition to any material costs, declaring publicly against one's preferences involves expressive costs and may undesirably influence the election. A signaling model elaborated

in Chapter 3 clarifies the logic by which citizens can employ declared support to signal their credibility, thereby alleviating an information asymmetry that undermines relational clientelism.

Declared support, however, mitigates only one side of the dual credibility problem. How do voters in clientelist relationships know whether to trust politicians' promises to provide assistance during illness, drought, and other adverse shocks? The present book argues that citizen requests are a key mechanism that allays such concerns. Although most studies of clientelism focus exclusively on exchanges initiated by elites, many citizens *ask* for benefits. Of course, not all responsiveness to such requests involves clientelism; for example, politicians may engage in constituency service, which provides help to citizens without any contingent exchanges. By contrast, politicians who engage in relational clientelism promise benefits that extend beyond campaigns in exchange for political support. When citizens in clientelist relationships demand help from their entrusted politicians, they not only potentially receive immediate benefits but also elicit information about the trustworthiness of these promises. This mechanism of requesting benefits addresses an important information asymmetry: politicians have superior knowledge about whether they will reliably fulfill their promises of help to clients. For instance, politicians are more informed about discretionary resources available to assist clients, what share of these discretionary resources they will allocate to providing such assistance, and how many voters they have vowed to help. Despite such hidden characteristics, politicians develop reputations based on their track record of fulfilling or denying clients' requests. Within the context of ongoing exchange relationships, citizens screen against politicians based on these reputations. More specifically, they terminate their relationships with politicians who have tarnished reputations, by refusing to vote for them. Chapter 3 elaborates the logic by which citizens can screen politician credibility by requesting benefits, thereby mitigating another information asymmetry that threatens ongoing exchange relationships.

These two mechanisms involving the choices of citizens – declared support and requesting benefits – thus alleviate both sides of the dual credibility problem that threatens the survival of relational clientelism. Both mechanisms can contribute to the often self-reinforcing nature of ongoing exchange relationships: an equilibrium entails an endogenous feedback loop in which citizens and politicians have "self-confirming" beliefs about each other (Spence, 1973, 359–360). On the one hand, citizens have beliefs that politicians who fulfill requests will continue to deliver promised help after an election. Such beliefs are confirmed when citizens discover that such politicians do indeed comply with these promises. On the other hand, politicians have beliefs that citizens who declare support will later provide political support, especially their votes. Even if politicians cannot observe vote choices, their beliefs are confirmed (or at least not disconfirmed) when citizens declare for them again in future campaigns, and in some contexts, when they observe aggregate vote totals in declarers'

localities. Overall, the choices of citizens not only mitigate the dual credibility problem in relational clientelism but also provide microfoundations for why in many cases exchange relationships are self-reinforcing over time.

1.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR CLIENTELISM

The choices of citizens not only help to explain the endurance of clientelism but also shed light on an intriguing paradox. Given that many prominent studies depict clientelism as "reward targeting," why do politicians expend scarce campaign funds targeting citizens who are already persuaded and mobilized? Evidence from around the world shows that politicians predominantly distribute campaign handouts to supporters who reliably turn out (Nichter and Peress, 2016; Stokes et al. 2013).[24] This book argues that providing ongoing benefits to supporters is part and parcel of relational clientelism – and moreover, these citizens frequently receive benefits not because they are "targeted," but rather because they initiate requests for them. Politicians have an incentive to fulfill requests of supporters because otherwise they transmit information that their promises of benefits are not credible. This information undermines clientelist relationships that take years to cultivate, as supporters frequently (and credibly) threaten to vote against preferred candidates when their requests are unfulfilled. Citizen requests are thus a mechanism that complements the insightful work of Diaz-Cayeros et al. (2016). Their study, which focuses on party strategies and does not analyze requests, argues that core supporters are targeted with private benefits because otherwise they will become swing voters in the future (what they call "conditional party loyalty").[25] In addition, the present book's focus on citizens provides a different explanation for why supporters receive contingent benefits than that of Stokes et al. (2013). Their important study argues that party leaders intend to target swing voters, but are thwarted by brokers who find it cheaper to distribute benefits to voting supporters. The mechanisms of our studies, which focus on different information asymmetries, are likely to coexist in many settings.[26] Indeed, some unexplored findings in Stokes et al. (2013) underscore the important role of citizens in clientelism; for example, over half of Argentine brokers in their survey reported that they distribute most benefits in direct response to citizen requests (2013, 105).

