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Captured Countryside? Stability and Change in Sub-national Support for African Incumbent Parties[1]

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Abstract:

Many existing accounts of African elections assume that voters base their electoral decisions on cues and incentives that are anchored in highly stable ethnic cleavage structures. Yet several newer contributions to the study of African electoral politics have questioned the ethno-clientelistic voting thesis and highlighted other determinants of vote choice, such as class, ideology and performance evaluation. Existing research has, however, not dealt with geographic dimensions of electoral dynamics. In this paper we contribute to this literature by studying Government-Opposition Swing (GOS) voting in 7 African countries, 28 elections and 1900 parliamentary constituencies. We show that the likelihood of GOS differs from urban to rural, and across different types of rural constituencies. GOS is significantly more common in urban areas and in highly populated rural areas, but significantly less common in the president's home region and in sparsely populated rural regions. The results suggest that electoral and voting dynamics vary across space, even within a single country. We draw inferences about how political and economic geography shapes prospects for autonomous vote choice and performance-related voting.

Elections in Africa have often been described as predictable and non-competitive: voters are expected to base their choice on highly stable ethnic cleavages, and long-standing parties are portrayed as rooted in strong clientilistic networks. The long-dominant ethnic census hypothesis has held that African voters almost always support co-ethnics out of cultural affinity, ideological preference, or the hopes of clientelist rewards.[2] Recent work on the determinants of voting in African elections has, however, raised doubts about this theory. Some of the newer contributions to the field have described African voters as more autonomous, and more likely to withdraw support from poorly-performing incumbents (Bratton et al., 2012; Weghorst and Lindberg 2013). Other authors now suggest that the strong focus on ethnicity in African electoral studies has led scholars to underestimate the importance of social cleavages that may roughly correlate with ethnicity, but are not reducible to it (Lieberman and McClendon 2013). Meanwhile, the captive constituency hypothesis continues to pose an alternative to the ethnic census explanation for vote choice and constituency-level outcomes. Where voters have little political autonomy and little choice in elections – where levels of party competition and information about elections are low, or where local repression and voter surveillance and monitoring are high – neither ethnicity, nor clientelism, nor performance assessment may matter much at all. Citizens may lack the autonomy to exert personal discretion in casting their votes (Mueller 1984, 2011; Munroe 2001; Bekoe 2012; Straus and Taylor 2012).

This paper shows that it is a mistake to regard these explanations of voter choice as competing theories of "the African voter." Persistent and striking spatial variations in voting patterns within countries suggest that voting determinants vary across space, and that subnational factors specific to geographic context matter in understanding voting behavior in

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[2] Statements of long-reigning consensus in the political science democratization literature on Africa are found in Van de Walle (2003) and Horowitz (1985). This is summarized by Weghorst and Lindberg (2013: 717) as follows: "Voters in African countries are typically assumed to vote based on ethnic cleavages... or entrenched clientelist networks, rather than based on the performance of politicians in delivering collective or public goods."

Africa. In addition to the increasingly obvious urban-rural differences in voting behavior and patterns (Conroy-Krutz 2009, Harding 2010, Koter 2013, Resnick 2013), there are important differences across rural districts in voters' openness to programmatic appeals, their likelihood to vote along ethno-clientelist lines, and the scope of voter autonomy and choice. These subnational (spatial) dynamics are invisible in existing work that is cast at the individual level or the national level, and that seeks to generalize about "the" African voter.[3] Yet subnational variations may be very important in shaping constituency level voting dynamics, the incumbent party's electoral strategies, and the incumbent party's ability to maintain electoral support.

This paper tackles this issue through an analysis of swing voting in legislative elections in seven Anglophone SMD countries. We use Government-to-Opposition Swing (GOS) – which happens when an electoral constituency that voted for the incumbent in one election withdraws that support and votes for (or "swings to") an opposition party in a second election -- as a measure of constituency-level variation election competitiveness and "uncertainty in election results," thus tapping into Przeworski's (1991: 14,19) classic litmus test for democracy. Lindberg and Morrison (2005) used an analysis of swing voting – i.e. individuals' stated willingness to switch parties – as a gauge of Ghanaian citizens' openness to performance-based (as opposed to ethnicity- or clientelism-based) voting cues. They concluded that urban-rural residency and socio-economic profile (income) have no effect on individual's openness to persuasion (2005: 576, 579). Here, we use swing voting in a similar way, yet our analysis points to the opposite result. Our analysis of government-to-opposition swing (GOS) voting across almost 2000 electoral constituencies in seven different countries shows that at the constituency level, the likelihood of GOS varies systematically across space. Our results confirm what other scholars have shown in demonstrating the higher likelihood of

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[3] The attempt to "definitively arbitrate the debate" between proponents of the ethnic voting hypothesis and the economic voting hypothesis by examining data at the individual, national, and cross-national level only is exemplified by Bratton et al., 2012: 28.

urban constituencies to swing (i.e. the importance of the urban-rural divide), and the power of a constituency being in "the president's home region" as a predictor of loyalty to the president's party. The paper also goes further to reveal the predictive power of variables that further differentiate types of rural constituencies.

To perform this analysis we introduce a new longitudinal dataset of constituency level election results for 28 elections held in seven African countries in the period 1991-2013. Our results suggest that factors linked to political geography – rural/urban and regional socio-economic differences – systematically influence a constituency's propensity to swing from the government to the opposition party in parliamentary elections. The relative salience of clientelist/ethnic, programmatic, and captured-constituency electoral behavior and voting dynamics thus appears to vary *across different types of electoral constituencies* within a given country. One very plausible implication is that voting behavior and dynamics in Africa are linked to spatially variant contextual factors. The quest to understand "the" African voter should be abandoned in favor of efforts to analyze different types of African voters. Another very plausible implication is that ruling-party politicians both respond and contribute to these subnational differences by varying their electoral strategies across space. Yet another implication is that there is spatial unevenness in the quality of democracy across constituencies within a single country, and that this exerts a strong influence on national-level electoral outcomes.

The paper proceeds as follows. Part I lays out alternative theories of vote determinants (voting logics), and explains why we should expect the salience different types of determinants to vary across space. We present our theoretical arguments and frame their implications for the likelihood of GOS in terms of testable hypotheses. Part II introduces our data, estimation strategy and our statistical opertionalizations of the central concepts. Part III then presents descriptive statistics and the results of our multi-level regression analyses. We

conclude with a discussion on the broader implications of our results and avenues for further research.

I. Political geography of African voting: Theory and Hypotheses

Herbst's influential *States and Power in Africa* (2000) contributed to a broad current of work on subnational and regional variation in political and economic structure of African countries (Nugent 1999, Issacman 1990, Mamdani 1996, Boone 2013). Although this work has not yet had much of an impact of studies of electoral behavior, there are many reasons to expect that subnational-level spatial variation shapes determinants and dynamics of voter choice.

