GV101 Week 10: Holding Politicians Accountable
Questions to Consider

Teacher: Joe Greenwood

Email: j.greenwood3@lse.ac.uk

Office Hours (by appointment via the Student Hub):
Wednesdays, 10:30 – 11:30, CBG.4.13
Wednesdays, 14:30 – 15:30, CBG.4.13

Country Question:

- Locate your country on the Transparency International Index (www.transparency.org).
  - What do you think might explain the level of corruption in your country?
  - How would you design a mechanism (e.g. an information resource) for holding politicians to account?

Essential Reading Questions:

1. There are three problems for accountability identified by Keefer and Khemani: 'lack of information among voters about the performance of politicians, social fragmentation among voters manifested as identity-based voting, and lack of credibility of political promises to citizens.' Please explain how each of these limits accountability.

2. Keefer and Khemani suggest that there is 'potential for citizens to coordinate information about particular policies and thereby coordinate voter responses for greater political accountability.' How might this potential be realised, if at all?
   a) Can you think of solutions to each of the accountability problems that Keefer and Khemani identify? What are those solutions?

3. How do re-election incentives affect the behaviour of potentially corrupt politicians, according to Ferraz and Finan?
   a) For obvious reasons, Ferraz and Finan focus their analysis on corrupt politicians. How would we expect the behaviour of non-corrupt politicians to differ from corrupt ones? Is this a clear cut distinction?
   b) What factors might influence whether a politician is 'corrupt' or 'non-corrupt'?

4. What are the other factors (beyond re-election incentives) identified by Ferraz and Finan that influence whether politicians behave in a corrupt fashion?
   a) How does the empirical analysis indicate that these factors interact with re-election incentives?

Additional Essential Reading Questions:

5. Keefer and Khemani speak of a 'political market'. Do you think this is an accurate way to conceptualise politics? Why?

6. According to Keefer and Khemani: 'Like uninformed voters, polarized voters are less able to hold politicians accountable for their performance in office.' Why is this?

7. Ferraz and Finan identify possible unobserved (i.e. omitted) variable bias in relation to their models. What are the omitted variables that they are concerned may be causing bias, and why?

8. Do you think that the audits identified by Ferraz and Finan will continue to disincentivise corruption indefinitely? Why?

Further Reading Questions:

9. What is the report card experimental intervention used by Banerjee et al.? What are the three main effects of that intervention?
    a) What are the explanations for the three main effects of the intervention?

10. Banerjee et al. find that 'less-educated voters are able to process coarse information in a relatively sophisticated manner'. Should this be a surprise? Why?

11. Pande provides an overview of the literature (including Banerjee et al.) on experiments designed to examine whether informed voters can enforce better governance, focusing on low-income democracies. Are there any ethical considerations to bear in mind with regard to such experimental approaches?

Essential Readings for Next Week:

- 'Collective Action Theory' section in William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder, *Foundations of Comparative Politics* (London, Sage Publications, 2019), pp. 133-137.

- Cameron G. Theis and Schuyler Porche, 'The Political Economy of Agricultural Protection', *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (Feb., 2007), pp. 116-127.

Further Reading for Next Week:

The further reading questions for next week will be based on the following two sources, which you may choose to focus on:

- 'A Theory of Groups and Organisations' chapter in Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 5-52.

- Henry Farrell, 'The Consequences of the Internet for Politics', *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 15 (Jun., 2012), pp. 35-52.

- Jan H. Pierskalla and Florian M. Hollenbach, 'Technology and Collective Action: The Effect of Cell Phone Coverage on Political Violence in Africa', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 107, No. 2 (May, 2013), pp. 207-224.