[24] This book primarily provides evidence from Brazil that supporting voters are targeted. It also presents evidence of these patterns in Argentina and cross-nationally in Africa and Latin America (building on Nichter and Peress, 2016). An important contribution by Stokes et al. (2013) demonstrates this pattern in Argentina, India, Mexico, and Venezuela.

[25] The authors also argue that parties employ a portfolio diversification strategy, in which swing districts receive local public goods.

[26] As discussed in Chapter 8, the Brazilian mayors and councilors examined in this book often serve as brokers for higher-level politicians. In Argentina, councilors comprise 300 of the 800 brokers surveyed by Stokes et al. (2013, 268).

Although the present book argues that citizens often play an instrumental role in sustaining ongoing exchange relationships, it does not claim that they *always* do so. With regards to demand-side factors, the theoretical argument entails two scope conditions for citizens: *voter autonomy* and *vulnerability*. First, my focus on voter choice presumes that citizens have sufficient autonomy to engage in political actions of their own volition. Citizens may be unable to make independent choices to declare support or demand benefits if elites employ substantial coercion, a key feature in the traditional literature on clientelism that persists in some contexts (Mares and Young, 2016; Piattoni, 2001, 12). As discussed in Chapter 8, voter autonomy may be especially limited in some authoritarian contexts, even if they allow some form of limited electoral politics. Voter autonomy may also be relatively curtailed in some areas with monopolistic clientelism, which in traditional settings often limited citizens' exit options by restricting alternative sources of benefits (Piattoni, 2001, 12). Second, the argument presumes that citizens face vulnerability, a concept that encompasses both poverty and risk (Ligon and Schechter, 2003). If citizens experience neither poverty nor unprotected risk, the allure of contingent benefits may not motivate them to declare support or initiate demands. Thus, welfare states that mitigate adverse shocks through institutionalized channels may obviate citizens' reliance on ongoing exchange relationships with politicians. Chapter 8 explores the implication that relational clientelism (though not necessarily electoral clientelism) erodes as welfare states are introduced, an argument made by influential work that does not analyze the role of citizens (e.g., Banfield and Wilson, 1963; Scott, 1969). In the absence of a welfare state, rising incomes are unlikely to shield citizens from vulnerability, unless citizens can afford to self-insure against risks. These scope conditions – voter autonomy and vulnerability – shed light on why citizens do not always act to bolster relational clientelism.

Just as demand-side factors help to explain why citizens may not exert effort to sustain relational clientelism, so do supply-side factors. Although the objective of this study is to call attention to the undertheorized role of citizens in exchanges, elites obviously also play a fundamental role. The argument of this book – that citizen actions help to sustain relational clientelism – presupposes the existence of ongoing exchange relationships. However, there are numerous conditions under which politicians or parties might not provide benefits during adverse shocks in exchange for political support. On the one hand, they may choose to devote minimal or no resources to clientelism. For instance, Rebecca Weitz-Shapiro (2012) argues that politicians may "opt out" of clientelism when middle-class voters penalize politicians for distributing clientelist benefits.[27] And as mentioned, Phil Keefer (2007) contends that politicians tend to rely on clientelism when they are unable to make credible promises about policy,

[27] Weitz-Shapiro (2012) argues this effect pertains given a large middle class and strong political competition.