Electoral constituencies are differentiated starkly by factors related to physical, economic, political, and social geography – they vary by proximity and connectivity to capital cities and other urban centers, natural endowment and ecology, population density, economic make-up, local incomes and levels of wealth, levels of social service provision, local political structure, ethnic identity, levels and kinds of ethnic heterogeneity, sensitivity to cross-border influences, presence or absence of civil conflict and government repression. Existing literature on African politics and African elections gives us strong reasons to expect that these differences are salient in understanding campaign and election dynamics, and individual political logics.[4]

Urban-rural differences are stark. Urban areas are characterized by higher levels of income, education, mobility, and connectivity to telecommunications and the media. Urban poverty rates are less than half of rural poverty rates for the countries in our sample for which there is 2011 WDI data (about 20% for the urban areas, compared to rural rates 50% or more)

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[4] This general observation is consistent with Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) classic work on social-structural determinants of voting alignments.

(WDI 2014). Rates of education, literacy, access to social services, formal-sector employment are higher in the cities. Mamdani (1996) argued that the very "form of rule" in urban African differed from that prevailing in rural areas. In the urban areas, ordinary citizens are freer of the extra-economic coercion exerted by rural strongmen such as chiefs, are more difficult to monitor and surveil, and have the advantages of higher levels of literacy, cash income, connectivity, and information. Civil society exists to an extent that is unknown in most of rural Africa. Opposition parties are present and better organized, offering voters more choice. These realities lower the political costs of opposition voting for urbanites. As Barkan (2005: 9) put it for the case of Uganda, "Since the early 1990s and continuing to the present, there has been a significant measure of political liberalization in Uganda as evidenced by the emergence of a free media and civil society, through both are largely confined to major urban areas, especially the capital city of Kampala."

These factors combine to produce urban electorates that are more likely to vote for opposition parties than their rural counterparts. Indeed, the urban areas have been the locus of electoral opposition to African incumbents since the 1950s, if not before. Bratton and van de Walle (1997) showed that organized opposition that helped propel Africa's Third Wave of democracy in the 1990s was almost exclusively urban based, and a spate of recent studies shows that this continues to be a striking pattern through the present (LeBas 2012, Koter 2013, Resnick 2014).

The countryside, home to 60% of Africa's population (by country average and as a rough average for the countries in our sample), differs from urban Africa along the dimensions we have invoked above. Poverty rates are higher, education levels are lower, and connectivity to transport, the energy grid, and telecommunications infrastructure is worse. Rural electoral constituencies are generally less competitive than urban constituencies. At the community level, social and political relationships that mediate access to productive

resources, especially land, help enforce political discipline and cohesion, and thus to constrain the individual political autonomy and associational autonomy of rural citizens in the ways flagged by Fauré (1993), Mamdani (1996) Munro (2001), Koter (2013), and Boone (2014)

"The rural areas" themselves are also starkly differentiated in ways that are likely to affect electoral dynamics. Rural population densities vary radically across space within one country, reflecting the fact that zones of agricultural production are often highly concentrated in space. Only about 25% of all land in Sub Saharan Africa is suitable for agriculture, and this proportion holds as a rough average across the seven countries in our data set. Regions of highly concentrated commercially-oriented smallholder production, such as farming districts around Lake Victoria in Kenya or the cocoa-belt of southern Ghana, stand in stark contrast to the semi-arid zones that support subsistence agriculture, agro-pastoralism, or pastoralism. Rural population densities and socio-economic profiles vary dramatically within countries. In Kenya, rural population density varies from a high of 522 persons/sq. km in Western Region to a low of 18 in North Eastern Region. In Ghana, rural population densities in the southern and central regions of commercially-oriented smallholder production are six to eight times higher than they are in the sparsely populated Northern region. Densely-populated zones are home to some of sub-Saharan Africa's relatively prosperous small-scale farmers, while the sparsely-populated zones are home to some of the poorest people in Africa. Throughout most of sub-Saharan Africa, the development of road networks and of other forms of social and economic infrastructure generally maps onto and reinforces subnational differences in population density, natural endowment, and levels of economic development.

We theorize that features of economic and political geography are likely to affect the determinants of individual votes and of electoral outcomes at the constituency level, including the likelihood of voting for an opposition party and GOS.

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Performance criteria voting: We expect that relatively wealthier, better off, and better connected people in the urban areas and in densely populated parts of the countryside in a better position than others to apply *performance-related criteria* in making their vote choice, and thereby to reevaluate their political affiliation. And because districts with these attributes are likely to be more accessible to opposition parties and campaigns (because of the lower cost of campaigning in such districts), voters are likely to have more choice in the electoral marketplace (Barkan 1995; Conroy-Krutz 2009).

Captive constituency effects: Reciprocally, the poorer, more remote, less literate, and more economically marginal the constituency, the more isolated and less autonomous its voters are likely to be. The presence of opposition parties is likely to be weaker in remote such constituencies, and in remote and poor areas, rural notables, brokers, and strongmen linked to the ruling party are likely dominate the local playing field (Mandani 1996, Koter 2013, Poulton 2014). All else being equal, there is good reason to expect that in general, the poorest rural areas are those in which incumbency advantages are the strongest, creating the *captive constituency* effect.[5]

Similar arguments have been made of new democracies outside of Africa. In an analysis of Russia and Kyrgyzstan, McMann (2006) argued that the prospects for electoral competition and opposition contestation are lowest in regions with undiversified economies, where the voters' autonomy from economic elites allied with the incumbent party is likely to be low. Without such autonomy, voters face higher economic and security risks from aligning with

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[5] In her analysis of voting behavior before and after Senegal's turnover election in 2000, Dominika Koter (2013: 658) observed that some of the poorest, most remote, and most sparsely-populated rural constituences of northern Senegal (the Senegal River Valley and Ferlo departments of Linguère, Matam and Podor) migrated en masse (in a phenomenon dubbed *'transhumance'*) from the incumbent from the Parti Socialiste (PS) in 2000 (which won 70% of the vote in these departments) to the incumbent Parti Démocratique Sénégalais (PDS), which won 60% of the vote in these departments in 2007. Neither party could claim a "home base" in northern Senegal. This kind of voting behavior is in accordance with our expectations of 'captive constituencies' -- they are highly likely to support for the incumbent regardless of party, performance, or ethnic ties.

the opposition. They are likely to vote for incumbents regardless of effects of government policy on their localities.

Instrumental ethnicity and clientelism: Political geography is also likely to affect rural voters' instrumental calculations about the connection between ethnicity and clientelism. *Where voters reside* is likely to affect their calculations about whether and to what extent they (or their locality) would benefit from club goods provided/promised by the incumbent. Ichino and Nathan (2013) argued that in constituencies populated mostly by voters of one ethnic group, all voters in that constituency could expect club-good benefits from the electoral victory of a politician of that ethnicity.[6] They did not attach a geographic logic to their argument, however. Here we do so, arguing that the salience of this logic would vary across space: voters in the president's home region or ethnic stronghold are likely to be relatively more confident of a club-goods payoff to ethno-clientelist voting in favor of the president's party.

