

Local Control: How Opposition Support Constrains Electoral Autocrats

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March 5, 2020

Abstract

Scholars conceptualize autocrats as central planners, constrained in how much they can distribute but not where. Autocrats use punishment regimes to sanction disloyalty. In many electoral autocracies, local institutions are the infrastructure of reward and sanction, a legacy of decentralization in the 1980s and 1990s. I show that autocrats face subnational constraints on their ability to enforce punishment regimes. Using administrative and electoral data, interviews and a survey in Tanzania, I demonstrate that local control – who wins elected control of local institutions – determines the autocrats’s ability to punish opposition support. I show incumbent local governments (LGs) punish opposition support while opposition LGs do not. As a result, survey respondents in opposition LGs fear community sanctions less. In these LGs, weakening the punishment regime increases opposition support. This suggests even small pockets of opposition constrain autocrats. This study demonstrates the importance of subnational politics in the study of autocracy.

Word Count: 11 922

Electoral autocrats¹ must contain threats to their rule to stay in power. Work on authoritarian politics focuses on incumbent strategies to prevent the emergence of credible challengers and meaningful political contestation. Opposition parties are generally thought to be permitted for functionalist reasons. Opposition parties are a means of co-opting possibly rebellious elites and act as a ‘safety valve’ for popular discontent (Gandhi, 2008; Sartori, 1976). So long as incumbent support remains above the electoral thresholds for executive and legislative control, opposition support is not thought to constrain or threaten incumbents.² Autocrats use distributive politics to keep opposition support low. Incumbents often enforce ‘punishment regimes’, rewarding the loyal with state resources and sanctioning opposition support (Magaloni, 2006; Blaydes, 2010).

Existing understandings of distributive politics in electoral autocracies³ presuppose that an incumbent can exert their authority uniformly across space. Conceptualizing the incumbent’s problem as that of a central planner, studies of incumbent strategy assess where regimes target resources and why. Incumbents are understood to be resource constrained but not constrained as to where and how they can distribute. I argue that *local control* – who wins elected control of local institutions in a given subnational unit – constrains incumbents’ electoral strategies in decentralized electoral autocracies. By overlooking these constraints, we overlook subnational variation in the incumbent’s ability to punish opposition support from region to region, community to community. Thus, we overlook subnational limitations in the incumbents’ ability to manage political competition and so maintain their hold on power. As a result, I contend we overlook an important way opposition support meaningfully constrains electoral autocrats.

The 1980s and 1990s saw an unprecedented wave of decentralization. The legacy of this is that most countries, including many electoral autocracies, are decentralized to some extent. After decentralization, local institutions allocate significant state resources with control of these institutions often determined by local elections. I contend that this changed the dynamics of authoritarian distribution and made it possible for regimes to lose local control. The comparative politics literature broadly views decentralization as a boon for autocrats because it improves their ability to reach into communities, monitor and distribute patronage (Landry, 2008; Riedl and Dickovick, 2014; Bohlken, 2016; Aalen and Muriaas, 2017). However, I argue that these benefits are contingent on local control. In this study I ask how does local control affect autocrats’ ability to punish opposition support? Given this, what implications does opposition support have for regime

¹I use electoral autocrat, autocrat and incumbent interchangeably

²Low levels of opposition support are important for projecting power and an aura of invincibility (Magaloni, 2006)

³I use Schedler (2006) definition of electoral authoritarianism: “Electoral authoritarian regimes practice authoritarianism behind the institutional facades of representative democracy. They hold regular multiparty elections at the national level, yet violate liberal-democratic minimum standards in systematic and profound ways”

durability in decentralized electoral autocracies?

I make three claims in this study. First, local institutions are a key part of the infrastructure of reward and sanction in decentralized electoral autocracies. I argue that local institutions are the conduit through which punishment regimes are enforced. Second, control of these institutions determines the credibility of an incumbent's 'punishment regime' in a given area. Different levels of government have different capacity to monitor and sanction individuals and communities. Local control determines the kind of electoral tools the incumbent can use to induce cooperation and dissuade defection in a given area. In incumbent areas, they can leverage the power of local knowledge to sanction voters and prevent defection. Loss of local elections forces incumbents to cede their usual infrastructure of reward and sanction to opposition parties. Therefore the incumbent can impose greater costs for opposition support in incumbent areas than they can on similar voters in opposition areas. Third, I claim that loss of local control reduces voters' fear of sanctioning which in turn influences their vote choice. By this channel, loss of local control can threaten regime durability by making it harder for the autocrat to discourage opposition support.

I use a range of data from Tanzania to test these claims. I use administrative data from across Tanzania to show that opposition and incumbent local government distribute state resources differently. Once opposition parties win local control, I demonstrate that they can disrupt the existing punishment regime across a number of local provisions. I supplement this data using evidence from over 50 interviews with politicians, bureaucrats and voters in Kilimanjaro. I trace how local officials⁴ use local institutions and dense local knowledge to sanction opposition support and provide direct evidence that incumbent and opposition LGs distribute with the logics of punishment and evening access respectively. I use responses to list experiments designed to elicit truthful responses to sensitive questions to explore where voters fear community sanctions for defecting to the opposition party. I find that respondents in opposition local governments are significantly less likely to fear community sanctions. Finally, I show that opposition control of the local government increases later opposition support in that jurisdiction. By analyzing the evolution of opposition support *within* LGs, I provide evidence that this increase is driven by different patterns of sanctioning *between* LGs. I therefore show that opposition control blunts incumbents' use of the 'punishment regimes' integral to how they manage competition.

Punishment regimes and opposition support

By 2005, 75 countries had passed decentralization reforms with the majority incorporating some combination of administrative, fiscal and political decentralization ([Ahmad et al., 2005](#)). I define decentralization

⁴I use local officials when I refer to local politicians and bureaucrats interchangeably

using Treisman’s definition of decision-making decentralization. A country is decentralized if there exists at an elected subnational tier or tiers responsible for at least one policy domain which it is hard for the incumbent to recentralize (Treisman, 2007).⁵ Decentralization creates elected local institutions which are empowered to provide public services without extensive coordination with the center. The decision-makers on distributive policy move to the local level. Decentralization changed who implemented these electorally important distributive policies. Most developing countries had introduced some form of decentralization reform (Ahmad et al, 2005). Many of these countries were electoral autocracies. Indeed around half of all electoral autocracies are decentralized.⁶ Decentralization was not simply window-dressing in these cases. As shown in Figure A1, many autocracies committed to significant decentralization.

Decentralization has long been thought of as inherently democratic in normative political theory (De Tocqueville, 2003; Madison, 1787). Despite this, existing work views these reforms as a boon for autocrats. As with other nominally democratic institutions, subnational governments and administrations give incumbents new tools to manage political competition (Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007). Studies point to a range of mechanisms - improved economic performance through competition, elite cohesion through promotions, better information on performance, better distribution of patronage, containment of regional opposition - by which decentralization may strengthen the hand of autocrats (Cai and Treisman, 2009; Landry, 2008; Malesky and Schuler, 2011; Riedl and Dickovick, 2014; Hess, 2013; Aalen and Muriaas, 2017; Clark, 2018). Decentralization strengthens local institutions where local state and party presence may have been weak. Indeed, many decentralization packages came with significant budgetary assistance to support the new local institutions, resources which were then tied to the state rather than party infrastructure.

Distributive politics is core to regime survival as it structures the incentives of the electorate and the elite to remain loyal to the incumbent (Albertus, Fenner and Slater, 2018). One prominent logic of authoritarian distribution is ‘punishment regimes’ (Magaloni, 2006; Blaydes, 2010).⁷ ‘Punishment regimes’ target state resources to the loyal and deny them to the disloyal. In these studies and work on authoritarian politics more broadly, scholars conceive of incumbents as constrained in how much they can distribute but not where they can distribute. Both Magaloni and Blaydes argue that citizens in autocracies continue to support the regime at the polls because the regime is understood as the sole route to resources and opportunities. By sanctioning disloyalty, the regime signals that it is costly to be outside the regime’s group of beneficiaries. Voters in electoral autocracies vote based on this electoral bargain. The durability of an incumbent’s tenure

⁵This is a form of political decentralization which assumes a non-trivial accompanying level of administrative and/or fiscal decentralization

⁶Based on V-Dem data using the above definition and dropping those cases with trivial administrative and fiscal decentralization as measured by Ivanyna and Shah (2012)

⁷I focus on punishment regimes but local control would also temper incumbent’s ability to implement other distributive logics

is therefore driven by their ability to enforce this bargain.

This kind of clientelist allocation of state resources is common across democracies and electoral autocracies. In many countries, these strategically important functions of the state are decentralized. Clientelist transactions are contingent exchanges between voters and politicians (Wantchekon, 2003). To get a reward or avoid sanction, the client votes for the patron. The client will only honor this bargain if it is credible that the patron can monitor the client and has the capacity to punish them if they defect from the bargain. The credibility of punishment regimes in electoral autocracies is underpinned by the capacity of agents acting on behalf of the incumbent to monitor and sanction voters. Studies of regime durability often focus on how local party structures in electoral autocracies solve this problem (Levitsky and Way, 2010; Svobik, 2012). However, the importance of local state resources is underplayed. State resources are the currency of most clientelist bargains in decentralized electoral autocracies. (Slater and Fenner, 2011) argue that state institutions hold far greater leverage over ordinary citizens than party institutions. The strongest regimes are those where state apparatus can consistently reward the loyal and sanction the disloyal. To punish opposition support, incumbents must be able to influence the distribution of these resources.

An incumbent's ability to sanction opposition voters also depends on the information they can draw on. Extensive work demonstrates the informational advantage that local actors have over those at the center (Brusco, Nazareno and Stokes, 2004; Stokes, 2005; Malesky and Schuler, 2011; Finan and Schechter, 2012; Stokes et al., 2013; Cruz, 2018). In a centralized system, agents use electoral returns and heuristics like ethnicity to direct state resources to sanction disloyal regions. To engage in finer-grained targeting, they must rely on local networks of brokers to identify disloyal communities. However, sustaining a network of brokers is costly. Stokes et al. (2013) stress how difficult it is to monitor and control brokers. Information often leaks from the chain of delegation before reaching the center where allocative decisions are made.

In decentralized systems, it is often local officials that allocate public goods central to the incumbent's distributive strategy. They act as gatekeepers to state resources. In these systems, it is those with the best information about political support who are tasked with implementing the incumbent's sanctioning strategy. As I argue in the next section, this means that who controls these local institutions is therefore highly consequential to whether autocrats can punish opposition support.

It is clear that opposition supporters incur costs for going against the incumbent. Scholars explore why voters back opposition parties despite these costs. Opposition supporters are generally high socioeconomic status who are less vulnerable to sanction or ideological 'activist' voters committed to their programmatic platforms (Greene, 2007; Letsa, 2017). The hostile environment for opposition voters that punishment regimes create makes it hard to win over other voters. Despite these costs, opposition strongholds – often clusters of these 'most likely' opposition voters – are a common feature in electoral autocracies (McMann,

2018; Letsa, 2018).

In decentralized countries, these subnational pockets of opposition support translate to *local control*. That means opposition parties win control of state resources wherever they are popular enough to win a local election. This significantly lowers the bar they must clear to gain meaningful powers and take those powers from the autocrat. This calls into question the extent to which the same ‘electoral bargain’ holds uniformly across a given electoral autocracy. Scholars of decentralization often ask how the incumbent’s power at the time of decentralization affected the local institutions that were introduced (O’Neill, 2003; Boone, 2003; Falleti, 2010; Riedl and Dickovick, 2014). I ask how local institutions affects the incumbent’s power going forward and the prospect that opposition parties have to convince voters outside their core constituencies.