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suggesting they may no longer do so when they achieve such credibility. On the other hand, elites may be unable to engage in clientelism. They may lack resources altogether, or they may not have sufficient discretion over available resources to distribute them in a politicized manner. However, clientelism can thrive on the politics of scarcity, so long as elites have substantial discretion over limited resources (Chubb, 1982, 5–6). Politicians may also lack the dense organizational structure that machines typically use to learn about citizens' preferences, monitor their actions, and deliver benefits (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007, 8–9; Stokes, 2005, 317). Overall, both demand and supply-side factors explain why citizens do not always play an instrumental role in the survival of clientelism.

Even though citizens do not *always* help sustain clientelism, this book argues that in many contexts, they do. To investigate the ways in which citizens take purposive actions to bolster ongoing exchange relationships with politicians, I now turn to Brazil.

1.7 WHY BRAZIL?

This book presents a general argument about how and why many citizens undertake purposive actions to help sustain ongoing clientelist relationships. Given that Kitschelt's 2013 global survey shows the remarkable persistence of clientelism across the world – it continues in over 90 percent of nations – mechanisms could plausibly be investigated in a variety of contexts. I primarily test the argument with empirical materials from Brazil, building on eighteen months of qualitative fieldwork and two original surveys. As discussed next, Brazil presents an especially fortuitous context to examine the survival of clientelism: the phenomenon remains resilient even though many of the challenges discussed earlier are especially daunting. Moreover, the book presents substantial evidence of how citizens buttress the stability of clientelism in Northeast Brazil, which is especially illuminating because much scholarship emphasizes the region's paucity of autonomous voters.

The persistence of clientelism across Brazil's history has long captured scholarly attention (e.g., Andrade, 1997; Hagopian, 1996; Nunes Leal, 1949), with many other influential works also emphasizing its role in Brazilian politics during various periods (e.g., Diniz, 1982; Nunes, 1997; Weyland, 1996).[28] Empirical materials presented in this book suggest that substantial clientelism persists in many parts of contemporary Brazil. For example, a 2010 survey conducted across the nation found that 41 percent of respondents knew someone who had voted in exchange for benefits, though it did not specify

[28] Other examples include Cammack (1982), Carvalho (1997), Collier and Collier (1991), Falcón (1995), Mainwaring (1999), Power (2010), Queiroz (1976) and Vilaça and Albuquerque (1965).

when those benefits were received.[29] A brief discussion of campaign handouts – which may involve electoral or relational clientelism, depending on whether benefits also extend beyond campaigns – motivates thorough analyses in later chapters. The nationally representative Brazilian Electoral Panel Study in 2010, for instance, uncovered considerable evidence of campaign handouts: over 16 percent of respondents were reportedly offered favors, food or other benefits in exchange for their political support during recent campaigns.[30] And belying the common misperception that clientelism only remains in certain regions of Brazil, at least a tenth of respondents in *all* regions reported this phenomenon, as did a quarter of those surveyed in the North and Center-West.[31]

Various other sources, including two original surveys described later, also point to the persistence of clientelism in Brazil. In an online survey conducted across the nation in 2016, only a quarter of citizens believed that campaign handouts had decreased in their own municipalities since 2000. By contrast, 36 percent reported an increase and 26 percent reported no change. In fact, nearly a quarter of all participants responded that the distribution of benefits during campaigns had increased "a lot."[32] Findings were similar in a face-to-face surveys conducted across rural Northeast Brazil: less than one-third of citizens believed that campaign handouts had declined since 2000. By contrast, 43 percent reported an increase and 27 percent reported no change.[33] Likewise, findings were comparable in an elite survey conducted in the Northeast state of Maranhão: less than a quarter of judges, prosecutors and activists believed that campaign handouts had declined in the past decade. In contrast, 45 percent of respondents reported an increase, and 29 percent reported no change.[34] And in Herbert Kitschelt's 2013 cross-national survey, only two of thirteen Brazil experts indicated the country's politicians engaged in "much less" efforts

[29] Survey conducted by research firm IBOPE on behalf of the Associação dos Magistrados Brasileiros in August 2010. Included 2,002 respondents across all regions of Brazil. The question: "Do you know someone who voted in exchange for a benefit?"