It is possible that two or more ethnic groups could form a coalition to produce a win at the national level. Our analysis suggests that there is usually a spatial logic to such coalitions. Coalition partner constituencies that lie outside the president's home region are *unlikely* to be urban. They are also unlikely to be found in high-density rural areas. Such coalition partner constituencies are likely to be low population density rural areas that can be counted on to bloc vote at local leaders' instructions, as per our "captive constituency" hypothesis, above.[7]

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[6] Indeed, recent research on public resource allocation has provided more evidence for the claim that African incumbents strategically target clientelistic club goods to core constituencies of ethnic supporters (Caldeira 2011; Briggs 2012; Franck and Rainer 2012; Jablonski 2014). Ichino and Nathan expand upon recent work that views voting for co-ethnics as a form of instrumental voting that produce effects that operate within electoral jurisdictions. As Ichino and Nathan explain, many goods that politicians deliver are locally non-excludable in rural areas (eg. an improved road or local clinic). Based on a study of polling station data in Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana (and ethnically-diverse region marked by highly competitive elections), they argue that voters are likely to vote for the candidate of the locally-dominant ethnic group, rather than their own. Local ethnic geography thus influences vote choice, as has been found to be the case in Latin America (Madrid 2005, van Cott 2007). We expect similar results for elections at district and other subnational levels of offices that that have significant authority over the location of club goods" (345).

[7] Some of the newer literature on ethnicity and elections in Africa has concentrated on the creation of multi-ethnic coalitions, where ethnic strongmen are supposed to deliver the vote from their ethnic community in exchange for personal or communal benefits (Arriola 2013). As a consequence, ethnic communities outside the president's home region may also retain their support for the incumbent as a

We have just outlined three different constituency-level scenarios. Our hypothesis is that voting logics vary across constituencies within the same country, in the same national election. It stands to reason that political parties' electoral strategies also vary across constituencies. We add the coalition-building possibilities in the conclusion.

Hypotheses

Our typological theory generates testable hypotheses about how political geography is likely to affect the likelihood of government-to-opposition swing at the constituency level. Because of variations in political geography, the likelihood of GOS in legislative elections is likely to vary systematically across different types of constituencies. This does not preclude that determinants can also vary across individual voters,[8] but it does suggest that local political-economy variables are likely to affect the structure of individuals' voting choices, and the voting logics they employ.

We theorize the voters in urban constituencies are best positioned to engaged in performance-based voting. When the overall economy is not performing well, or when the ruling party is scoring poorly on human rights or governance indicators, urban voters are best positioned to make incumbents pay an electoral price. We therefore hypothesize that the likelihood of GOS is highest in urban constituencies (H1).

Our theory also predicts that performance-based voting is more likely in densely-populated, more prosperous, and better connected rural constituencies than in sparsely populated, remote, and very poor rural constituencies, and more likely outside the president's home region than it is in the president's home region. The observable implication of

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part of an ethnic bargain. However, given the logic about 'captive' constituencies described above, there should be significant spatial differences local elites' ability to control votes within their constituency. A recent study of Kenya by Brass and Cheeseman (2013), which focuses on individual level vote choice, provides some support for this. The authors showed a significantly lower propensity for urban communities to engage in ethnic bloc-voting.

[8] As suggested by Weghorst and Lindberg (2013). Ecological fallacy issue...

hypothesis (H2) is that GOS is more likely in densely populated rural regions outside the president's home region than it is in other rural regions of the country.

By our theory, <u>instrumental-clientelist logics</u> are likely to hold most sway in rural constituencies in the president's home region.[9] Voters in the president's home region can most rationally calculate that a victory for the presidents' party (the ruling party) will redound to their benefit in the form of club goods. We thus hypothesize (H3) that GOS is less likely in these constituencies than it is in other rural constituencies.

By our theory, <u>captive-constituency voting dynamics</u> are likely to be most pronounced in sparsely-populated rural constituencies in which subsistence agriculture and/or pastoral activities are likely to predominate. (This is the reciprocal of H2, since the observable implications are the inverse of those in H2.) We therefore hypothesize (H4) that GOS is less likely in rural, low-population density constituencies than it is in high populations density regions, and that this holds *even outside the president's home region*. We also expect these constituencies to be less competitive than the high population density constituencies outside the president's home region.

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[9] In this paper, "president's home region," "president's ethnic stronghold," and "region(s) in which the president's ethnic group is predominant" are taken as synonyms. In matching the majority ethnic affiliation of a locality with the ethnicity of the incumbent we follow the strategy used by Jablonski (2014).

II. Data and Research Design

This paper uses a unique dataset of longitudinal constituency level election results in parliamentary elections for seven African countries with single member districts to account for GOS. In order to maximize our sample, we rely on parliamentary rather than presidential election results. Only a few of the electoral commissions in our sample have consistently provided spatially-disaggregated (constituency-level) election results for presidential elections. Most countries provide presidential election results at the regional level, but such aggregation would not enable us to properly distinguish between urban and rural areas within the same region, or to track electoral results from each country's secondary cities. We also assume considerable contamination between the presidential and parliamentary elections (Golder 2006; Stoll forthcoming), in particular given the fact that all countries in the sample arrange concurrent parliamentary and presidential elections (except from Botswana, which does not have direct executive elections).

The population of cases consists of all constituencies **in all the sample's elections** that elected an MP from the *current* (incumbent) government party in the last election.[10] The dependent variable for the analysis is *government-opposition swing* (GOS), i.e. whether a constituency <u>again</u> elects an MP from the national incumbent party, or votes instead to replace the government party MP with a representative of an opposition party (or an independent). The party in control of the presidency is always considered the government party. In order to more fully grasp constancy and change in government party support, in addition to GOS we include two more dependent variables: *change in constituency support for government party,* and level of constituency *support for government party's parliamentary candidate*.

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[10] I.e. if the election at t-1 had a turnover the current incumbent party was an opposition party in the last election.

These three operationalizations measure slightly different aspects of change and stability. With the GOS variable, we look at all 1900 constituencies that were won by the current ruling party in the previous election. We find that 26.6% of these constituencies (for all election in our sample) swung to the opposition in the next election. With the change in constituencies support variable, we look at all 2,978 constituencies for which we have data for two consecutive elections (i.e. those won by either government or opposition party in the last election) and capture the average magnitude of swing from one election to the next. The result shows that for the average constituency in our sample, support for the government party's parliamentary candidate declined by 5.4%. The absolute level of constituency support for the government party's candidate gives us a baseline measure of the average level of constituency support for the government party. We can use this baseline later to determine whether the types of constituencies that are *unlikely* to swing away from the government (e.g. rural constituencies in general, and especially constituencies in the president's home region and sparsely populated constituencies) also produce higher *absolute levels* of electoral support for the government party. This is a snapshot variable that allows us to include all 3539 constituencies in our data set.[11] In our sample the average constituency level support for the government party legislative candidate is 44.9%.