Local control and sanctioning of opposition support

I argue that local control – who wins elected control of local institutions in a given subnational unit – determines the incumbent’s ability to sanction opposition support across space. When the incumbent retains local control, incumbent-loyal politicians can exploit local knowledge and local state resources to sanction opposition support. However, if the incumbent loses local control, it forces them to abdicate the capacity to monitor and sanction voters to opposition parties. This constrains their use of ‘punishment regimes’ and limits their ability to discourage opposition support. I define sanctioning as the use of powers associated with public office to disadvantage individuals or groups who do not support the regime. Here I focus on the local government (LG) level. By ‘local government’, I refer to the decentralized level of government responsible for the allocation and delivery of local public goods and services.

Local officials improve on the accuracy of central targeting by drawing on local knowledge that would otherwise leak from the system before it could be acted upon. Their local knowledge allows them to sanction opposition support more accurately for two reasons. First, the ‘brokers’ are now embedded state bureaucrats and politicians, responsible for new, fine-grained political units. The demarcation of small, elected subnational units makes the geography of political support more ‘legible’ (Scott, 1998; Malesky and Schuler, 2011). Second, local officials learn even more about levels of support of those below them through their day-to-day work. They learn the partisanship of the communities they work with and can keep up to date with noticeable shifts in popular support. They can use that information to accurately punish opposition support.

LGs are well placed to target the communities which make up their jurisdiction. LGs may be responsible for allocation of local public goods like schools, clinics and waterpoints, running costs for these local public

Level	Monitoring	Sanctioning technology
Local Government	Communities	Local public goods, development grants
Center	Central electoral returns, regional heuristics	Central transfers, welfare programs, security services

Table 1: Monitoring, sanctioning capacity by government level

goods, allocation of human capital, community development budgets and so on. Using these resources, LGs can reward loyal communities and sanction disloyal ones. They can mobilize these local resources to sanction opposition support at election time and between electoral cycles.

Targeting and monitoring capacity combine to determine a level’s sanctioning capacity. Officials are motivated to leverage their sanctioning capacity against opposition voters to curry favor with the regime. LGs target disloyal communities to discourage opposition support and present a show of loyalty to avoid sanction from the center. For example, they may fear cuts in central transfers or being denied centralized infrastructure or development projects. When motivated to implement the incumbent’s sanctioning strategy, the custodians of local institutions use the information and resources at these levels to sanction opposition support and reward loyalty. However, the regime’s access to these critical local advantages are lost when opposition parties take over. The regime has fewer eyes and ears on the ground and the opposition politician who takes over can use that information and leverage as they see fit.

Local control determines what information the incumbent can draw on and what resources they can allocate to reward and sanction in that unit as summarized in Table 1. Opposition control deprives incumbents of many of their usual clientelist tools and so reduces the costs incumbents can impose for opposition support. If the incumbent retains control of LG, the incumbent can credibly threaten communities. When LGs are opposition-controlled, opposition parties have control over allocation of local resources, making it harder for the incumbent to reward loyalty and sanction opposition support community-by-community.⁸

Losing local control weakens the incumbent’s ability to punish opposition support. It is then easier for citizens to vote on conscience for opposition parties where similar voters living under incumbent control would be motivated to remain loyal to the incumbent by threat of sanction. As discussed above, scholars have characterized who the ‘most likely’ opposition voters are. This theory points to a mechanism by which opposition parties can break out of these core constituencies.

This has important implications for understanding if opposition support threatens autocrats, even if it

⁸I do not focus on the scenario where opposition parties can likewise use local institutions to sanction incumbent support. Opposition control does not take away other incumbency advantages, which make it more difficult for opposition parties to sanction incumbent voters as consistently as the regime sanctions opposition voters. Bureaucrats may refuse to cooperate or they may be subject to legal consequences for pursuing such a strategy. Opposition control blunts the incumbent’s ability to sanction but does not take it away entirely nor does it insulate opposition politicians from threats of repression or legal harassment which may constrain their behavior. I provide evidence for this in SI (p11)

falls well below the bar to win the presidency or control of the legislature. An incumbent may be hegemonic at the center but opposition local control can disrupt an incumbent's ability to impose their punishment regime in some parts of the country. In these areas, it becomes easier for opposition parties to win votes and thus maintain control from one election to the next because it is harder for the incumbent to sanction.⁹ Thus even small pockets of opposition support can lay the foundation for a future challenge to the incumbent if they translate to local control.

This theory applies most closely to decentralized electoral autocracies i.e. autocracies with elected local institutions with non-trivial local capacity and fiscal and administrative autonomy. For the theory to hold, opposition parties must be able to influence how state resources, budgets and capacity are used once they take power. The theory holds best in those countries where information-gathering and service provision is more 'face-to-face' and where competition is, at least in part, clientelistic. Given these conditions, my theory is most likely to hold in developing and middle-income countries. I focus on local governments but the logic of local control holds for any subnational institution which has meaningful autonomy over the allocation of state resources or the exercise of state powers. I focus on electoral autocracies because the importance of local-level explanations challenges the prevailing understanding of these regimes. However, the dynamics I describe may carry to other decentralized countries. For example, the theory may also dominant party regimes where opposition parties are also ordinarily marginalized.

Hypotheses and empirical approach

I test the following hypotheses:

- **H1:** Opposition control of local government weakens the ability of the incumbent to sanction opposition communities
- **H2:** Voters living under opposition control fear sanctioning less than those living under incumbent control
- **H3:** Given H2, voters living under opposition control are more likely to support opposition parties than those living under incumbent control all else equal

I test these hypotheses using evidence from Tanzania. It is a case of a decentralized electoral autocracy which exhibits variation in opposition control which allows me to plausibly test my theory. The case has several useful qualities. First, it is a case where we may not expect local politics to matter. Figure [A1](#)

⁹Incumbents are still likely to control some resources and power in areas of opposition control as few electoral autocracies are fully decentralized, which they can use to frustrate opposition parties in power. I discuss this in SI (p11). Exploring dynamics of this fully are beyond the scope of this study

shows Tanzania is not a highly decentralized country. It is below average on all forms (administrative, political, fiscal) of decentralization across all countries, average among all electoral autocracies. If I can show that local control matters in Tanzania, where the central government is relatively more powerful than in elsewhere in my universe of cases, this will provide convincing evidence for my theory and indicate that local control and indeed local politics more broadly matters more in electoral autocracies than scholars may ordinarily assume. Second, Tanzania is a unlikely case of incumbent weakness and opposition strength given existing theories of regime durability. As I discuss further below, it does not have a significant history of opposition, CCM elites control much of the economy, civil society is weak and the opposition lack ethnic bases of support. The CCM is a strong party with high organizational capacity. The party has hegemony over central state institutions as well as much of society (Morse, 2018). Therefore, if I can show that local control meaningfully constrains the regime in Tanzania, this suggests these explanations will be important in a range of other cases. Third, politics in Tanzania is comparable to other low to middle income decentralized electoral autocracies, particularly post-socialist/post-communist countries with a legacy of one party rule.¹⁰

I present evidence for my theory in three parts. First, I use administrative data on local state resources and services from across Tanzania to assess if resources are distributed differently in incumbent LGs and opposition LG to test H1. The data I use measures local government provisions which were commonly discussed in interviews with opposition politicians: construction of highly local public goods like classrooms, quality of public services and the allocation of technical capacity to repair and maintain existing public goods. I describe the data I use in more detail in the first empirical section.

Second, I use a mixed methods case study of Kilimanjaro region to provide further evidence for H1 and test H2 directly.¹¹ I use the case study to explore how those acting on behalf of the regime use local institutions to sanction opposition support and ask if opposition control confounds this. I trace the logic they use when exploiting these institutions and interrogate how this differs for opposition politicians. I also use the case study to assess the consequences of these differences for voters' fear of sanctions in the region. I use a survey with list experiments alongside interviews to test if voters' fear of sanction is determined by who controls the LG in their area. Working in a single region allows me to implicitly control for variation in administration and leadership at the regional level.

Third, I broaden the focus back out and use election data from across Tanzania to test H3. If H2 holds and voters under opposition control fear sanctioning less then we would expect this would influence their vote choice and make them more likely to support opposition parties. I use ward-level data from the 2005,

¹⁰This is particularly true because politics in Tanzania is not defined by ethnicity. While this limits the extent to which Tanzania is comparable with some other cases in sub-Saharan Africa, it increases the portability of the conclusions I draw to other regions.

¹¹I account for my subnational case selection in that section

2010 and 2015 elections to test this by assessing if being in an opposition LG affects later levels of opposition support and a ward's prospects of electing an opposition councilor. I then test my sanctioning mechanism more directly by looking at patterns of opposition support *within* LGs and *over time*. According to my theory, it is opposition areas in incumbent LGs who are sanctioned. Incumbent areas in incumbent LGs are not sanctioned and opposition local control offsets sanctioning. If this holds, I would expect voters in opposition areas in incumbent LGs to be directly discouraged from supporting opposition parties from one election to the next. Thus, I also look at how past opposition support predicts later opposition support by LG control and the partisanship of the lower level unit to test whether lower levels of opposition support in incumbent LGs are indeed driven by sanctioning.

This study draws on a range of data, both qualitative and quantitative. The first part of my theory focuses on regime strategy and how local control constrains it. While it would be possible to test the observable implications of the hypothesis using administrative data alone, this approach could not differentiate between a constrained autocrat and an autocrat who chooses to not punish opposition support in areas under opposition control. A mixed method approach allows me to identify the *intent* of the regime, how local control constrains it and the downstream consequences for distribution of state resources. Similarly, a mixed methods approach allows me to go beyond identifying the observable implications of my theory on election results. Instead, I use survey data and interviews alongside these data to demonstrate that voters fear sanction less under opposition control before then tracing how this influences vote choice. Thus, my empirical strategy relies on triangulation using multiple data sources to carefully identify differences by local control. I use various strategies including interview evidence and subsamples of closely contested LGs to convince the reader that these differences are *because of* local control.

Together these empirical tests show that local institutions are an important part of the regime's infrastructure for punishing opposition support and that loss of local control reduces their ability to sanction. I also aim to demonstrate that this has downstream consequences for how voters perceive the costs of opposition support and hence choose to vote.

Local control in Tanzania

Tanzania is an electoral autocracy in East Africa. Since independence, it has been ruled by a single political party. Until 1992, this party was the only legally permitted one. The ruling *Chama cha Mapinduzi* (CCM) has overseen several successful handovers of power within the party. Since the founding elections of 1995, opposition parties have become more institutionalized. In 2015, the opposition parties formed a single coalition to contest for the presidency and gained 40% of the vote. Opposition parties initially had little

presence in local government. However, from their initial footholds, opposition support has spread and opposition parties now control local government in majority of Tanzania’s urban areas. Almost all local elections are now contested by at least one of the opposition parties.

Tanzania decentralized in 2000 through the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP). The LGRP gave elected politicians at the LG level authority over key public goods including schools, clinics, roads and water. Coordination with the central government is sometimes required to provide expensive, lumpy public goods like new schools and hospitals but work in public administration has found that the reforms meaningfully empowered local government and were comparable to other reforms to local public good provision (Kessy and McCourt, 2010). Councilors are elected to LGs from wards. LG funding and projects are allocated by ward. The reforms also increased the role of community institutions. Village/street offices are headed by an elected village/street chair (VC). Figure 1 summarizes the levels of government in Tanzania.