[30] Based on data from Ames et al. (2013). The three-wave survey of 2,669 voting-age Brazilians spanned 60 municipalities in 16 states during the presidential campaign. The question: "In recent years and thinking about election campaigns, did a candidate or someone from a political party offer you something, like a favor, food or any other benefit in exchange for your vote or support?" In Wave 1, 10.4 percent chose "sometimes" and 5.9 percent chose "frequently."

[31] The regional breakdown is 26.4 percent in the North, 24.2 percent in the Center-West, 14.3 percent in the Northeast, 13.6 percent in the South, and 9.5 percent in the Southeast.

[32] Data from the Online Clientelism Survey, which is discussed later and in Appendix B. $N = 1{,}964$. Findings similar if only including respondents of voting age in 2000. Question: "In your opinion, in the last 10 years, did the practice of politicians distributing money, goods or services during election campaigns increase or decrease in your municipality?"

[33] Data from the Rural Clientelism Survey, which is discussed later and in Appendix B. $N = 2{,}934$. Findings similar if only including respondents of voting age in 2000. Question: "During which campaign did politicians give more help to voters?"

[34] The author thanks Douglas de Melo Martins (a Brazilian judge) for including this question in his survey, which is discussed in Chapter 2 ($N = 258$). The question is identical to that in the 2016 online survey mentioned earlier.

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to provide preferential benefits than a decade earlier.[35] While such evidence suggests the continued existence of clientelism in Brazil, it does not distinguish between electoral and relational clientelism. As explored extensively in this book, campaign handouts are often distributed not in isolation, but as part and parcel of an ongoing relationship in which benefits extend beyond campaigns. Unlike most of the extant literature, the present study examines patterns of clientelism during both election and non-election years, and thus reveals the important role of relational clientelism in Brazil.

More broadly, extensive evidence in this book demonstrates that clientelism is far from extinct in Brazil – much to the contrary, it continues to pervade many parts of the country. The survival of clientelism in Brazil is puzzling: especially since the nation's democratization in 1985, a series of monumental challenges have confronted the phenomenon. These challenges correspond to the four categories of global threats discussed earlier: structural changes, institutional reforms, legal enforcement and partisan strategies. Given that substantial clientelism continues despite such threats, Brazil provides an intriguing laboratory to investigate the mechanisms underlying its survival.

The resilience of clientelism is surprising in part because of Brazil's significant structural changes, which as explained earlier can undermine contingent exchanges. First, economic development is expected to reduce many Brazilians' willingness to vote against their preferences in exchange for benefits. Notwithstanding Brazil's severe recession experienced in 2015–2016 – potentially its worst in over a century[36] – Chapter 4 documents how incomes of the poor have risen dramatically over the past few decades. Growth in income per capita, especially of the poor, had previously reached what some Brazilian economists dubbed a "Chinese rate" of growth.[37] Remarkably, Brazil achieved a UN Millennium Development Goal – halving poverty in a quarter century – in just six years (IPEA, 2013a, 18). Over the past 20 years, the poverty rate fell from 34.7 percent to 5.9 percent (based on $2 PPP per day) (IPEA, 2013a, 18). A contributor is the rapid expansion of Bolsa Família, one of the world's largest conditional cash transfer programs, which reaches a quarter of Brazil's population (IPEA, 2013b; Soares et al., 2010a). Brazil also exhibits two other structural changes predicted to undercut clientelism, urbanization and population growth. Urbanization heightened the mobility of millions of Brazilians in recent decades (IBGE, 2011), which is predicted to undermine clientelist monitoring. And population growth – along with the renewed enfranchisement of illiterates in 1985 – contributed to an over 87 percent rise in the electorate

35 Survey details discussed earlier. Five indicated "somewhat less," three indicated "somewhat greater," and two indicated "about the same." Question: "Do politicians nowadays make the same, greater or lesser efforts to provide preferential benefits to individuals and small groups of voters than they did about ten years ago?"