TABLE 1: DEPENDENT VARIABLES: AVERAGES, RANGES AND SAMPLE SIZES

Variable	mean	min	max	Observations
Government Opposition Swing (GOS)	.266	0	1	1900
Change in constituency support for government party	-.054	-.927	.879	2978
Absolute level of constituency support for government party's parliamentary candidate	.449	.001	1	3539

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[11] We can also include constituencies that did not exist at t-1 or where data was missing in the official reports.

Identifying the incumbent party is relatively straightforward for most of our cases. However, in two cases, that of Kenya in 2007 and Malawi in 2009, the government party split in between elections. Although such splits are likely to have consequences for government party support, we stick with the original coding procedures for the purposes of this analysis. We are hypothesizing that the party of the president is likely to maintain the incumbent advantages, even over its coalition partners.

Scholars working on electoral politics in North America and Western Europe have benefitted from sophisticated election datasets with highly disaggregated data and long time series. Through sources such as the Constituency-Level Election Archive (Kollman et al. 2012) and the Global Elections Database (Brancati 2013), data availability has also improved dramatically for elections in new democracies. However, these new contributions to the field are significantly less comprehensive and updated for the African continent. Electoral commissions in Africa has often chosen not to report disaggregated election results, or failed to make these records readily available (Fridy 2009).

To undertake this research project we have compiled a new dataset consisting of 28 elections and 4076 constituency-years in the period 1991-2013. Most of the data was gathered on a country-by-country basis from official accounts issued by the respective countries' national election commissions. In some cases data has also been found in election monitoring reports or national media.[12] Out of the 4076 constituency-years recorded in the data, the sample includes 1900 potential observations, i.e. constituencies that were won by the incumbent government party in the last election and that could potentially swing to the opposition. In these 1900 constituencies, we observe "swing" in 505 cases. To the best of our knowledge, our dataset represents the most extensive account of constituency level election results for this set of seven African elections up to this date.

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[12] We also thank some individuals for providing some data: Jørgen Elklitt, John Ishiyama.

The dataset includes elections in seven countries: Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. These seven countries represent a subset of the 18 African countries currently arranging SMD elections.[13] Case selection was determined on the basis of (a.) data availability, (b.) institutional continuity, and (c.) competitiveness of elections in a given country – i.e. we limited our sample to countries with SMD elections that exhibited at least a minimal degree of competitiveness (i.e. opposition parties received no less than 10% of parliamentary seats), where multipartyism has not been interrupted since the early 1990s by coup d'états or wars, and for which we could obtain data for several elections.[14] Following these criteria, we excluded from the analysis eleven African countries holding SMD elections: Ethiopia, Uganda and Swaziland (for lack of competitiveness); Nigeria (due to missing data for several elections); and Comoros, Central African Republic, Congo, the Gambia and Liberia (due to recent interruptions in their electoral cycles amid wars or coup d'états). Sierra Leone and South Sudan were also excluded since they were still in their first electoral cycle using SMD (as of 2013). For five out of the seven countries included, the dataset covers all non-boycotted relatively competitive elections in the 1990s and 2000s.[15] For the other two countries, sub-national data on registration and election results was missing for one election (Tanzania 1995 and Zimbabwe 2000).[16] Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for our three dependent variables.

Independent variables

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[13] As of 2012 according to the Database of Political Institutions (Beck et al. 2001)

[14] Studying elections with major opposition boycotts or a practically non-existent opposition makes it hard to capture incumbent favoring or disfavoring biases in apportionment structures. Although constituency level election data for Ethiopia and Uganda does exist, we excluded these cases due to their low level of competitiveness.

[15] In Ghana the election series starts in 1996 due to the 1992 NPP election boycott.

[16] The elections in Zimbabwe during the 1990s have been excluded as competition was very low (the opposition never received more than 2.5% of the seats in parliament).

We theorize that in Africa, geographic variables condition voting dynamics, and that the weight and salience of performance based, instrumental-clientalist and captive-constituency voting dynamics will vary across different types of voting constituencies. From this theoretical starting point, we deduced a series of hypotheses about the likelihood of GOS.

Following Ishiyama et al.,[17] we coded all constituencies located within the administrative boundaries of major cities as urban.[18] National and regional capitals with at least 20,000 citizens were considered "major cities," together with all other top 10-cities that met a population threshold of 20,000. This allows us to look beyond national capitals to observe voting in constituencies in regional capitals, secondary urban centers, and large towns. On average, our dataset includes 13 urban areas per country, ranging for high of 32 in Tanzania to a low of 4 in Botswana.

We used region population density as a rough indicator of the presence of a large zone of smallholder or peasant farming within a region (small-scale family farming, partly oriented to the market and partly self-provisioning).[19] We take low *population density* at the regional level as a marker of the predominance of semi-arid agro-ecological conditions (low rainfall and/or poor soil quality), and the predominance of near-subsistence or subsistence agricultural and pastoralism as livelihoods.[20]

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[17] Ishiyama et al. (2013)

[18] An alternative, perhaps preferable operationalization is to use population density of each constituency. This however, requires information on constituency area (geographical size) which is generally unavailable. Data on city population is taken from each country's national bureau of statistics, available at www.citypopulation.de.

[19] Data originates from the respective country's population censuses and is collected from citypopulation.de

[20] We assume that subsistence farmers (ie., not producing cash crops for the market) and pastoralists are among the poorest of a country's rural citizens, and that they are highly disfavored in the national allocation of roads, schools, hospitals, etc. (Salih et al, 2001). These assumptions hold pretty well for much for Kenya, for example, where regional disparities in wealth and income are vast. About 74% of the population in Kenya's least-densely populated region, the arid North Eastern Province on the border with Somalia, lives below the national rural poverty line. This can be compared to only 30% in densely-populated Central Province, a region of intensively-cultivated small farms that is adjacent to the national capital of Nairobi. We assume that subsistence farmers and pastoralists are among the poorest of a country's rural citizens, and that they are highly disfavored in the national allocation of roads, schools, hospitals, etc. (Salih et al, 2001). These assumptions hold pretty well for much for Kenya, for example, where regional disparities in wealth and income are vast. About 74% of the population in Kenya's least-densely populated region, the arid North Eastern Province on the border with Somalia, lives below the national rural poverty line. This can be compared to only 30% in densely-populated Central Province, a region of intensively-cultivated small farms that is adjacent to the national capital of Nairobi.

Region population density is an important variable, but an imperfect indicator of what we are trying to measure. First, regional averages may conceal significant diversity within regions. This is likely to be more true for some regions (e.g. very large ecologically-diverse regions like Kenya's Rift Valley Province) than others (e.g. Nyanza Province in Kenya, which is much smaller region and the home of a very dense concentration of small peasant and subsistence farms).[21] District or constituency-level population density would be a better indicator. This data should be constructed and employed in future research. Second, low rural population density can be an indicator of either pastoralism and semi-subsistence agriculture in a semi-arid zone, or of the presence of large estates and highly commercial agriculture (even agribusiness), where landholdings are very large and the area is lightly settled. Coding by district- or constituency-level economic profiles, or obtaining data on landholding size or labor productivity for these disaggregated units, would allow us to differentiate between these two possible socio-economic meanings of low regional population density.