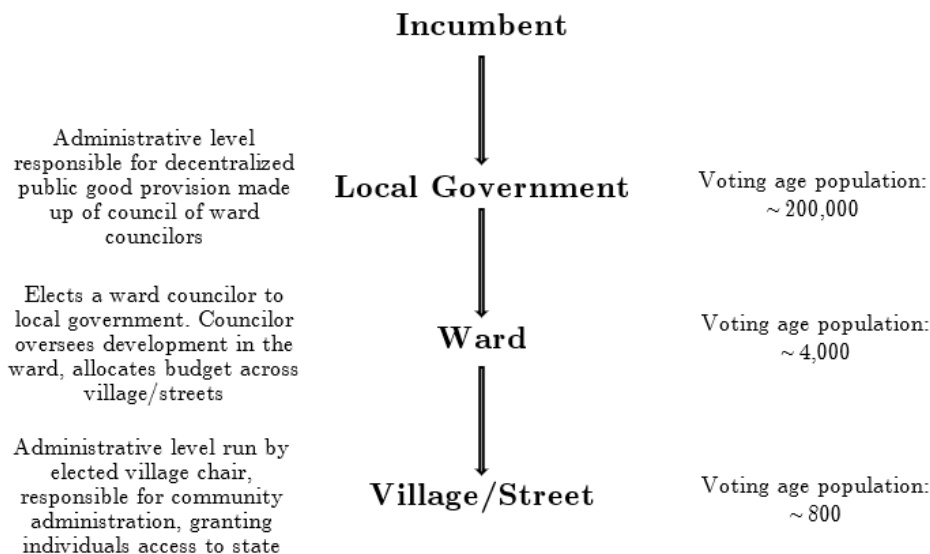


Figure 1: Subnational levels of government in Tanzania

Historically, the CCM has had a strong local presence but this waned towards the end of the 20th century. LGRP strengthened these institutions but they could now be lost to opposition parties. The Tanzanian government were confident in 2000 that this was not a major threat as opposition parties have historically been weak and volatile in Tanzania. However, these reforms have led to substantial variation in CCM local control. Today, about a quarter of wards are in opposition hands. Furthermore, around two thirds of all Tanzanian wards neighbor an opposition ward. Extant evidence suggests the CCM enforces a punishment regime. Central transfers to LGs (Weinstein, 2011) and provision of water points are disproportionately allocated to CCM areas (Carlitz, 2017). In this study, I address how local control confounds this punishment

regime.

Local control and local public good provision across Tanzania

In this section, I show that local control changes how state resources are distributed across Tanzania. Specifically, I show that voters' access to local public goods and state resources is conditional on their community's loyalty to the regime *unless* they live under opposition control.

In interviews in opposition LGs, opposition politicians described the most important powers they have: local road construction, access to water, school classroom construction, school performance, environmental cleanliness, public health management. The kinds of projects opposition politicians mention may seem trivial compared to big infrastructure projects often studied.¹² However, these local powers make substantial impact on the standard of living in these LGs, particularly given the low rate of construction of new large public goods. If opposition parties in local government can redirect local state resources and stop sanctioning opposition supporters, it makes it less costly to be an opposition voter in that LG.

I use administrative data on public good provision collected from various ministries in the Tanzanian government to assess whether incumbent and opposition LGs allocate local state resources differently. First, I look at secondary classroom construction between the 2010 and 2015 election.¹³ Second, I use data on waterpoint functionality from 2015 and 2017 to measure in which wards local governments did repair work. I create a measure of waterpoint repair by comparing functionality between 2015 and 2017. If a broken waterpoint in 2015 is fixed by 2017, this suggests that the local government has sent a water engineer out to fix the problem, that the local government has mobilized its limited technical capacity to help that ward over another. Third, I analyze school performance data from 2012 to 2016. I use data on primary school pass rates, the proportion of pupils who achieve satisfactory grades in standardized tests. To measure opposition support and opposition control, I use ward-level results from 2005, 2010 and 2015 local elections. I then use these to calculate which party holds majority control of each local government.

I provide evidence using data on a range of provisions to convince the reader that loss of local control does force the regime to abdicate its influence over all those powers ceded to local governments. Administrative

¹²Opposition LGs are unable to overhaul the infrastructure of local service delivery because of the constraints they face. LGs under opposition control face significant disadvantages as they too are subject to a punishment regime enforced from the center. The incumbent CCM retains control of the rest of the system and can use this power to frustrate opposition autonomy and subvert these LGs' decentralized powers. Opposition LGs receive significantly lower central transfers than comparable incumbent areas. Given these fiscal restrictions, it is harder for opposition local governments to deliver new public goods without central assistance. Indeed the provision of 'high coordination public goods' like new schools etc fit a classic punishment regime as shown in Figures A2 and A3. These projects are only feasible with significant coordination with the center which gives them leverage over the project's location thereby allowing the regime to continue to favor CCM wards.

¹³I measure classroom construction by using school enrolment data and identifying those schools which have added fifth or sixth form (equivalent of junior and senior year in high school) from initially being a school that only caters for Forms 1 to 4. To add Form 5 or 6 to a school, local governments must construct new classrooms and facilities.

data in autocracies is difficult to collect, particularly when it comes to local provisions which are less likely to be rigorously monitored and counted. This kind of data is often subject to concerns about data quality (Sandefur and Glassman, 2015). If I find consistent results in line with my theory across different data, this provides stronger evidence for it than focusing on any one data source alone.

The results of analysis of these data suggest that opposition politicians are able to move the distribution of these public goods and disrupt the sanctioning of opposition support. The CCM regime’s preferred distributive logic is a punishment regime. They allocate public goods which must be co-produced with the center according to this logic as shown in Figures A2 and A3. First I look at data on the construction of new secondary school classrooms. According to my interviews, construction projects to enhance existing schools are a key part of local governments’ remit. In Figure 2, I plot the proportion of new secondary school classrooms built in opposition wards versus incumbent wards in incumbent LGs and opposition LGs over a four year period. If local control really constrains the regime, I would expect to find a punishment regime in incumbent LGs but not in opposition LGs. Indeed, in incumbent LGs, around eighty percent of all classrooms are built in incumbent wards. However, in opposition LGs this flips with the overwhelming majority of classrooms being built in opposition wards. This plot shows the descriptive differences. These differences are statistically significant and robust to controls as shown in Table A1. This suggests that opposition politicians in opposition LGs are able to shift the distribution of local state resources.

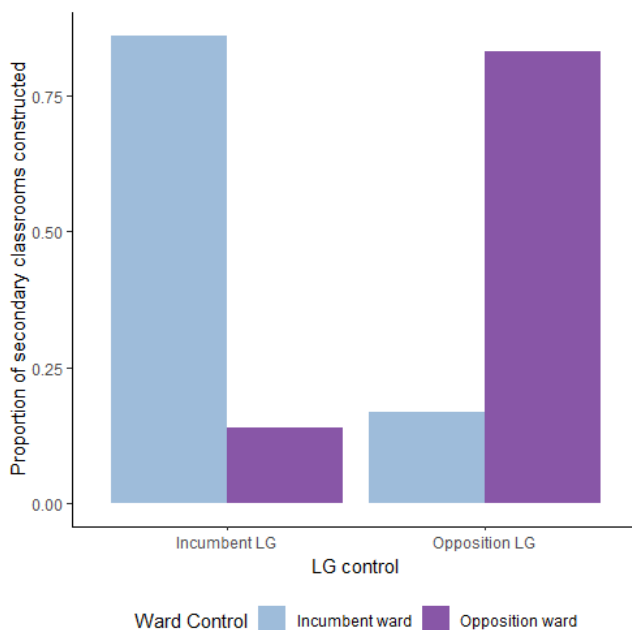


Figure 2: Secondary school construction between 2012 and 2016¹⁴

¹⁴This plot shows the proportion of secondary school classrooms constructed in opposition and incumbent wards by local control. The reader may be concerned that this result is driven by there being an overwhelming majority of opposition wards

Second, I look at how local governments deploy their technical capacity. Local governments are staffed with bureaucrats with technical expertise that ensure the smooth running of schools, waterpoints like pumps and wells are functional, clinics are staffed and have supplies etc. LGs decide how these bureaucrats use their time and resources and so decide which communities' services get prioritized or receive help in an emergency. Interviews suggest that these bureaucrats are under pressure from above to prioritize CCM communities. However, if my theory holds, the extent to which they are pressured to do so by local politicians should be less in opposition LGs.¹⁵ In these places, I would expect LGs to direct technical capacity to favor CCM communities less than in incumbent LGs. I analyze data on waterpoint functionality to test whether opposition wards are more likely to have their waterpoint repaired in opposition LGs than in incumbent LGs. I plot these results in Figure 3 and full results are shown in Table A2. Figure 3 shows that repair work on waterpoints is positively and strongly significantly associated with incumbent vote share under incumbent control. Similarly, incumbent wards are significantly more likely to get their waterpoint repaired than opposition wards. However, in opposition areas, I find that repair work is allocated more evenly.¹⁶¹⁷ This result is robust to controls and various specifications. This provides further evidence that opposition LGs can meaningfully influence how state resources are used at the local level.

Finally, I look at school performance. School performance is determined by many factors and local governments are responsible for a number of these: buildings, materials, oversight, fundraising, meals, sanitation and so on. If my theory holds, the regime would like to favor those schools in CCM communities but are only able to do so in opposition LGs. I use data on primary school pass rates to test whether schools in opposition wards fare relatively better under opposition LGs. I present the results of this analysis in Table A3. In models 1-4, I use OLS regression with various specifications controlling for demographic controls, legislative support for the ruling party and region fixed effects as indicated. In models 5 and 6, I conduct two-way (school, year) fixed effects regressions including a control for legislative support in model 6. Across all specifications, I find that interaction term between opposition ward and opposition LG is positive, large and significant showing that opposition wards perform relatively better under opposition LGs. The results suggest that incumbent LGs favor those schools in incumbent areas and opposition LGs favor those schools in opposition areas.

Across three different types of data which each measure the allocation of three different local government in opposition LGs and vice versa. However, this does not reflect the actual distribution of opposition wards by LG control. Many incumbent LGs have a significant minority of opposition wards and vice versa.