36 "Para Meirelles, Brasil terá pior recessão desde 1901," *O Globo*, August 3, 2016.

37 "Brasil Retirou 3,5 Milhões de Pessoas da Pobreza em 2012," Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, 10/1/2013.

over the past quarter century, which is predicted to increase the relative costs of clientelism.[38] Given that Brazil's important structural changes are expected to undercut clientelism, its robust survival is perplexing.

As examined in Chapter 2, several institutional reforms might also be expected to extirpate clientelism in Brazil. Over much of the last century, electoral institutions such as open-list proportional representation and presidentialism fostered clientelism and broader personalistic strategies (Ames, 1995; Mainwaring, 1991). Although such institutions continue, a recent major technological shift ostensibly rendered Brazil a much less propitious environment for clientelism. Brazil became the first nation in the world to introduce fully electronic voting in 2000 (Mercuri, 2002, 48), a shift that dramatically improved ballot secrecy. Many previously efficacious tactics to monitor vote choices became useless without paper ballots, making it difficult to verify vote-buying agreements. Brazil also took several steps to strengthen compulsory voting, hindering politicians' ability to influence electoral participation through clientelism. Moreover, the nation instituted voter registration audits to inhibit "voter buying," a clientelist strategy that imports outsiders into municipalities (Hidalgo and Nichter, 2016). Given that this confluence of reforms might be expected to cripple clientelism, its resilience is surprising.

Brazil's impressive enforcement of anti-clientelism laws might also be expected to extinguish the phenomenon. Although over 150 election observers from 36 countries watched its 2010 presidential election,[39] clientelist politicians face a far more serious threat from domestic watchdogs. Formal laws had prohibited campaign handouts for many decades, but until recently politicians delivered them with impunity because prosecutions were rare. Enforcement began ratcheting up after 1999, when over one million Brazilians signed a petition against campaign handouts and thus prodded the enactment of Law 9840, the first popular initiative approved by the national legislature. As explored in Chapter 2, this new law dramatically increased prosecutions for clientelism and is currently the top reason politicians are removed from office in Brazil. Given that such legal enforcement increases the costs and risks of clientelism, why does the phenomenon persist?

Party strategies provide another reason why clientelism's durability is surprising. Several important Brazilian parties have adopted strategies potentially inimical to clientelism. In a new book, Frances Hagopian (forthcoming) argues that increased programmatic competition in Brazil stems from two parties' strategic choices to eschew exchange politics. Briefly summarized, she contends that the Workers' Party (PT) and the PSDB were "distinctly disadvantaged" in distributing patronage and clientelism, so they instead adopted programmatic

[38] Electorate growth (1988–2013) calculated by author based on TSE statistics (see also Holston, 2008). Electorate growth increases relative costs of clientelism as programmatic strategies entail more economies of scale (Stokes et al., 2013, chap. 8).

[39] "Mais de 150 Observadores de 36 Países Acompanham as Eleições no Brasil," *Tribunal Superior Eleitoral* (*TSE*), October 3, 2010.

policies when faced with neoliberal shocks (Hagopian, 2014, 139). Although the PT's ideological appeals moderated during Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's presidencies (Hunter, 2010), and have been muddled by major corruption scandals (including Operação Lava Jato) and Dilma Rousseff's impeachment, many studies over the years suggest that the PT is relatively more programmatic than other Brazilian parties.[40] Meanwhile, conservative machines in Northeast Brazil (well-known for doling out clientelist benefits) experienced a considerable erosion of power with numerous gubernatorial defeats (Borges, 2007, 2011; Montero, 2012). Given such developments, how does clientelism persist in Brazil?