To test our theory of instrumental-clientelist logics, we hypothesized that constituencies in the *president's ethnic home region* (or ethnic base) are less prone to GOS than other rural constituencies. This is a way of asking if the president's party is likely to have the support of an ethnic clientele. Where the president is generally described as belonging to a certain ethnic group, we coded provinces where this particular group makes up more than 50% of the population as being part of the president's home region or ethnic base.[22] For instance in Ghana 2000-2008 the president, John Kufuor, was born in the Ashanti region and belonged to the broader Akan group. The Akan group makes up more than 50% of the total population in Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Central, Eastern and Western Regions, so these were all coded as the president's ethnic home region. As a robustness test we also ran all models with a narrower

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[21] It is also more true of the data for countries with a small number of large, diverse administrative regions (i.e. first-level subnational administrative divisions) like Kenya than for countries with a large number of smaller and less diverse administrative regions like Tanzania.

[22] Data on sub-national ethnic distribution are taken from Alesina and Zhuravskaya (2011). In also including other regions where the president's ethnicity holds a majority we follow similar coding principles as Jablonski (2014).

definition of the president's home region – i.e. the region in which she/he was born.[23] This operationalization did weaken some of the results. Following the logic applied by Ichino and Nathan (2013), we use the broader operationalization better to capture the instrumental-clientelistic logics.

Control variables

Beside the main independent variables we have also included a number of controls that should affect the baseline probability of GOS. There is a wide variation in the national level democracy within our sample. On average we would expect more electoral competition in elections held in more democratic contexts (Levitsky and Way 2010). We hence include a control for *level of democracy* measured using the mean Freedom House Political Rights and Civil Liberties index. The index was reversed, so that higher scores represent higher levels of democracy and ranges between 1-7 (1 being least democratic and 7 most democratic). The democracy score was lagged in order to exclude post-electoral development in the measurement. Given the substantial literature on economic voting (e.g. Lewis-Beck and Nadeau 2011) we would expect improvement in national-level economic performance to decrease the national baseline probability of GOS.[24] We measure economic performance as mean annual growth in real GDP/Capita within the current term in office. Data are collected from Heston, Summers and Aten (2012). A substantial literature has dealt with the adverse impact of *opposition disunity* for electoral competiveness on both the national and local level (e.g. Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Rakner and Svåsand 2004; Arriola 2013; Wahman 2014) and as disunity may vary across constituencies we use it as a control. To measure

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[23] In one case, Zambia in 2011, the president was born outside the country's borders. However, the president, Rupiah Banda, claimed that his ancestry from Chipata in the Eastern District (Africa Review 06/06/2011). Hence, we code Eastern as his home region.

[24] Given our theory on performance voting it is reasonable to expect that urban and more densely populated constituencies would attach greater importance to macro-economic development. We would, however, need data from more elections to effectively test this hypothesis using cross-level interactions between constituency-level characteristics and national level economic performance.

opposition disunity across constituencies we use the constituency level opposition sf-ratio, first introduced by Cox (1997). In Cox's version of the SF-ratio, it measured the ratio between the vote shares obtained by the second and first loser's in a constituency. However, as we are only interested in opposition disunity we measure fragmentation as the ratio between the vote share of the largest and second largest opposition party (high ratios showing high levels of disunity).

Estimation strategy

Given the hierarchical nature of the data, where constituencies are clustered geographically into provinces (regions) and elections, the data will be analyzed using a three-level mixed effects multi-level logistic models. Failing to acknowledge the multilevel structure of the data would increase the risks of model misspecification and underestimate the standard errors, thereby increasing the risks of type-I errors. It is fair to assume that certain unobserved election or region specific factors, not captured by the general parameters in the model, will have a systematic effect on the baseline propensity for GOS in a specific province j in the particular election k. For instance, a government scandal might have increased the likelihood of GOS nation-wide, or the split of a regionally strong opposition party might have had a negative effect on the likelihood for GOS in this party's particular stronghold (Steenbergen and Jones 2002; Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2008). Since we are also interested in the interaction between the president's home region effect and a constituency's urban/rural status, we will also estimate split-sample models, where we only keep rural constituencies or constituencies within the president's home region in the model. For simplicity, we prefer this approach to using cross-level interactions (Kam and Franzese 2007).

III. Analysis

	GOS percentage
Rural	26.1 (1622)
Urban	29.5 (278)
Rural constituencies in president's home region	18.4 (646)
Rural constituencies outside president's home region	31.3 (976)
Urban constituencies in president's home region	24.5 (94)
Urban constituencies outside president's home region	32.1 (184)
Low population density rural	23.1 (922)
High population density rural	30.1 (700)
Low population density rural in president's home region	12.4 (283)
High population density in president's home region	23.1 (363)
Low population density rural outside president's home region	27.9 (639)
High population density rural outside president's home region	37.7 (337)

Note: We classify all regions with population density above the country's modal value of (regional) population density as "high density."

The descriptive statistics in table 2 show the rate of GOS in rural and urban constituencies (rows 1 and 2), rural constituencies in and outside the president's home region (rows 3 and 4), urban constituencies in and outside the president's home region (rows 5 and 6), rural constituencies in high and low population density areas (rows 7 and 8), and low and high population density areas in the president's home region (rows 9 and 10), and low and high population density regions outside the president's home region (rows 11 and 12). As hypothesized, we see higher rates of defection from the ruling party (i.e. higher rates of GOS) in urban consistencies than in rural, higher rates of defection to opposition parties outside the

president's home region than in his or her "home region," and higher rates of GOS in rural constituencies with high population density than in those with low population density.

These data show the rate of GOS to be at its highest in high population density rural areas outside the president's home region (37.7%).[25] This rate of GOS is much higher than it is sparsely populated rural regions outside the president's home region (27.9%). We have hypothesized that these low-density rural constituencies are more likely to be 'captive constituencies,' and the descriptive statistics support that hypothesis.

Unsurprisingly, the incumbent party is especially likely to retain its hold on rural constituencies in the president's home region (with very low rates of GOS – 18.4%). What our data allow us to see is variation in rates of GOS across *different types* of "home region" constituencies. The likelihood of government-to-opposition swing varies from a low 23.1% when the president comes from a high population density region to an even lower GOS propensity rate of 12.4% when the president hails from a low population density region. Of the 15 incumbents in our data set (in 20 elections across 7 countries), 10 hail from "home regions" with higher-than-average rural population densities.[26] The five who are from lower-than-average density regions – Mogae and Khana in Botswana, Moi in Kenya, and Rawlings and Mahama in Ghana – thus enjoyed an overwhelmingly strong "home region effect."[27] This finding helps reinforce our argument that sparsely populated rural regions are particularly

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[25] This probably reflects the fact that urban constituencies were more likely to vote against the incumbent at t_1, thus taking them out of our data set (since we are looking for swing from the incumbent to the opposition, not any and all opposition voting). However it does reinforce our argument about different types of rural constituencies.