¹⁵I discuss this in more detail in the next section

¹⁶In the previous and following example, opposition LGs deliver *better* provisions/services to opposition communities. Here they even access. I posit that this is because water bureaucrats report being under the most pressure/oversight from the center

¹⁷You may note that less repair work is done overall in opposition LGs. Opposition LGs are generally allocated less funding for running costs (including staff) and for public spending. This may explain the difference in levels reflected in this plot. However, the important takeaway from this plot is that opposition politicians can actually change the slope in question suggesting real power over allocation of technical capacity

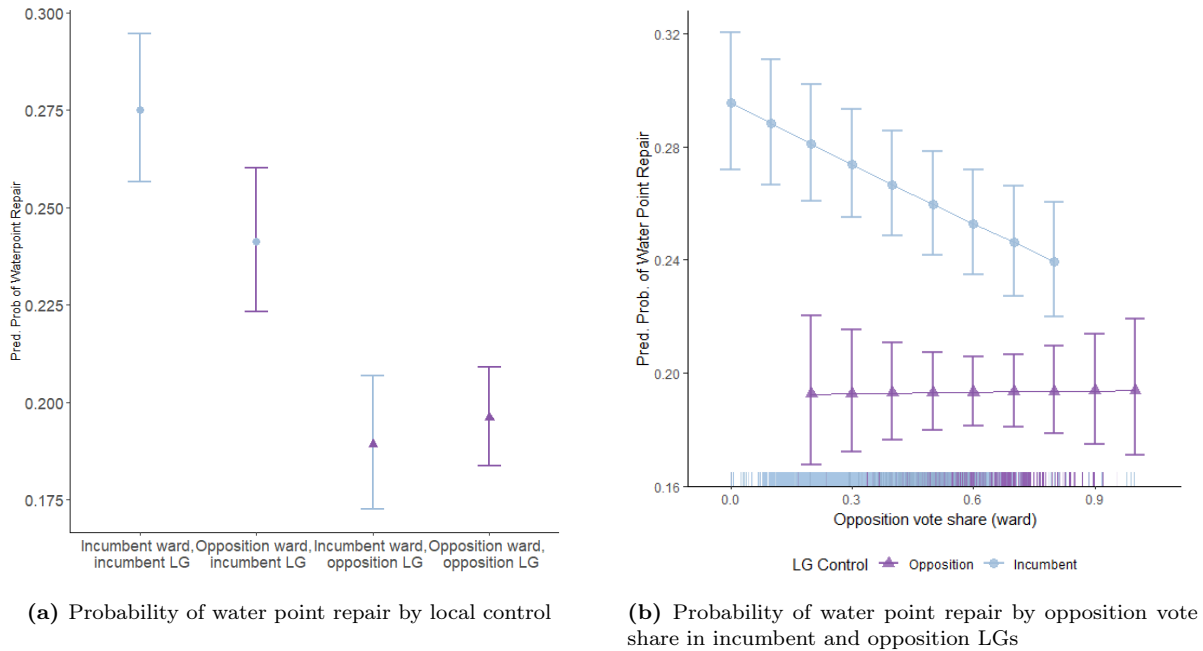


Figure 3: Effect of local control on use of technical capacity to sanction

Details: Predicted probabilities calculated from logistic regression with robust standard errors on dataset of >73000 waterpoints in Tanzania. Repair is calculated by comparing status in 2015 and 2017. The rug plot in plot b) indicates the support in the data for opposition share by LG control. Full table with alternate specifications can be found in Table A2. Results are robust to use of OLS and conditional logit.

provisions, I find consistent evidence of a punishment regime in incumbent LGs that is weakened or even flipped in opposition LGs. These results is in line with H1 that loss of local control constrains regimes from enforcing a punishment regime.

A mixed-methods case study of Kilimanjaro

However, this is not the only plausible account which could explain these results. As such, I now turn to my case study to present direct evidence that a punishment logic is in operation in incumbent LGs and that opposition politicians act to disrupt this once they win local control. I then use evidence from a survey with a list experiment to test whether voters in Kilimanjaro fear of sanctioning less under opposition control in line with H2.

I focus on Kilimanjaro region as it exhibits substantial variation in support for CCM. Areas in the north of the region are some of the most loyal in Tanzania to the main opposition party, Chadema. The areas south and east of Moshi range from competitive to highly CCM loyal. The main opposition parties are active in multiple levels of government in Kilimanjaro. I did interviews in 6 LGs to exploit this variation to understand how variation in control of different levels influenced whether and how Chadema areas and

voters were targeted. Kilimanjaro’s cash crops make it one of the wealthier areas of Tanzania and its residents are less vulnerable to state sanction. If sanctioning is important to voters in Kilimanjaro, where residents are less reliant on the state, then I expect it to be important to voters across the country. Additional interview evidence and discussion of case selection can be found in SI (p9). I conducted interviews with local and community politicians and bureaucrats as well as voters.¹⁸ I conducted over 60 interviews in Kilimanjaro region between 2015 and 2018. I also interviewed bureaucrats at the President’s Office for Regional Administration and Local Government in Dodoma.

I also conducted a pre-election survey in Kilimanjaro in 2015, selecting three LGs: one opposition and two CCM.¹⁹ In each LG, communities were categorized as opposition or incumbent and were then selected at random from each list. A total of 20 villages were included in the sample with a total of 766 respondents. Households were selected using ‘random walk’ from a centroid of each village.

This survey included list experiments. Respondents are likely to avoid or lie when asked direct questions about sensitive topics. List experiments use an item count technique, where respondents report a number of the items they agree with, to allow respondents to have plausible deniability for affirming a sensitive item. Half of respondents, the treatment group, are given the non-sensitive items and the sensitive item. The other half, the control group, are given only the non-sensitive items. Estimates of the rate that respondents agree/identify with the sensitive item(s) are made by comparing the item response counts of the treatment group and the control group. I include more information on implementation in the SI. I asked the following question:

Some people are worried about voting for the opposition in the upcoming election. How many of these things would you worry about in voting for the opposition?

The sensitive item was:

1. If we vote opposition, my community may lose out; for example the community may receive fewer projects and grants to improve life here, we may have more power cuts and other shortages here

This item gets at community costs of opposition support that voters and politicians report as common. The full text of the list experiment is in SI (p12). To test my hypotheses, I use a maximum likelihood regression technique developed to analyze item count data with sensitive items (Blair and Imai, 2010). This

¹⁸The communities in which I interviewed VCs were randomly selected from villages not included in the survey. A random sample of ward councilors were contacted (stratified by party) and those who consented were interviewed. In LGs with few opposition councilors, all were contacted and those that consented were interviewed. Permission to talk with politicians was brokered through the parties. LG bureaucrats were contacted directly. Permission to talk to these bureaucrats was brokered through Kilimanjaro Regional Commission and District Executive Directors

¹⁹I do not name LGs due to safety concerns

method allows me to directly estimate the proportion of the population who ‘agree’ with the sensitive item, while controlling for covariates.

First, I discuss evidence from my interviews in Kilimanjaro. I interviewed bureaucrats to probe if sanctioning was a factor in their distributive decisions.²⁰ Bureaucrats report feeling pressure to overlook the needs of opposition communities. Bureaucrats working in both CCM and Chadema-controlled LGs said they had to respect the wishes of presidentially appointed senior bureaucrats often over those of local politicians. Some were explicit that they received directives to prioritize CCM communities and neglect opposition ones. A bureaucrat in a Chadema LG said the money often “comes with specific projects in the directive. It’s water. It’s roads, education. It is directed to CCM areas. They are human beings and so they do focus on areas where they have followers and away from their opponents.”²¹ Central bureaucrats claimed these directives were necessary because opposition politicians could not be trusted.²² Those bureaucrats who are seen as helping opposition communities too much are punished. Bureaucrats described a common practice of cycling those who worked too closely with opposition to less desirable postings in rural parts of Tanzania.

In a widely circulated video from a by-election rally in a CCM LG in Manyara region, a CCM councilor made clear that punishment was indeed the logic driving these directives and the pressure on bureaucrats: “When this place had a councilor from the opposition, we didn’t bring development projects here as we are not the ones who brought him to power. We didn’t build schools, dispensaries and roads. Why should we allocate money to this place? The councilor should struggle by himself. Pray for hunger to the enemy because when they pray for food, you will be powerful to punish them.”²³ This sanctioning logic echoes the rhetoric of President John Magufuli in Kilimanjaro. After the majority of voters in Kilimanjaro voted against Magufuli in 2015, he made clear at a rally in Moshi in 2017 that the region could expect to see no new infrastructure. If voters did not hold up their end of the bargain then neither would the central government.

However, bureaucrats sanction opposition communities less despite these directives when opposition politicians have local control. Opposition politicians make sure opposition communities are included in the spending of the local government budget and then oversee the bureaucrats to make sure this is implemented. One bureaucrat in a LG where Chadema took control in 2015 was concerned that they would be less able to follow the directives coming from the CCM now that the opposition parties controlled the council, putting him in a difficult position professionally.²⁴ Where opposition politicians and government appointed technocrats cohabit, central government preferences over which areas receive projects and which are passed over no longer dominate as opposition politicians have control of the LG budget. Bureaucrats described

²⁰I provide further details on the decision-making process I describe in SI (p10)

²¹Interview #9074

²²Interview #8627

²³Speech by CCM councilor, Manyara region, 2018

²⁴Interview #1782

having to keep both sides happy which is likely to mean an evening of access to state resources. Thus the costs that the CCM can impose for voting against them are weakened once the LG is Chadema-controlled.

Leaders of opposition LGs explicitly aim to disrupt sanctioning once they take power. One mayor of a rural opposition LG explained her local government's popularity: "People did not like unequal distribution under CCM. We tried to convince people that Chadema would be fairer in allocating services and the party grew when this happened."²⁵ Similarly, another mayor made clear that his opposition LG sought to eliminate sanctioning, albeit without only partial success: "We want to show CCM how to govern. We want to make broad-based neutral policy. 21 wards, all under Chadema, not considering how two of those wards are different."²⁶ As much as we try, the civil servants do CCM area projects quicker."²⁷ These interviews with local bureaucrats and politicians demonstrate that incumbent and opposition LGs distribute state resources differently because the punishment regime is easy to implement in the former and more difficult to implement in the latter.

Indeed, my interviews in communities in incumbent and opposition LGs suggest that sanctioning is significantly lower under opposition control. I found that opposition communities struggled to secure access to public goods and services in CCM LGs. Interviewees in CCM LGs point to clear bias in allocation of local development projects²⁸. According to an opposition councilor, "there is a lot of favoritism and discrimination. Projects are allocated to CCM wards over Chadema wards. The head of the township authority, who is a CCM VC, has had 17 projects allocated to his street alone. Chadema wards? (*author's note: wards are four times or more the size of streets*) Maybe one. They get road building and maintenance, development funds, money from TASAF."²⁹ Favoritism has been increasing as Chadema has got more popular. Most of the projects are now being allocated outside of town because Chadema has all council seats in the Township."³⁰

Chadema areas' lack of support from the local authorities in that LG is not for want of trying. For example, a Chadema village chair had been seeking to add an additional classroom to the school in his community. In line with government policy, the community had raised funds for and built the initial foundations and structure awaiting final completion by the LG. The chair said "We still can't get the school finished. LG has refused to help despite us holding up our end of the bargain. Before the presidential election, we were told we will get help with our projects but only if we went back to CCM but we voted more for Lowassa"³¹ and so we haven't got help"³² In contrast, the policy was respected in a CCM VC's area: "We just finished a

²⁵Interview #9964

²⁶In that LG, only two wards are under the ruling party, CCM

²⁷Interview #6541

²⁸Development projects are small public good projects, which are proposed by the community and funded by LG

²⁹TASAF is a centralized conditional cash transfer program

³⁰Interview #6798

³¹Opposition candidate for President in 2015

³²Interview #3561

school. The decision of where to build the school is the community's: we built the foundation and then the government built the rest."³³ The dynamics of distribution in this incumbent LG shows how decentralized resources can be used deliberately and punitively to sanction communities for their political loyalties. When the incumbent controls LG, distribution looks like a classic punishment regime.

However, opposition communities in opposition LGs do not face the same problems. A VC in an opposition LG who was elected before the opposition party won control of the LG explained how his role had changed with the change in local control. "You still have to push to get anything out of the (central) government...Importantly, this is not the case with things like roads now because the LG is Chadema. We finally got the paved road we had asked for since I came to power in 2009."³⁴ Chadema politicians in opposition LGs talked about their relative ease in securing funding for public goods. Opposition control of LG denies the incumbent their usual clientelist tools. As one voter in an opposition LG put it: "In the past, the top government was threatening the community for being with the opposition party but that's not happened for a long time since the council has been under Chadema."³⁵ Together with the quantitative evidence in the previous section, these interviews provide strong support for H1.