Amidst this confluence of challenges, the present book argues that the choices of citizens play a key role in explaining the survival of ongoing clientelist relationships in Brazil. Both qualitative and quantitative evidence are marshaled to test this argument. Qualitative evidence stems from eighteen months of fieldwork, including 110 interviews in Bahia state in 2008–2009 and 22 interviews in Pernambuco state in 2012.[41] I conducted formal interviews with 71 elites (primarily mayors and city councilors) and 61 citizens (both urban and rural residents) in municipalities with populations under 100,000 citizens.[42] Whereas most contemporary research on clientelism focuses on major metropolitan areas, over 45 percent of Brazil's population lives in municipalities under 100,000 citizens, as do over 60 percent of residents in the Northeast region (IBGE, 2010).[43] Additional informal interviews about clientelism were also conducted in Brasília in 2013. Other qualitative materials employed include government documents, court cases, and newspaper articles.

The argument is also tested with two original surveys that build on this fieldwork. First, I collaborated with Gustavo Bobonis, Paul Gertler, and Marco Gonzalez-Navarro to conduct a multiyear, three-wave panel survey of approximately 3,700 rural citizens across 9 states in Northeast Brazil (2011–2013).[44] This "Rural Clientelism Survey" was collected in conjunction with a field

[40] The extent to which parties in Brazil are ideologically distinguishable is debated (see Power and Zucco Jr., 2009; and Lucas and Samuels, 2010), but most analysts concur the PT is relatively more programmatic than its peers. For a review of the PT's evolution, see Amaral and Power (2016). Chapter 2 discusses PT efforts against clientelism and recent scandals.

[41] As described in Appendix A, interviews were conducted in Portuguese, lasted an average of seventy minutes, and were nearly all taped and transcribed. I also conducted 350 informal interviews and three focus groups.

[42] Mayors and councilors are elected concurrently in local elections, held nationwide every four years. Mayors are elected by plurality (unless the population exceeds 200,000), can hold office for two consecutive terms, and can be reelected again in later elections. The city council is a municipality's legislative branch. Municipalities have nine to fifty-five councilors (based on population), who are elected without term limits by open-list proportional representation.

[43] Bahia is the most populous state in the Northeast region, with 14 million citizens; Pernambuco is in the same region, with 8.8 million citizens.

[44] There were 3,685 respondents in the 2012 wave, and 3,761 respondents in the 2013 wave. In addition, the 2011 wave gathered baseline data for these and other respondents.

experiment discussed in Chapter 8. Respondents were randomly selected from the federal government's poverty database (Cadastro Único) and, as is common in the rural Northeast, did not have piped water or a water cistern. The survey was conducted in 40 municipalities, selected randomly with geographic stratification.[45] In order to examine patterns elsewhere in Brazil, I then conducted an online survey in collaboration with Salvatore Nunnari in 2016. This survey recruited participants through Facebook advertisements displayed in all municipalities with 250,000 or fewer residents; nearly 60 percent of Brazilians live in such municipalities. Nearly 2,300 citizens participated in the survey, from 1,210 municipalities across the nation. Although online participants were not randomly selected from a sampling frame, their characteristics are fairly representative of Brazil with respect to gender, age, and geographic region. Both surveys are described more extensively in Appendix B.

While the book tests the argument with evidence from across Brazil, its prime focus on the Northeast region is particularly useful for evaluating mechanisms by which citizens help to sustain clientelism. Scholarship on Brazil's Northeast has long emphasized that the region has a paucity of autonomous voters.[46] Indeed, many studies have traditionally discussed its voters using terms such as *votos de cabresto* (halter votes) and *currais eleitorais* (electoral corrals) – both referring to the restraint of animals. One might thus expect the region to offer relatively minimal scope for citizens to undertake actions of their own volition to bolster the stability of ongoing exchange relationships. Yet Part II shows that even in such a context, many citizens declare support and demand benefits from politicians. Such evidence not only demonstrates the mechanisms elaborated in this book, but also challenges the typical assumption that citizens play only a passive role in clientelism.