[26] These are Kufour (Ghana), Kibaki (Kenya), Muluzi and Mutharika (Malawi), Mkapa and Kikwete (Tanzania), Chiluba and Mwanawasa (Zambia), and Mugabe (Zimbabwe), who was born in Harare but is considered to draw ethnic support from the Mashona regions.

[27] Cases of electoral turnover in our dataset allow us to consider the urban-rural distinction from yet another angle. In the sample we include five turnover elections for which we are also able to observe voting behavior in the subsequent election (Zambia 1991, Malawi 1994, Ghana 2000, Kenya 2002 and Ghana 2008). For idiosyncratic reasons two of these elections, Zambia 1991 and Kenya 2002, are not very appropriate for studying this phenomenon. The 1996 Zambian election was boycotted by UNIP, the previous incumbent party. In Kenya 2007 the incumbent NARC coalition had split and the previous incumbent, KANU, supported Kenyatta's re-election bid. However, in the remaining cases we see more evidence that incumbents find rural constituencies easier to control than urban ones. In the 1999 Malawi elections, five constituencies switched their support from the previously incumbent MCP to the new incumbent party, UDF. All these constituencies were rural. In Ghana 2004, 17 constituencies switched their support from the previously incumbent NDC to the new incumbent party NPP; all were rural. Again, looking at the 2012 election, we see all 23 constituencies that supported the previous incumbent (NPP) in 2008 but that now supported the new incumbent (NDC) were rural.

susceptible to incumbent control, and show that the finding holds whether they are part of the president's home region or not.

Multivariate analysis

The simple descriptive statistics generate support for the hypotheses laid out in the theory section. We see that GOS was highest in urban constituencies (H1), and that GOS was more common in high-population density rural areas than low-population density rural constituencies (H2). As expected, we see less GOS in the president's home region than outside of in (H3). And as per our hypothesis about captive constituencies (H4), we see especially low levels of GOS in low population density constituencies.

However, to test the hypotheses appropriately, we have to move beyond bivariate analysis. As mentioned in the methods section above, the multivariate analysis will be performed using mixed effects multilevel logistic models. This estimation strategy is used to account for the hierarchical structure of the data. This section will present 9 different models. The first three models will look at GOS (presented in table 3). Model 1 looks at the full sample, model 2 looks specifically at rural constituencies, and model 3 specifically at constituencies in the president's home region. In table 5 we use two additional dependent variables, change in government party support over time and absolute level of government party support, and run the same models (full sample, then only rural, and then only constituencies in the president's home region).[28] Post estimations to give substantive interpretations from the models are presented in table 4, 6, and in figure 1.

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[28] When we look at rural constituencies only, we test for the regional population density effect. We did not include region population density in the models looking exclusively at constituencies in the president's home region. Given that most elections in our sample would only have one region coded as a "presidential home region," we would not have any variation within the clusters specified in our multi-level models. However, our descriptive statistics above (comparing between countries and elections) offers some indication that the population density of the president's home region does matter for the propensity of GOS.

TABLE 3: ANALYSIS OF GOS: ALL CONSTITUENCIES, RURAL CONSTITUENCIES, AND CONSTITUENCIES IN THE PRESIDENT'S HOME REGION

	(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*
	All constituencies	*Only rural constituencies*	*Only in President's home region*
Fixed Part			
Level 1 (Constituency)			
Urban	.596***	_	.205
	(.221)		(.353)
Opposition disunity	-2.378***	-2.192***	-2.436***
	(.306)	(.322)	(.561)
Competition (lagged)	.008	.224*	3.073***
	(.013)	(.129)	(.561)
Level 2 (Region)			
President home region	-1.265***	-1.290***	_
	(.361)	(.377)	
Population density (logged)		.224*	_
		(.129)	
Level 3 (Election)			
Level of democracy (t-1)	-.020	-.017	.024
	(.235)	(.229)	(.226)
Average term growth	-.256**	-.255**	-.263**
	(.126)	(.123)	(.119)
Constant	.107	-.789	-2.614
	(1.040)	(1.107)	(1.051)
Random Part **Std. deviation level 3 (election)**			
Intercept	1.305	1.238	1.252
	(.282)	(.270)	(.289)
Std. deviation level 2 (region)			
Intercept	1.289	1.294	_
	(.151)	(.169)	
Interclass Correlation (election)	.256	.236	.323
	(.083)	(.079)	(.101)
Interclass Correlation (region)	.506	.494	_
	(.063)	(.065)	
Log Likelihood	-801.129	-686.506	-265.733
AIC	1620.257	1391.013	545.467
N (constituencies)	1853	1580	710
N (regions)	192	183	_
N (elections)	21	21	20

*** p<.01 **p<.05 *p<.10

Note: Multilevel random intercept mixed effects models. Entries are logistic coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The analysis is estimated as a three level model with random intercepts (not random slopes). Significance is reported for independent variables.

Post-estimation	
	Discrete Change
Urban	.104**
President home region	-.152***

*** p<.01 **p<.05 *p<.10

Note: Predicted probabilities calculated for fixed part of equation only. All dichotomous variables are held at their mode, all continuous variables at their mean. Estimations done based on results from model 1.

The results in model 1 of table 3 confirm hypotheses 1 and 3. In accordance with H1, GOS is more common in urban than rural constituencies. This result holds controlling for a number of covariates, including the president's home region variable (which taps into the ethnicity effect). The coefficient is significant at the 1% level. According to the post-estimations in table 4 the predicted probability of GOS is .104 higher in urban than rural constituencies. The estimations are calculated for a constituency outside the president's home region (the mode value in the sample) and with all the continuous variables held at their means. In accordance with H3, we also find that constituencies within the president's home region are less likely to experience GOS. This coefficient is also significant at the 1% level. According to the post-estimations presented in table 4, the difference between constituencies in- and outside the president's home region is even larger than between urban and rural constituencies. When calculating estimations for rural constituencies holding all the continuous covariates at their means, the predicted probability of GOS is .152 lower in constituencies in the president's home region compared to constituencies in other regions.