Interviews suggest that voters in opposition LGs generally felt freer to discuss politics in the open, felt less pressure to keep quiet than those in incumbent LGs and moderate voters felt less pressure to stay loyal to regime. I contend that this is because voters make political decisions with lower fear of sanction. Interviews made clear that the offsetting of sanctioning allowed people to vote more based on their real preferences. I spoke to a CCM voter in Moshi MC. Their community had elected a CCM chairperson in 2009 before Moshi as a whole elected an opposition local government in 2010. In 2014, the community chose to elect a Chadema chairperson. I asked this voter how the community decided to switch their loyalties. They said: "People wanted a change and this time they did not fear. They saw the leaders from CCM were weak and opposition showed us where we can improve." Now that the local government was under Chadema, the community switched sides because they were less scared of sanction. That voter had remained loyal to CCM so I asked them if they thought this switch was the right decision for the community. They replied: "Yes. Some leaders of CCM at the local level have forgotten what is right. CCM had got complacent and expected they would always have Moshi. When CCM realised it was too late." This interview gives good insights into how opposition control emerges and spreads. Initial complacency and poor performance allowed early opposition control in Moshi which Chadema then capitalized on. Because opposition local control disrupted sanctioning, even more voters were able to shift their loyalties at the next electoral cycle.

To provide further evidence for H2 that voters' fear of sanctioning varies by local control, I now turn to

³³Interview #1710

³⁴Interview #4567

³⁵Interview #3809

my survey data. I use maximum likelihood estimation to identify the estimated proportion of respondents who are concerned about each kind of sanction, controlling for covariates. Table A4 shows the estimated proportion of respondents who agree with the sensitive item i.e. fear community sanction given who controls the LG in models 4-8. However, the main quantities of interest here are the differences between incumbent and opposition controlled units, i.e. how much more likely respondents are to fear sanction in incumbent communities and LGs than in opposition ones. Across multiple specifications, this difference is positive and significant. I plot my my main result in Figure 4. I find that those living in opposition LGs fear community sanction less than those in incumbent LGs. The difference between these two values is significant but it falls short of 0.05 level when I include a control for individual partisanship ($p = 0.07$).

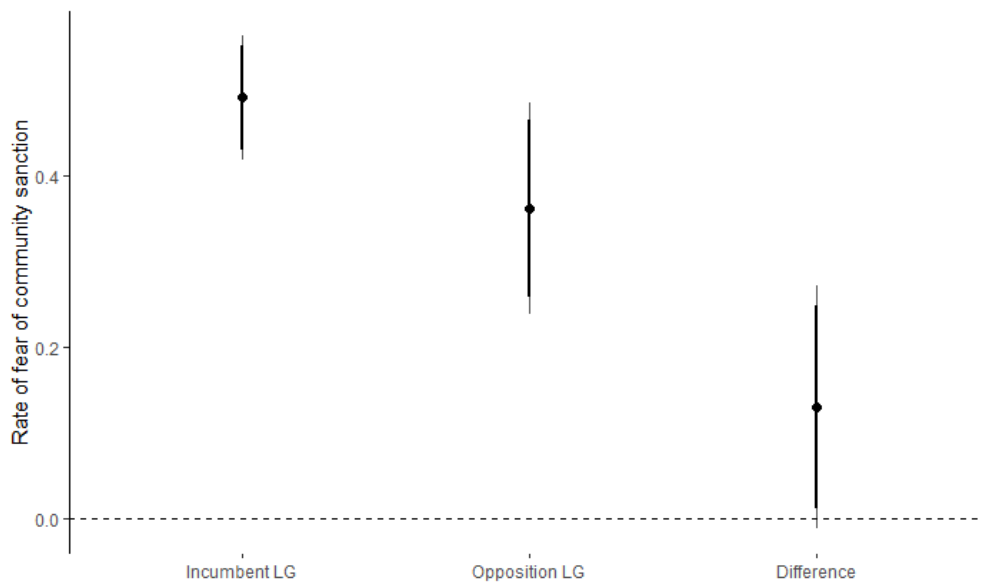


Figure 4: MLE estimates of the effect of LG control on fear of community sanction. Plots show 90% and 95% confidence intervals of Model 8 in Table A4

This result provides evidence for H2, that local control determines voters’ fear of sanctioning. One plausible objection to this finding is that voters in incumbent LGs might be more skeptical about opposition parties or more scared of regime reprisals in general. That could mean that the difference I find may be a ‘false positive’ driven by incumbent LG voters’ inclination to answer affirmatively to any negative item about their future under opposition control. Thus, as a robustness test, I show the results from another list experiment in Models 1-3 in Table A4. I asked voters the same question but instead included a sensitive item capturing the fear of individual sanction.³⁶ If this objection held, I would also expect to find a positive and significant difference despite there being no reason to suspect LG control should directly influence the regime’s ability to sanction individuals. Across all specifications, I find no evidence that LG control influences

³⁶The text of this sensitive item was “I, a member of my family or a friend may be worse off if I back Ukawa, for example I or someone I know may lose a job, permits and permissions, a position of influence.”

fear of individual sanction. Voters' fear of sanction only differs by local control for the type of sanction that local control should influence. Taken together, these findings provide strong support for H2.

Alongside my qualitative evidence, these results suggests that local control determines how able the regime is to punish opposition support in Kilimanjaro and hence how threatened voters feel when they make their voting decisions. These differences in control create radically different environments for opposition supporters across the region. Opposition voters in the north where Chadema controls LGs are generally less fearful, can vote more on conscience and express beliefs about politics more akin to voters in democracies. CCM voters even reported split-ticket voting in these areas, preferring opposition candidates for some positions without fear of reprisals. In these areas, voters who are not archetypal opposition supporters may switch their vote because the coercive influence of incumbency advantage is weaker. In contrast, opposition supporters in CCM dominated areas in the south face pressure to keep their sympathies private for fear that they will lose the basic benefits of citizenship. The CCM can control politics far more when they have local control. When they lose local control, it becomes far harder for them to contain the spread of opposition support. Figure 5 shows how opposition LG control persisted in early movers Katavi (one of only 3 opposition LGs in 2005) and Moshi (opposition controlled after 2010) and then spread out from them. By 2015, most of northeastern Tanzania was under opposition control or had significant opposition minorities. I contend that the subnational constraints of local control on the regime's ability to punish opposition support made it possible for opposition footholds to form and then subsequently spread.³⁷

³⁷Lucardi (2016) shows local opposition performance can lead to the diffusion of opposition support in electoral autocracies

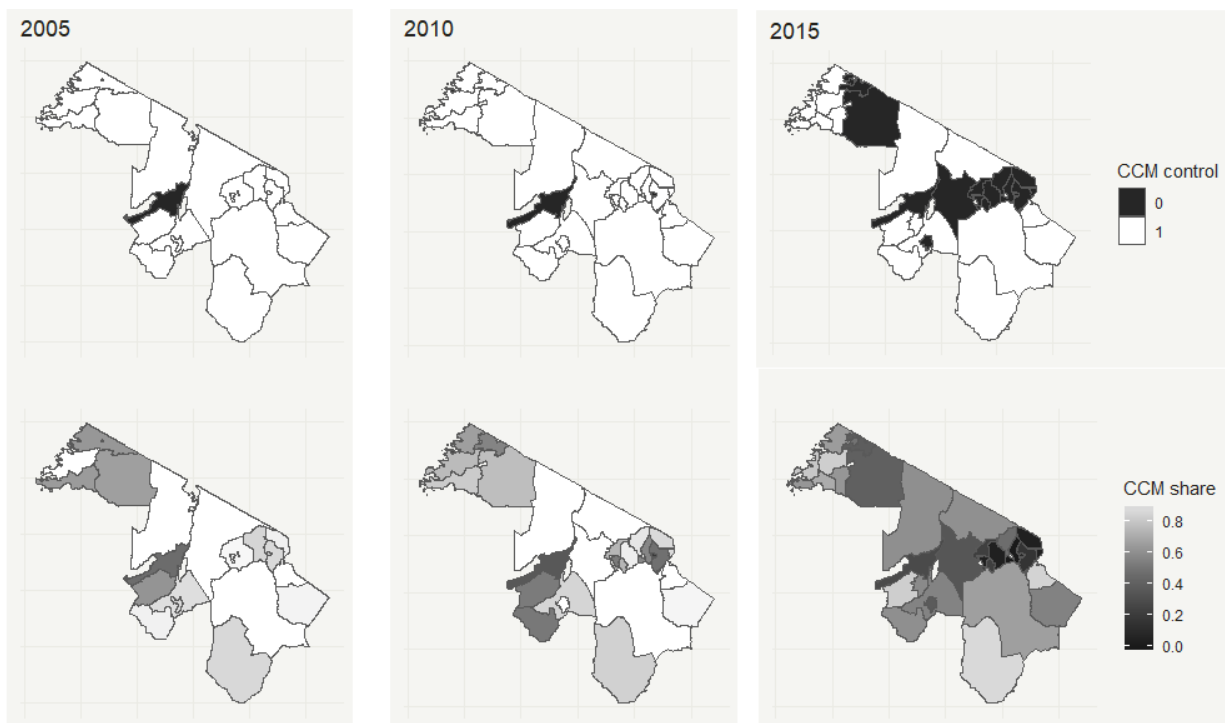


Figure 5: Map of evolution of opposition control in NE Tanzania including Kilimanjaro. Top row shows LG control, bottom shows what share of LG is CCM councilors

Local control and opposition support across Tanzania

In this final empirical section, I use ward-level election data from the 2005, 2010 and 2015 elections in Tanzania to look at how local control influences opposition support and so test H3. I have shown that opposition local control weakens the regime’s ability to punish opposition support which in turn makes voters less scared of community-level sanction. Given this, I would expect voters living under opposition control to be more likely to support opposition parties because of this variation in sanctioning.

To test this, I first look at the relationship between opposition local control and later opposition support. Table 2 presents the results of regression analysis of the relationship between opposition local control and that ward then electing an opposition councilor at the next election. Models 1-4 analyze the full dataset while models 5-8 focus on a subset of closely contested LGs. These results consistently show that all else equal those wards in opposition LGs are significantly more likely to elect an opposition councilor later. This finding is robust to multiple specifications controlling for demographics of the wards, lagged opposition vote share and election fixed effects in that ward. Wards in opposition LGs are between 17 and 41 percent more likely to subsequently elect an opposition councilor, depending on specification.

We may be worried that voters in those wards in opposition LGs are significantly different from those in incumbent LGs in unobserved ways that my controls do not fully capture. To assuage these concerns, I

Table 2: Effect of opposition control of local government on likelihood of a ward electing an opposition councilor at next election

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>							
	Elect opp councilor							
	<i>Full sample</i>				<i>Closely contested LGs</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Opp LG	1.756*** (0.136)	1.582*** (0.146)	1.489*** (0.150)	0.685*** (0.159)	0.723** (0.284)	0.719** (0.337)	1.128*** (0.396)	1.013** (0.413)
Election fixed effects	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y
Demographic controls	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Lagged opp vote share	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y
Observations	6,345	6,287	6,287	6,279	225	225	225	225

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: Results of logistic regression with robust standard errors. Models 5-8 look at a subsample of closely contested LGs, those LGs for which control was determined by only a small number of councilors. Where indicated, models include controls for ward population, population density, income, gender ratio, election fixed effects and lagged opposition vote share

look at my closely contested subsample. The LGs in this sample are ones that could have easily gone either way and where the results were determined by results of a small number of wards. This drops those LGs which are ‘most likely’ and ‘least likely’ opposition areas, which are more likely to systematically differ from one another, and leaves only a subsample of more easily comparable LGs. In this subsample, I find similarly robust results, making it all the more convincing that my baseline findings are driven by differences in local control directly. For additional robustness, I repeat the same analysis looking at the effect of opposition control on subsequent opposition vote share in Table A5 and find similar results.³⁸ Taken together, these results suggest that opposition local control does indeed increase opposition support.