Overall, this book presents a novel theoretical argument that is primarily tested with unpublished data from two original surveys and interviews. It significantly extends my prior work on the topic, which instead focused predominantly on elite strategies of electoral clientelism. Given Part I's focus on electoral clientelism, a portion of Chapter 2 adapts a typology from Nichter (2008) and discusses findings from Gans-Morse, Mazzuca, and Nichter (2014) and Hidalgo and Nichter (2016). Chapter 3 briefly compares the present book's theoretical contributions with those of Nichter and Peress (2016) and Nichter and Nunnari (2017). Chapter 5, which focuses on declared support, includes a short summary of findings from Nichter and Nunnari (2017). A subset of the comparative evidence in Chapter 7 is adapted from Nichter and Palmer-Rubin (2015) and Nichter and Peress (2016), which both focus exclusively on campaign handouts. In addition, several chapters briefly discuss findings

[45] The random sample was stratified geographically by municipality (with probability proportional to families without access to potable water) and by locality (with probability proportional to eligible households).

[46] For instance, see Nunes Leal (1949), Hoefle (1985), Roniger (1987), Bernal (2001), Bursztyn and Chacon (2013) and Moraes (2015).

from a field experiment that reduced vulnerability in Brazil (Bobonis, Gertler, Gonzalez-Navarro and Nichter, 2018).[47]

1.8 THE PLAN OF THE BOOK

This book, which argues that citizens play an instrumental role in the survival of ongoing exchange relationships, is organized in three parts. Part I sets up this argument through juxtaposition, as it examines why more episodic forms of clientelism are under substantial duress in Brazil. More specifically, Chapter 2 demonstrates that electoral clientelism is undermined by the substantial institutional and legal challenges mentioned earlier. First, it presents a typology of distinct strategies of electoral clientelism and introduces a theoretical framework explaining how politicians employ strategies. The chapter shows why two key factors – rigorous ballot secrecy and stringent compulsory voting – pose significant challenges for contingent exchanges during Brazilian campaigns. Given these challenges, many politicians use campaign rewards to import outsiders into their municipalities, but this expensive tactic is also hindered by extensive voter audits. The chapter then turns to yet another major challenge facing electoral clientelism in Brazil, the enactment of a new law against campaign handouts that has ousted over a thousand politicians from office. Amidst such challenges, electoral clientelism has declined in Brazil, though some politicians still employ its risky and unreliable strategies as a secondary measure.

Next, Part II pivots to relational clientelism. Chapter 3 shows that relational clientelism is relatively resilient to the challenges faced by electoral clientelism in Part I, but is threatened by a dual credibility problem. The survival of ongoing exchange relationships is imperiled by the possibility that citizens or politicians may engage in opportunistic defection: citizens may renege on their vote promises, and politicians may renege on their promises of material benefits. As explored in the chapter, voters often undertake purposive actions to mitigate this dual credibility problem, and thereby fortify relational clientelism. Vulnerability frequently motivates clients to do so, as enduring clientelist relationships provide an important form of informal insurance when the state fails to provide an adequate social safety net. To elaborate this argument, Chapter 3 distills the logic and mechanisms by which citizens buttress the stability of relational clientelism. In particular, the theoretical chapter examines two citizen mechanisms introduced earlier – *declared support* and *requesting benefits*. Building on a signaling model, it examines how citizens can declare support to transmit meaningful information about the credibility of their vote promises. In addition, the chapter elaborates the logic by which citizens can

47 Several interview quotes about declared support and citizen requests also appear in Nichter (2009, 2014a) and Nichter and Peress (2016), respectively.

screen against politicians who are unlikely to follow through on promises of benefits beyond election campaigns.

Subsequent chapters in Part II flesh out and test the argument, building on empirical materials from Brazil. Chapter 4 argues that despite rising income, vulnerability spurs many citizens to sustain ongoing exchange relationships with politicians. First, the chapter examines Brazil's substantial pro-poor income growth, fueled in large part by labor income, social pensions, and a conditional cash transfer program. Analyses show that campaign handouts become less attractive as income increases, as theory predicts. Nevertheless, many Brazilians continue to be vulnerable to adverse shocks, including unemployment, illness, and drought. Given the unemployment insurance system's focus on formal employees and stringent requirements, less than a tenth of Brazilians who lose their jobs receive benefits. Inadequacies in the public health care system often contribute to catastrophic out-of-pocket expenditures, and most citizens cannot afford private health insurance. And recurring droughts threaten many citizens' livelihood, with 40 percent of survey respondents in rural Northeast Brazil facing a water shortage at some point in their lives. The chapter also demonstrates that local politicians have considerable resources and discretion, enabling them to mitigate risks faced by their clients. Overall, vulnerability continues to afflict many Brazilians, providing them an important motivation to help sustain relational clientelism.