FIGURE 1: PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF GOS FOR RURAL CONSTITUENCIES
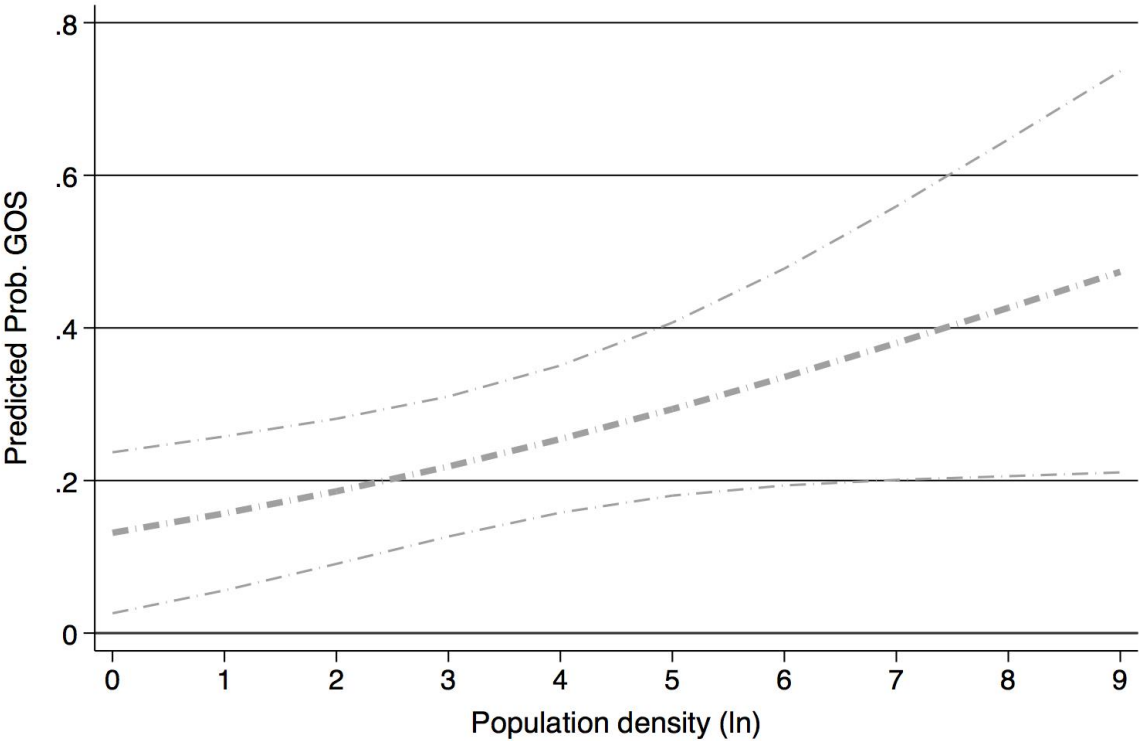
Note: Predicted probability calculated for constituencies outside the president's home region with all continuous variables held at their means. Outer boundaries show the 90% confidence interval.

H2 stipulates that there is a difference in the probability of GOS not only between urban and rural constituencies, but also between rural constituencies depending on their population density. In Table 3, model 2 is designed to investigate this hypothesis and only includes rural constituencies. Recall that in our data set, the national capital and provincial capitals are coded as urban. Indeed, we find that rural constituencies in more densely populated regions are more likely to experience GOS. Figure 1 plots the predicted probability of GOS along all observed values of logged population density, again the calculation is for constituencies outside the president's home region and with all covariates held at their means. Within the observed levels of population density in our sample, the predicted probability of GOS changes from .103 (at the lowest population density) to .43 (at the highest density).

Constituency-level data on density would surely make for a more fine-grained test, but, given lack of this data, we consider our results to provide a very *conservative* test of H3, and thus to offer strong support for the hypothesis.

Finally, to disentangle the interaction between the "home region" effect and urbanness, model 3 reruns model 1, this time including only constituencies within the president's home region. Similar to our preliminary finding in the descriptive statistics, we find no significant correlation between GOS and urbanness when looking only at constituencies in the president's home region. These findings show that urban constituencies in the president's home region tend to stay with the government party. If we assume that urban voters in the president's home region are more autonomous and better informed than rural voters in the same region (as per our general hypothesis about urban voters), then we can take this as evidence of instrumental voting logics in these constituencies.

These results are consistent with earlier findings about ethnic voting in African elections, but they add to these by underscoring the highly regionalized (spatialized) nature of this ethnic effect. Commenting on the models in general, it is interesting to observe the high level of region interclass correlation (ICC) for all models in table 3. The high ICC indicates the importance of regional cleavages in African voting and suggests that government-opposition swing often clusters in space.

Table 5 shows our results using change in government support over time (i.e. from one election to the next) and absolute levels of constituency support for the government as dependent variables. The main results are consistent with those in table 3.

TABLE 5: CHANGE IN AND ABSOLUTE LEVELS OF SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT PARTY: ALL CONSTITUENCIES, RURAL CONSTITUENCIES, AND CONSTITUENCIES IN THE PRESIDENT'S HOME REGION

	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Fixed Part	*Change in gov support- all constituencies*	*Change in gov support- only rural*	*Gov support- President's home region*	*Gov support- all constituencies*	*Gov support- rural constituencies*	*Gov support- President's home region*
Level 1 (Constituency) Urban	-.034*** (.007)	_	-.053*** (.012)	-.056*** (.008)	_	-.133*** (.014)
Opposition disunity	.002 (.009)	-.003** (.010)	-.004 (.019)	.018* (.010)	.021** (.011)	.056*** (.021)
Government support t-1	-.517*** (.015)	-.544*** (.016)	-.418*** (.025)	_	_	_
Level 2 (Region) President home region	.070*** (.018)	.078*** (.019)	_	.160*** (.025)	.169*** (.024)	_
Population density region (ln)	_	-.021*** (.006)	_	_	-.033*** (.008)	_
Level 3 (Election) Level of democracy t-1	.007 (.015)	.002 (.015)	-.001 (.014)	.014 (.020)	.003 (.019)	.003 (.020)
Average term growth	.009 (.008)	.008 (.008)	.015** (.007)	.007 (.011)	.006 (.010)	.003 (.011)
Constant	.137** (.066)	.253*** (.071)	.153** (.063)	.329*** (.088)	.505 *** (.092)	.521*** (.090)
Random Part Std. deviation level 3 (election) Intercept	.091 (.016)	.092 (.016)	.086 (.015)	.122 (.022)	.120 (.021)	.129 (.022)
Std. deviation level 2 (region) Intercept	.082 (.005)	.082 (.006)	_	.121 (.007)	.112 (.007)	_
Interclass Correlation (election)	.282 (.073)	.405 (.087)	.294 (.071)	.302 (.077)	.309 (.076)	.369 (.079)
Interclass Correlation (region)	.510 (.051)	.595 (.060)	_	.601 (.045)	.575 (.048)	_
Log Likelihood	1856.807	1496.883	537.608	1660.596	1352.099	399.627
AIC	-3693.613	-2973.766	-1059.217	-3303.193	-2686.198	-785.255
N (constituencies)	2970	2492	952	3510	2944	1199
N (regions)	204	196	_	209	202	-
N (elections)	21	21	20	21	21	20

*** p<.01 **p<.05 *p<.10

Note: Multilevel random intercept mixed effects models. Entries are logistic coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The analysis is estimated as a three level model with random intercepts (not random slopes). Significance is reported for independent variables.