However, Tables 2 and A5 do not allow me to account for whether this increase in opposition support is explained by my theory or a simple incumbency advantage story. To lend support for my theory, I must show that it is variation in the regime’s ability to sanction which drives this increase. Thus, I look patterns of opposition support both between and within LGs over time. I look at the effect of lagged ward control and opposition vote share on the probability a ward then elects an opposition councilor at the next election and later opposition vote share. The logic of this test is as follows. In opposition LGs, opposition support can evolve with less fear of sanction. Thus, I would expect earlier opposition support to predict later opposition success in opposition LGs regardless of ward control. However, when the regime retains control of the local government, local officials punish opposition wards. Therefore I would expect opposition support to evolve differently in opposition wards in incumbent LGs than in incumbent wards. Incumbent wards are unlikely to be sanctioned so I would expect earlier opposition support to predict later opposition support there, even

³⁸These results are less robust to a subsample of close elections, however.

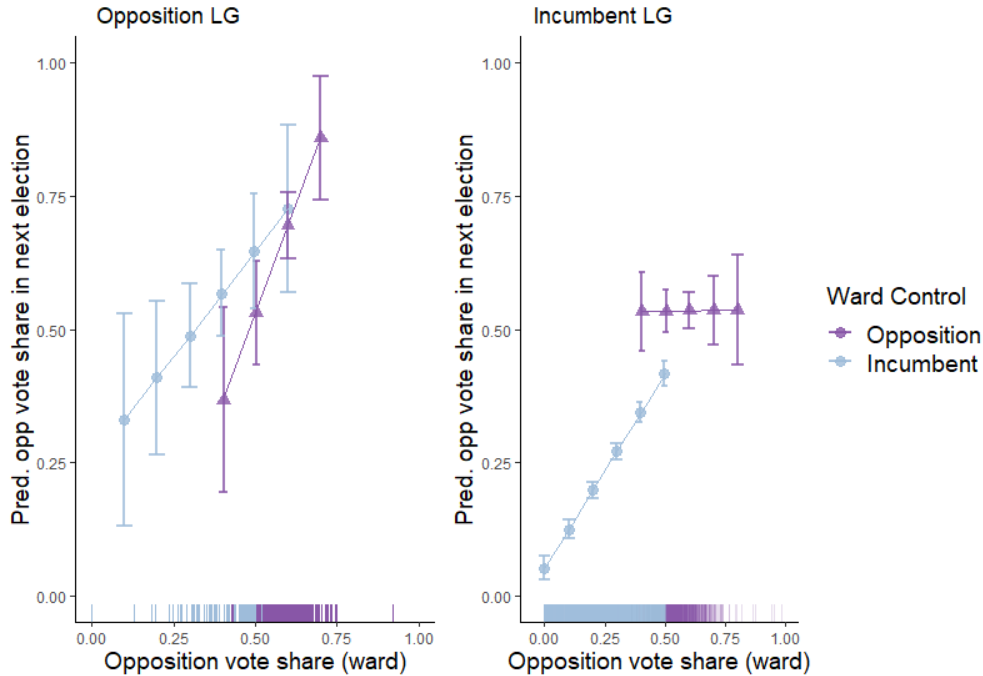


Figure 6: Effect of LG control and ward control on subsequent opposition vote share

Details: Figure plots the fitted values of an OLS regression which interacts ward control, LG control and opposition vote share at the ward level using ward election results from the 2010 and 2015 elections with lagged share/control from the 2005 and 2010 elections. Models includes demographic controls and election control. The panels on the left plots the effect of ward share and ward control on the predicted probability of electing an opposition councilor later, while the right shows the same relationship in incumbent LGs. The rug plots visualizes the support of opposition vote share in each of opposition and incumbent LGs by ward control. Results are robust to multiple specifications, inclusion of region fixed effects.

if that support is at a relatively low level. In contrast, the experience of sanctioning in opposition wards is likely to discourage continued loyalty to the opposition party in these places. Thus, I would expect that earlier opposition support will be less likely to predict later opposition support in opposition wards.

Figure 6 shows that the extent to which lagged opposition vote share predicts subsequent opposition vote share is conditional on local control at the LG and ward level. I plot the relationship between past opposition vote share and later opposition vote share by LG and ward control. In opposition LGs, lagged opposition support is a significant and positive predictor of later support in both incumbent and opposition wards. In line with the results of Tables 2 and A5, opposition LG control increases subsequent support for opposition parties, especially in incumbent wards. This suggests that voters previously loyal to the regime switch once opposition parties win local control at the LG level and the threat of punishment falls.

I find very different results in incumbent LGs. In incumbent wards, past opposition support does indeed predict later opposition vote share. In these wards, opposition support remains broadly the same if slightly lower from one electoral cycle to the next. However, the same is not true in opposition wards in incumbent LGs. Lagged opposition support does not predict subsequent opposition support. There is a flat relationship

with later opposition vote share and probability of electing an opposition councilor. This suggests that some voters who backed opposition parties in the past choose to go back to the ruling party at the next election. Comparing opposition wards in opposition and incumbent LGs respectively, it is clear that opposition support evolves differently by local control. In the former, opposition support is able to take root. In the latter, it is discouraged. I contend that these differences are because of sanctioning. This is made all the more compelling when we note that there is no substantial difference in the nature of the relationship between lagged and subsequent opposition support in incumbent wards in incumbent and opposition LGs.

In Figure A4 I repeat the same analysis using electing an opposition councilor at the next election as my dependent variable for additional robustness and find similar results. These results are also robust to isolating the sample to only those wards in which there was a close election. When wards are narrowly won by the opposition in incumbent LGs, the relationship between lagged vote share and subsequent prospects of opposition victory in the ward is also flat while it is positive in those narrowly won by the incumbent as in the main sample. This suggests that it is whether a ward is liable to be sanctioned (which is determined by ward control) which influences how opposition support in incumbent LGs evolves over time.

These results are consistent with my theory. I show that opposition control of the local government increases subsequent opposition support, as measured by both opposition vote share in the ward and the ward subsequently electing an opposition councilor. By analyzing differences in opposition support within LGs, I provide evidence that this increase is driven by variation in sanctioning by local control. Where local institutions are not used to sanction opposition support, opposition support survives from one cycle to the next regardless of ward control. Where the incumbent controls the LG, opposition wards are sanctioned using local resources. Voters in those areas are then discouraged from supporting the opposition at later elections while past opposition support predicts later opposition support in incumbent wards because they are less likely to be directly sanctioned. These results therefore provide strong evidence for H3, that opposition local control makes voters more likely to support opposition parties given their lower fear of sanctioning.

This final empirical section makes clear why it is so important that opposition support constrains electoral autocrats. Without the ability to enforce their punishment regime in areas where they have lost local control, opposition support is able to grow in these areas and likely spread to others. It is by this pathway, opposition parties building support from below, that local control is a threat to regime durability

Conclusion

In this study, I show that local control determines how able the regime is to punish opposition support in decentralized electoral autocracies. Through a mixed methods approach, I demonstrate that the incumbent

CCM is constrained in its ability to implement its punishment regime across space. This changes how we think about incumbent strategy. Incumbents may be able to win enough votes to maintain an elite coalition but doing so does not imply they have hegemonic control over state resources nor that they have full territorial control. I show that there are areas where the incumbent faces serious limitations on their ability to use the ‘quieter’ forms of coercive distribution they rely on. This demonstrates that opposition support does meaningfully constrain electoral autocrats, even when it falls well below the bar for legislative control or presidential victory.

When the incumbent retains control of local government, it can credibly threaten to sanction disloyal communities. Once the local government is under opposition control, the regime loses control of decentralized resources and hence loses the ability to direct these to sanction disloyal communities. Using extensive administrative data, I show that the central government and incumbent LGs distribute state resources using a clear punishment regime. However, opposition control undermines this. I find that state resources are allocated more evenly or even favor opposition communities under opposition control. Thus, in areas where opposition parties are popular enough to win local office, the incumbent becomes less able to punish opposition support.

As a result, I find that loss of local control led to a significant drop in fear of community sanctions as measured by a novel survey with experimental components. Importantly, loss of local control does not influence fear of other sanctions unrelated to the local government. This variation in fear of sanctioning has important implications for electoral behavior. In opposition LGs, voters make political decisions given a lower coercive threat of sanction. Voters are more able to vote on conscience, making it more likely that they will switch their support to opposition parties. Indeed, my analysis of election results from the 2005, 2010 and 2015 elections shows that opposition local control significantly increases subsequent opposition support. In areas where the incumbent retains control, they can discourage opposition support more successfully. In these areas, nascent opposition support may quickly collapse before the next election as voters and communities weigh the consequences of sanction for their welfare. Unlike in all other combinations of LG and ward control, I find that opposition support in opposition wards in incumbent LGs is not positively associated with later opposition support. In these units, sanctioning discourages continued support for opposition parties.

Thus when autocrats retain local control, they can better manage the evolution of political competition and prevent the emergence of an opposition threat from below. However, when they lose local control, it becomes harder for the autocrat to suppress political competition and increases the chance that such a threat will emerge. Opposition support therefore does constrain electoral autocrats. Even relatively small pockets of opposition support force the autocrat to concede some of their most tried, tested and well-studied tools to win elections.

This study has important implications for the study of decentralization, autocracy and opposition parties. I challenge the view that decentralization is only a boon for autocrats. I show how decentralization is a double edged sword by showing that decentralization introduced institutions which can meaningfully empower incumbents in some areas while constraining them in others. This suggests decentralization might have a more democratic legacy than existing scholarship suggests.

Second, this theory contributes to the authoritarian politics literature. I challenge the dominant view that autocrats are hegemonic by showing that they can be spatially constrained despite being hegemonic at the national level. I show that these constraints substantively threaten the regime's hold on power. By relaxing ideas around incumbent hegemony, this study shows that authoritarian institutions do not necessarily have stabilizing influence on authoritarian power. Local control limits the incumbent's reach and may force them to change how they manage competition. In a literature dominated by studies of central institutions, I demonstrate the importance of local explanations and the value of subnational analysis in the study of authoritarian politics.

Finally, I take seriously opposition parties' agency. When opposition parties win local control, they gain real power over distribution of state resources. Normally viewed as either co-opted or doomed to fail, I propose and provide evidence for a channel by which opposition parties can gain a foothold in electoral autocracies. This study therefore suggests one set of conditions – decentralization – which makes it easier for stable opposition to form in electoral autocracies.