Chapter 5 then examines the mechanism of declared support, which enables citizens to signal the trustworthiness of their vote promises. Many Brazilians make public declarations in favor of candidates. While their reasons are multifaceted, evidence points to the role of vulnerability; for example, declarations significantly increase during droughts in rural Northeast Brazil. The chapter demonstrates a substantial link between declared support and relational clientelism. Evidence points to widely shared perceptions that declarations affect whether citizens receive ongoing benefits. Beyond these perceptions, analyses suggest that Brazilians who declare support for victorious candidates are indeed more likely recipients of benefits during election *and* non-election years. Consistent with the logic of signaling elaborated in Chapter 3, qualitative and quantitative evidence suggests that declared support is indeed informative, as citizens overwhelmingly vote and hold perceptions in accordance with their declarations. By allaying politicians' concerns about their trustworthiness, declared support enables many Brazilians to buttress the stability of relational clientelism.

Next, Chapter 6 examines requesting benefits, another key mechanism by which citizens sustain relational clientelism. Even in rural Northeast Brazil, an area not traditionally known for high levels of voter autonomy, the majority of citizens who receive handouts had *asked* politicians for help. Citizens' demands are frequently motivated by vulnerability: most requests involve life necessities, such as water and medicine, and they spike during adverse shocks. Evidence is consistent with both relational clientelism and the logic of screening elaborated

in Chapter 3. Analyses suggest that during both election *and* non-election years, requesters disproportionately receive help, with declared supporters as more likely recipients. Interviews provide insight about the screening role of requests in ongoing clientelist relationships, and regressions show that survey respondents often espouse negative perceptions of politicians who deny their requests, and refuse to vote for them. By eliciting information about politicians' trustworthiness, requesting benefits enables citizens to mitigate an important threat to the survival of relational clientelism.

Finally, Part III places the book's argument in comparative context and examines its broader implications. Chapter 7 extends beyond Brazil, focusing primarily on Argentina and Mexico. For both countries, the chapter investigates challenges for clientelism, such as rising income, heightened ballot secrecy, and increased legal scrutiny. Moreover, it documents substantial vulnerability that can motivate citizens to undertake actions to sustain relational clientelism. An analysis of survey data, complemented by qualitative sources, provides evidence of both mechanisms – declared support and requesting benefits – in Argentina and Mexico. Furthermore, patterns consistent with one or both strategies are observed in Ghana, India, Lebanon, and Yemen, and cross-national data from Africa and Latin America suggest a link between requesting benefits and clientelism. Chapter 8 concludes by providing a summary of the overall argument and discussing implications for democracy and development. It emphasizes that relational clientelism is an inferior substitute for an adequate welfare state, but it provides an informal risk-coping mechanism in countries with patchy coverage. The chapter explores why citizens' actions to fortify ongoing exchange relationships may have important consequences for higher levels of political systems, given that the local politicians examined in this book often serve as brokers for state, provincial, and national politicians in various countries. It also discusses when citizens might shift away from sustaining relational clientelism, drawing on findings from a coauthored field experiment in which our team randomly distributed water cisterns to reduce vulnerability in Northeast Brazil.

More broadly, this book suggests important directions for research on clientelism. First, it emphasizes the need to take more seriously the independent role of voters in the survival of clientelism. Second, it underscores the importance of studying how vulnerability, and not just poverty, affects contingent exchanges. And finally, it calls for refocused attention on ongoing exchange relationships, which have been investigated far less than electoral clientelism in recent years.