In model 4, we again see that from one parliamentary election to the next, government parties tend to lose more support in urban constituencies than in the rural areas, and increase their levels of support in the president's home region. The predicted increase in support for the government party parliamentary candidate is 3.4% lower in urban than it is in rural constituencies, and 7% higher in constituencies within the president's home region compared to constituencies outside the president's home region (model 4). Model 5 provides additional support for H4: when measuring the *amount* of government-to-opposition swing from one parliamentary election to the next, we see an even stronger relationship between population density and propensity to swing in rural constituencies (model 5). Similarly, we also see that ruralness and being in the president's home region is positively correlated with the absolute level of support for the government party (model 7). The predicted level of support for the government party parliamentary candidate is 5.6% lower in urban than in rural constituencies, and as much as 16% higher in parliamentary constituencies within the president's home region, compared to those in other regions.

Finally, one important difference exists between the table 5 results and those presented in table 3. Whereas urban and rural constituencies were equally unlikely to experience GOS *within* the president's home region (model 3) table 5 shows a statistically significant and negative correlation between urbanness and increase in support for the government party within the president's home region (model 6), and between urbanness and the absolute level of support for the government party in the president's home region (model 9). These results show that the general competitiveness of elections is higher in urban constituencies, even in secondary cities or a regional capital in the president's home region. It is hard for the government party to totally dominate the electoral marketplace in towns and cities, even in the president's "ethnic stronghold" (although the incumbent party is generally able to hang onto seats it already controls).

Predicted Probability GOS		
	Urban	Rural
President's home region	.087	.072
Outside President's home region	.352	.262
Predicted Change in Incumbent Party Support		
	Urban	Rural
President's home region	-.101	-.048
Outside President's home region	-.079	-.057
Predicted Support for incumbent party		
	Urban	Rural
President's home region	.422	.555
Outside President's home region	.367	.394

Note: Continuous variables held at their means.

To summarize the findings, table 6 shows the predicted probability of GOS, predicted change in government party support, and predicted support for the government depending on whether a constituency is urban or rural, inside or outside the president's home region. (Figure 1 looks at the effect of the rural population density variable on GOS.) In the calculations we have kept all covariates in the models at their mean values. The numbers show how substantial the effects of these variables are. Whereas the predicted probability of GOS for a rural constituency in the president's home region is only .072, the corresponding number for an urban constituency outside the president's home region is .35. Similarly, the expected support for a government party parliamentary candidate is 35% in urban constituencies outside the president's home region, compared to 55.5% in rural constituencies within the president's home region. The fact that the predicted support for the government party MP is above 50% is remarkable, given the generally high level of constituency level party fractionalization in African SMD elections (Wahman 2014).

Yet the basic finding here is consistent with conventional wisdom about ruling parties' "ethnic strongholds." What is new in these results, when we combine them with Figure 1, is

(1) the finding that high density rural areas outside the president's home region are, by the GOS measure, as likely to defect from the ruling party as the urban constituencies, and (2) the finding that low population density rural areas outside the president's ethnic base appear to be almost as reliably "locked up" by incumbent parties as those within the president's home region.

All of these results support our hypotheses about how constituency outcomes vary over space. Urban constituencies and rural constituencies with high population densities are more likely than all other constituencies, and particularly sparsely-populated rural constituencies, to swing away from the incumbent and to vote for the opposition. In towns and cities in the president's home region, a "clientelist voting" logic seems to trump the urban effect. Voters in both the towns and rural areas of the president's home region may have good reason – instrumental reasons – to believe that the incumbent will channel benefits to his/her home region. Our findings are also consistent with the expectation that rural constituencies with low population densities, which likely to be remote, poor, and pastoral, can often be described as captive constituencies. They are likely stay loyal to the incumbent, whether she or he hails from the region or not. Our results show that the competitiveness of elections in these constituencies is weak and voters thus have fewer real choices. It may also reflect the strong political influence of rural notables linked to ruling parties, and low levels of economic autonomy of voters due to poverty, lack of diversification of livelihoods, and remoteness of localities. The results show the salience of spatial variation in describing and analyzing African voting patterns.

IV Conclusion

As our understanding of African electorates and African voters improves, the previously dominant idea of African voters as ethnic clients basing their vote choice solely on ethnic identity is gradually being discredited. New research has indicated that beside ethnicity, African voters are likely to base their vote choice on a number of other factors such as social class, ideology and incumbent performance evaluation (e.g. Lindberg and Morrison 2008; Bratton et al. 2012). New research, common sense, the findings presented here also suggest that context matters: within a given country, constituencies are likely to differ in their levels of economic development and economic diversification; levels of voter information, connectivity, and voter autonomy from repressive local notables and government officials; levels of voter registration; presence or absence of campaigning on the part of opposition parties; nature and density of civil society organization, etc.

It comes as no surprise that ethnicity matters in African elections. After all, when evaluating the determinants of individual vote choice in most democracies, ethnicity remains one of the most significant predictors. To take just one prominent example, presidential and congressional elections in the US feature a clear racial component in vote choice that cannot be explained away by socio-economic group differences (Frymer 1999). Ethnicity remains one of the most important determinants for the vote choice in the United States. Even so, few political scientists would describe an American election as an "ethnic census." Better and more nuanced theory and data on elections and electoral dynamics will allow African politics scholars to join the Americanists in resisting this kind of reductionism.

Our analysis supports the argument that different types of constituencies are likely to feature significantly different levels of political competition. The ethnic factor in vote choice shows up in the analysis: that incumbent parties are less likely to lose support from one

election to the next in the home region of the president. Ichino and Nathan (2013) hypothesize that support from these strongly pro-incumbent constituencies may not only come from the President's co-ethnics, but also ethnic "outsiders" in these regions who hope to benefit from strategically directed clientelistic club goods. Meanwhile, controlling for ethnicity, we see that all rural constituencies, and especially the most sparsely populated, are significantly less likely to desert the incumbent party than the urban constituencies. In this paper we proposed the label of "captive" for the low population density rural constituencies, underscoring what appear to be real limits on possibilities for effective opposition in-roads in many or perhaps most of these districts. Conversely, we see a high propensity to reevaluate vote choice in urban constituencies, and in more densely populated rural areas outside the ruling party's home region. In such constituencies, voters appear to be more autonomous, and more able and more likely to engage in performance-related voting. For such constituencies, the idea of the captive African voter seeking clientelistic rewards from an incumbent party can be particularly off the mark.

Most research on African politics has used countries as the basic unit of analysis, but attempts to generalize about entire countries – or "African voters" in general – entail great information loss. National-level generalizations obscure variations that tell us a great deal about electoral politics in Africa. The findings in this paper point strongly to clear subnational differences in voting patterns, underscoring arguments that suggest that in Africa, political competition, patterns of representation and, indeed, the very functioning of democracy varies considerably over space.

The results also suggest that incumbent and opposition party electoral strategies probably vary across space far more than previous research has recognized. Careful crafting of *regional coalitions* may play a key role in producing national-level electoral outcomes in Africa's SMD systems, just as it does in other parts of the world.

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