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Supplemental Information for 'Local Control: How Opposition Support Constrains Electoral Autocrats'

Table of Contents

1. Additional quantitative evidence

- Figure A1: All countries plotted by levels of administrative, fiscal and political decentralization 3
- Table A1: Relationship between local control and secondary classroom construction 4
- Table A2: Relationship between local control and LG waterpoint repairs 4
- Table A3: Relationship between local control and school performance 5
- Figure A2: Use of high-coordination public goods in punishment regimes by local control 6
- Figure A3: Effect of CCM vote share on probability of high-coordination public good provision 6
- Table A4 List experiment results table on effect of local control on fear of sanctions 7
- Table A5: Effect of opposition control on opposition vote share at next election 8
- Figure A4 Effect of LG and ward control on probability of electing an opposition councilor 8

2. Additional qualitative evidence

- Case selection logic 9
- CCM advantage in public good distribution 10
- Decentralization and dynamics of public good provision 10
- Additional evidence contrary to alternative explanations 11

3. List experiments

- Question wording 12
- Notes on implementation 12

Additional quantitative evidence

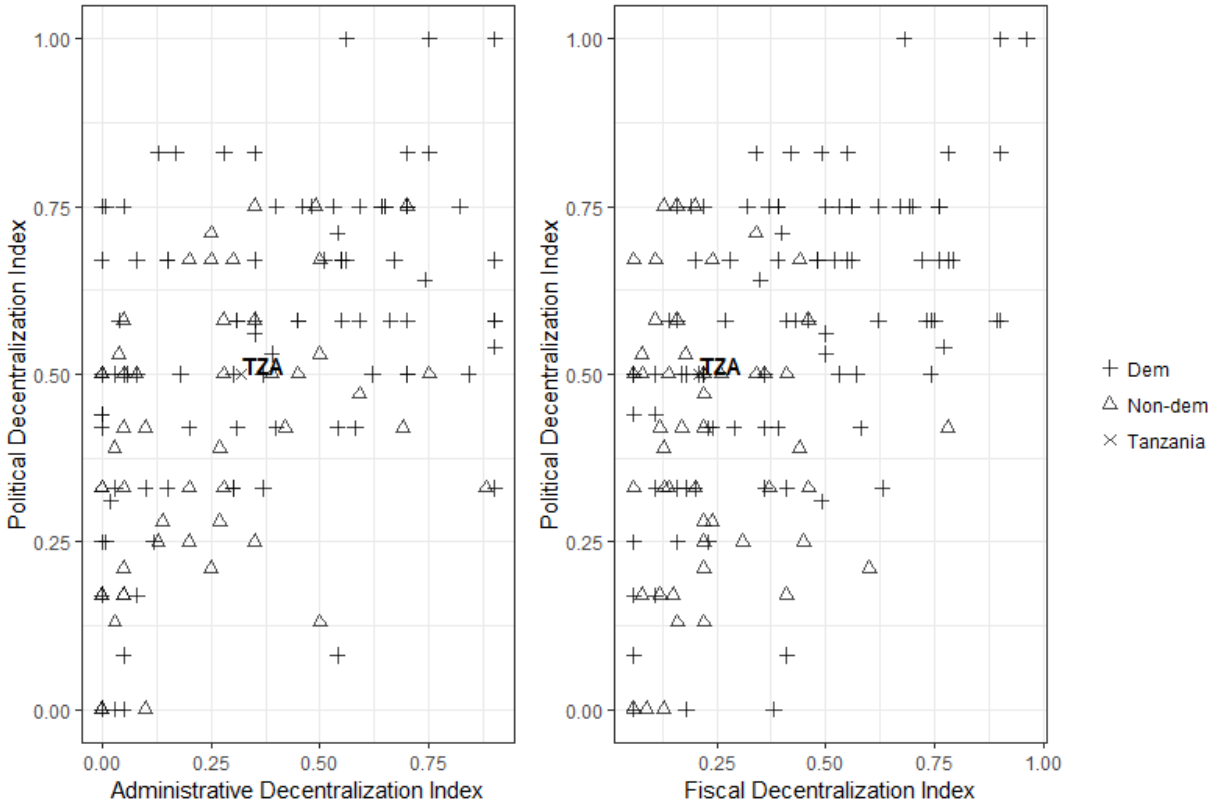


Figure A1: Levels of decentralization by regime type (data from Ivanyna and Shah (2012))

Table A1: Relationship between local control and secondary classroom construction

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	New classroom constructed			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Opp Ward	0.082 (0.205)	0.081 (0.211)	0.069 (0.211)	0.124 (0.220)
Opp LG	-1.901* (1.014)	-1.904* (1.018)	-1.909* (1.019)	-1.986* (1.018)
Opp Ward*Opp LG	2.148** (1.069)	2.149** (1.069)	2.166** (1.071)	2.150** (1.065)
Observations	3,313	3,313	3,313	3,313
Constituency vote	N	Y	Y	Y
Demographic controls	N	N	Y	Y
Region fixed effects	N	N	N	Y

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: Logistic regression with robust standard errors. Classroom construction measured by comparing school's provision of post-Form 4 education over time. Results are robust to use of OLS.

Table A2: Relationship between local control and LG waterpoint repairs

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Waterpoint repaired		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Opp Ward	-0.065** (0.028)	-0.177*** (0.030)	-0.170*** (0.029)
Opp LG	-0.182*** (0.045)	-0.487*** (0.052)	-0.472*** (0.047)
Opp Ward*Opp LG	0.222*** (0.058)	0.222*** (0.064)	0.118* (0.062)
Observations	79,668	79,668	73,774
Controls	N	N	Y
Region fixed effects	N	Y	Y

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: Results of logistic regressions with robust standard errors on waterpoints mapped by the Ministry of Water. Repaired is a binary measure calculated by comparing waterpoint status in 2015 and 2017. Results are robust to use of OLS and conditional logit. Results include controls for ward demographics (population, population density, sex ratio, income), legislative constituency vote and distance to groundwater as indicated.

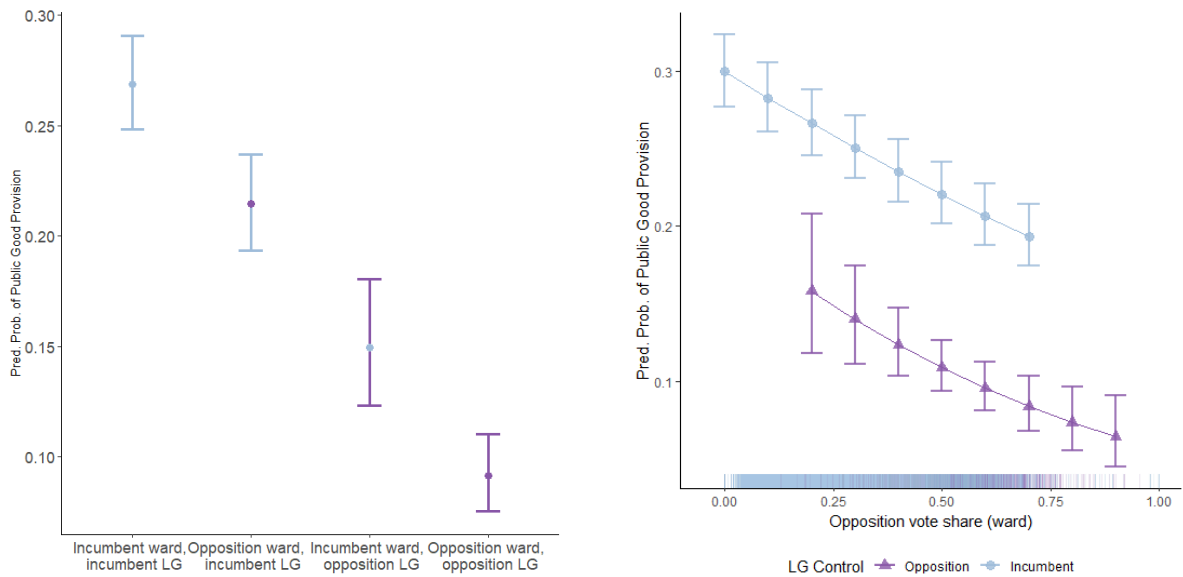
Table A3: Relationship between local control and school performance from 2012-2016

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Pass Rate					
	<i>OLS</i>			<i>panel linear</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Opposition LG	9.253*** (0.883)	9.239*** (0.912)	2.927*** (0.934)	1.031 (0.955)	0.688 (0.791)	0.660 (0.788)
Opposition ward	2.308*** (0.458)	3.214*** (0.461)	0.339 (0.465)	-0.578 (0.466)	-1.047** (0.502)	-1.233** (0.492)
Opp LG *Opp ward	4.281*** (1.137)	3.345*** (1.149)	4.346*** (1.143)	3.929*** (1.162)	1.974** (0.952)	2.050** (0.944)
Controls	N	N	N	Y	N	N
Constituency vote	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N
Region Fixed Effects	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N
School fixed effects	N	N	N	N	Y	Y
Year fixed effects	N	N	N	N	Y	Y
Observations	47,204	46,802	46,490	46,008	46,867	47,204

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: Results of OLS and fixed effects regression on school-year data with robust standard errors. I include demographic controls (population, population density, school age population, literacy and sex ratio) in OLS regression but drop them in the fixed effects regression as they do not vary over the time period.



(a) Probability of high-coordination public good provision by local control

(b) Probability of lumpy public good provision by opposition vote share in incumbent and opposition LGs

Figure A2: Use of high-coordination public goods in punishment regime by local control

Details: Predicted probabilities calculated from logistic regression models (including region fixed effects) on 50936 ward-years from 2000-2016. Public goods included are waterpoints, primary schools, secondary schools (only after 2010). The rug plot in plot b) indicates the support in the data by LG control. Results are robust to use of OLS. This result is highly robust to a range of controls and specifications.

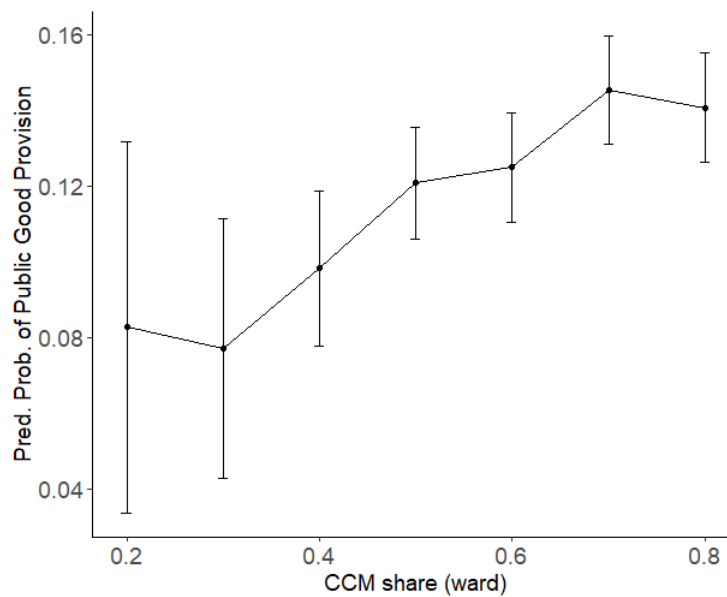


Figure A3: Results of LOESS regression of effect of CCM vote share on predicted probability of public good provision

Table A4: Effect of local control on fear of sanctions

		<i>MLE estimate of proportion of affirmative responses to the sensitive item</i>							
		Fear of individual sanction			Fear of community sanction				
		(Model 1)	(Model 2)	(Model 3)	(Model 4)	(Model 5)	(Model 6)	(Model 7)	(Model 8)
<i>LG control: Incumbent</i>		0.435*** (0.040)	0.418*** (0.039)	0.417*** (0.040)	0.503*** (0.037)	0.501*** (0.038)	0.486*** (0.037)	0.488*** (0.036)	0.4911*** (0.037)
<i>Opposition</i>		0.318*** (0.064)	0.304*** (0.063)	0.326*** (0.067)	0.3284*** (0.0825)	0.331*** (0.060)	0.334*** (0.061)	0.369*** (0.063)	0.3615*** (0.062)
<i>Difference</i>		0.119 (0.076)	0.114 (0.075)	0.091 (0.078)	0.175*** (0.070)	0.169** (0.071)	0.152** (0.071)	0.119* (0.073)	0.1296* (0.072)
<i>N</i>		766	766	766	766	766	766	766	766
Controls		X	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓
Village partisanship		✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X
Individual partisanship control		X	X	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓

