

Annotated Table of Contents of ‘*The Politics of Local Control in Electoral Autocracy*’

Chapter 1 – Introduction and Theory

This chapter introduces the central questions of the dissertation. Does local state capacity strengthen or weaken electoral autocrats? How does local control – who wins local elections in decentralized electoral autocracies – influence how incumbents and opposition parties compete for votes and their prospects of electoral victory? A review of existing literature on authoritarian politics shows that scholars generally presuppose incumbents are unconstrained in how they contest elections. Studies of authoritarian institutions take a functionalist approach ask why autocrats introduce certain institutions rather than when these institutions destabilize regimes and allow opposition parties to win support.

I outline the argument of the dissertation. I argue that local state capacity is a double-edged sword for electoral autocrats. I contend that the implications of local capacity are determined by local control in that subnational unit. Local control determines the strategies opposition parties and the incumbent can use to win votes in a given subnational unit. Local state capacity in incumbent hands makes autocrats better able to sanction opposition support. However, opposition control of local state capacity weakens electoral autocrats by three channels. First, it constrains where the incumbent can use their usual distributive and low-intensity coercive strategies to dissuade opposition support. Second, it allows office-seeking opposition parties to demonstrate competence and difference to voters. Third, it incentivizes electoral autocrats to respond to the threat from these parties using more violent and authoritarian strategies which may alienate popular support. All these channels make it harder for incumbents to keep winning elections.

Chapter 2 – Case

This chapter introduces my case, Tanzania, as well as my subnational case studies. I review the history of political competition, decentralization and local governance in Tanzania. I account for my case selection by situating Tanzania within my universe of cases (i.e. decentralized electoral autocracies). I show that Tanzania is relatively less decentralized than other cases. I contend that if I can provide support for my theory in Tanzania, this will provide convincing evidence that local control matters in decentralized electoral autocracies more broadly. I then provide background to my subnational case regions, Dodoma, Iringa and Kilimanjaro. I select these cases because they vary in their history of opposition control. I end by outlining the methodology of the qualitative components of the project.

Chapter 3 – Electoral Strategies under Incumbent Control

This chapter characterizes the electoral strategies that the incumbent CCM and opposition parties employ in areas under incumbent control. I leverage quasi-random variation in the timing of decentralization and geo-coded water distribution data to show that the creation of new local state capacity improves the CCM’s ability to sanction opposition support. I then use qualitative and quantitative data to demonstrate that opposition areas and voters under CCM control receive worse public good provision and are more likely to be subject to punitive legal sanctions than CCM areas

and voters. I show that opposition parties have few ways to win support beyond making promises that voters may not view as credible.

Chapter 4 – Electoral Strategies under Opposition Control

This chapter characterizes the electoral strategies that the CCM and opposition parties employ in areas under opposition control. I describe how opposition politicians conceptualize local control as an opportunity to win support. I characterize how they strategically exploit local state capacity. I use longitudinal data on local service provision and interviews to show that opposition control reduces the sanctioning of opposition support and makes access to state resources more equitable. I show that opposition control leads to improved service delivery as way of building credibility.

Chapter 5 – Local Control and Voter Calculus

This chapter explores how local control influences political competition. I analyze election results from 1995 to 2015, a survey with experimental components and voter interviews. I exploit a regression discontinuity design, the phasing of decentralization and fixed effect regression to show that opposition control makes it more likely that opposition support survives from one election cycle to the next and in the long-run. I then test the mechanisms I propose. Using a survey with list experiments, I show those in areas under opposition control have lower fear of sanction and higher perceptions of opposition credibility. Furthermore, I find that opposition support negatively predicts later opposition support under incumbent control as experience of sanctioning discourages loyalty to opposition parties. Under opposition control, opposition support survives and grows. I use spatial data to demonstrate that opposition support diffuses around these areas.

Chapter 6 – Asserting Autonomy, Resisting the Regime

I trace how incumbents strategically respond to loss of control and how opposition parties resist. I use tax and transfer data and interviews conducted during the current authoritarian crackdown. I show that incumbents restrict the autonomy of opposition parties they view as a threat. Opposition local governments receive significantly lower central transfers and are subject to more bureaucratic interference. Furthermore, I find that once the opposition won substantial local control in 2015, the CCM turned to legalistic and violent ways of suppressing opposition areas. However, I show that these attempts to suppress were not necessarily successful. I argue that control of local capacity allows opposition parties to weather attempts to contain them, which differentiates local control from other forms of opposition office-holding. I show that areas under opposition control raise significantly more taxes. Furthermore, investments in fiscal and administrative capacity increase after the current crackdown begins.

Chapter 7 – Local Democracy? Local Autocracy?

I show how differences in local control and strategic responses thereto have created substantial differences in ‘subnational regime type’ across my three regional case studies. I draw on interviews with voters as well as local officials to demonstrate that participation is far more democratic (as measured by voice, violence and prevalence of pluralist political ideas) in Kilimanjaro where long-standing opposition control is tolerated by the incumbent than in Dodoma, an incumbent stronghold. I contrast both these areas with Iringa, an opposition town, where repression of

opposition has led to a spike in polarization and community conflict. I use these cases to show that opposition control can be dangerous to incumbents through two different channels: the formation of a credible, governing opposition and political instability sparked by violence.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion

The final chapter of the dissertation reiterates the theoretical argument and summarizes the evidence presented in the dissertation. This chapter considers the generalizability of the argument with reference to crossnational data on decentralization and opposition support. I conclude by considering the implications of the research project for existing literature and policymakers interested in promoting democracy.