Robust standard errors in parenthesis. Models control for age, income, gender, ethnicity, vote choice in 2014, partisanship of village leader in 2014 as indicated
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A5: Effect of opposition control of local government on opposition vote share at next election

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>							
	<i>Full sample</i>				<i>Closely contested LGs</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Opp LG control	0.182*** (0.008)	0.162*** (0.009)	0.140*** (0.009)	0.049*** (0.009)	0.041* (0.022)	0.032 (0.022)	0.084*** (0.026)	0.021 (0.021)
Election fixed effects	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y
Demographic controls	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Lagged opp vote share	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y
Observations	6,345	6,287	6,287	6,279	225	225	225	225

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: Results of OLS regression. Models 5-7 look at a subsample of closely contested LGs, those LGs for which control was determined by only a small number of councilors. Where indicated, models include controls for ward population, population density, income, gender ratio, election fixed effects and opposition vote share

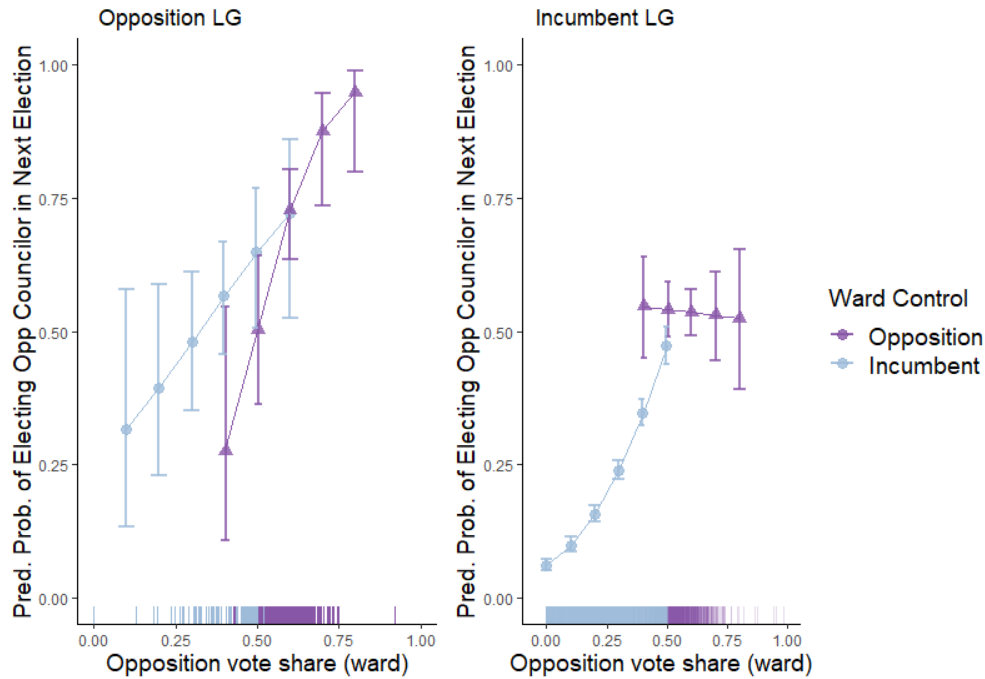


Figure A4: Effect of LG control on probability of later electing an opposition councilor by ward control

Details: Predicted probabilities are calculated from logistic regression model which interacts ward control, LG control and opposition vote share at the ward level using ward election results from the 2010 and 2015 elections with lagged share/control from the 2005 and 2010 elections. The panel on the left plots the effect of ward share and ward control on the predicted probability of electing an opposition councilor later, while the right shows the same relationship in incumbent LGs. The rug plots visualizes the support of opposition vote share in each of opposition and incumbent LGs by ward control. Models includes demographic controls and election fixed effects. Results are robust to multiple specifications, inclusion of region fixed effects. Focusing only on closely contested wards returns similar results.

Supplemental interview evidence

This section outlines additional interview evidence. This appendix is organized into sections, which correspond to paragraphs in the main body of the case study. To identify which paragraph each section corresponds to, the sections are marked with a thematic title.

First, I give additional details on case selection logic. Focusing on a single region allows me to control implicitly in my qualitative work for a lot of possible confounders that may exist across region and focus on the effects of variation in subnational control. As discussed, I select Kilimanjaro because it exhibits substantial variation in opposition control at the community and LG level. Kilimanjaro is in the North of the country, bordering on Kenya. Its economy is primarily based on agriculture (as is the case across Tanzania) and tourism (common in many parts of Tanzania). Kilimanjaro has one major urban center, Moshi, which has a population of less than 200 000. The rural LGs in Kilimanjaro are mostly composed of villages of between 500 and 4000 people. All of the rural LGs each have their own main towns, often the seat of the LG council, with populations of between 25000 and 40000 people. The urban/rural mix is typical of Tanzania. Kilimanjaro region is one of the wealthier regions in Tanzania although there is substantial variation within the region. As such, public good provision is comparatively less reliant on the state than in other parts of the country and the incumbent has weaker capacity to sanction. If risk of sanction worries potential opposition voters in a region where the incumbent has lower capacity to sanction, I would expect these sanctioning dynamics to be as important if not more so in voters' calculus in other parts of the country.

Within Kilimanjaro, I selected a number of LGs which vary in their experience of opposition control. Moshi Municipal and those rural areas to the West (Hai, Siha) of it have a long history of opposition support. The rural areas to the East of Moshi Municipal (Moshi Rural, Rombo) were CCM controlled but have been opposition led since 2015. The areas to the South of the region (Mwanga and Same) are CCM controlled and opposition support is low but growing. These Southern LGs are substantially more arid and poorer than the Northern LGs. I selected LGs for the survey which varied on opposition control at the time. For the interviews, I added an additional LG to allow me to increase my sample of opposition chairs and communities in consistently CCM LGs. This allowed me to do more interviews but also allows me to reduce the risk that my respondents are identified by the partisanship of their communities and LGs alone. There is variation in terms of income, education and existing access to public goods across and within LGs. I selected LGs to minimize between LG variation in confounders while preserving variation in local control. I do not name LGs given the current crackdown in Tanzania.

CCM advantage in public good distribution:

Local public goods in Tanzania are allocated through a participatory planning process. Village and street development committees (VDC) draft a plan which is then passed to the ward development committee (WDC) which is then passed up to the LG where final plans are made. These are then passed for approval to the ministry in charge of local government (formerly part of the Prime Minister's office under PMO-RALG, now part of the President's office under Tamisemi). While local communities are involved in plans, scholars of public administration argue that these development plans pass through so many hands and are subject to the influence of so many decision-makers that the realised distribution of local public goods and development projects often deviates substantially from the village or street's development plan (Tuwa, 2010). This was also borne out in the interviews conducted. For example, the leader of a Chadema village in a CCM ward and LG outlined how CCM influence is used to block plans at the WDC and LG level.

Given this procedure, CCM control of any level above the village introduces a new level at which a village's priorities can be taken off the plan and their demands ignored. Interviews corroborate the relative ease with which CCM politicians can secure funding for renovation and repair of local public goods. In contrast, Chadema politicians and CCM leaders who had ousted Chadema politicians spoke of the frustration and difficulty faced by Chadema areas in securing the funding they request from higher levels of local and national government.

Decentralization and dynamics of public good provision:

Decentralization allows decision-making power at different stages of the allocation process to be lost to opposition parties through elections. Because of this, the experience of CCM favoritism varies given the extent to which CCM remains hegemonic in a given area. Chadema leaders in CCM controlled areas spoke more of difficulties in getting access to resources accorded through development plans - money for repairs, local public goods, village development funds - than their colleagues in areas where power is shared between Chadema and CCM. One Chadema respondent in a CCM controlled area said that the distribution was becoming more and more punitive as Chadema was growing more powerful, that the CCM wanted to be seen to be punishing their disloyalty. A Chadema leader, in power for two electoral cycles, talked of how much easier it was to secure permits, funds and referrals for services for his constituents since Chadema took over the LG in the 2015 election.

Outside of CCM dominated areas, Chadema interviewees focused more on the persistence of problems in securing access to resources controlled by the central government as outlined in the main body of the text. One CCM street leader talked of how his ward (the only one still controlled solely by CCM in the area) could far more easily access funds earmarked for the LG by central government than his Chadema colleagues in neighboring streets and wards. He boasted that, despite their ‘political isolation’, their loyalty to CCM and their ability to ‘speak the CCM’s language’ meant they were able to request and complete a number of renovation and construction projects in a short amount of time. CCM influence is weakened when the LG is taken over by the opposition party. However, the influence of the regime persists through a number of channels.

Additional evidence contrary to alternative explanations:

Opposition control does not usher in extensive sanctioning of CCM supporters. Where there is opposition control, LG and Regional Commissioners, local appointees, have been known to intervene and overrule the decisions of opposition politicians. Furthermore, CCM retains control of a partial legal system. Chadema politicians cannot use the legal and coercive powers of the village chair with the same impunity. A Chadema VC in a CCM area claimed that he had been subject to several punitive legal cases, each issued after he tried to hold CCM supporters to account for violating village bylaws or failing to do their development duties. He discussed how difficult it had been to run the community since taking over because those who did not want to cooperate were going to the ruling party for protection. The selective use of the law constrains opposition politicians and makes it difficult for them to sanction incumbent support.

Is lack of capacity driving this variation or is it lack of intent? I contend CCM still wants to sanction because they engage in strategic substitution, leaning on their more limited central resources more in opposition areas to preserve some ability to sanction. A councilor in a longstanding Chadema LG discussed how schools in CCM villages often had more teachers.³⁹ Others cited difficulties in getting access to TASAF money for their eligible constituents compared to their colleagues in CCM held parts of the same LG. There is substantial evidence to suggest that incumbents substitute centralized provisions for decentralized ones once they lose control of the LG office. This suggests that they still very much want to sanction but loss of local institutions restricts their ability to do so using their usual clientelist resources.

³⁹In Tanzania, school building is decentralized but staffing is not

List experiment

Question wording

Some people are worried about voting for the opposition in the upcoming election. How many of these things would you worry about in voting for the opposition:

- a) They do not understand this community
- b) Ukawa⁴⁰ are promising too much
- c) They are inexperienced and may perform poorly in local and national government
- d) There are too many divisions within Ukawa already
- e) If we vote opposition, my community may lose out; for example the community may receive fewer projects and grants to improve life here, we may have more power cuts and other shortages here

Notes on implementation

This survey was conducted in the summer of 2015 by a small team of RAs with significant research assistance experience. They were trained in the list experiment technique over multiple sessions. The survey was piloted before rolling out the full instrument.

To increase the anonymity of item responses, respondents did not say their response aloud, rather they wrote it down (either number or tally marks) and placed it in a sealed envelope. When the RA read the list questions, they turned their backs. Respondents were instructed to complete the tally on the paper as the RA read the options aloud to make it easier to respond correctly. RAs did not move onto the main list experiments until respondents had correctly completed two training list experiments (on fruits consumed and urban areas visited).

Estimation of effects in list experiments is biased if there are floor or ceiling effects. These happen if respondents are likely to respond in the affirmative or negative to all points regardless. I use the techniques described in [Blair and Imai \(2012\)](#) to assess the risk of floor and ceiling effects in my data. I find no evidence of significant floor or ceiling effects. I include the text of the list experiments below:

⁴⁰Ukawa is the opposition coalition headed by Chadema