Traditional Chiefs and Opposition Party Fragmentation in Africa

Timothy J. Peterka[*]

Paper prepared for the
2016 Southern California Comparative Political Institutions Conference
September 30, 2016

Working Draft: September 20, 2016

Abstract

This paper investigates the determinants of opposition party fragmentation in the developing democracies of Africa. Rater than attribute fragmentation to ethnic diversity or to formal political institutions, I argue that informal institutions, namely the strength of traditional chiefs, explains fragmentation in opposition movements. When chiefs are strong, they are incentivize consolidation in opposition movements. Using Afrobarometer survey data and electoral returns, I test the relationship between chiefs and opposition fragmentation across a sample of 18 sub-Saharan African countries. I find that, in line with my hypothesis, chief strength is related to lower levels of opposition party fragmentation. This approach can account for why, despite similar electoral institutions and levels of ethnic diversity, we see different levels of opposition party fragmentation in different African countries. The paper should be of interest to scholars of African politics, informal institutions, and party systems.

1

INTRODUCTION

Why do opposition movements fragment in some countries but not in other? Existing explanations focusing on the role of ethnicity, formal political institutions, and historical legacies cannot adequately account for variation in opposition party fragmentation because countries with similar levels of ethnic diversity and identical political institutions sometimes feature many opposition parties and sometimes feature few opposition parties. For example, Ghana and Kenya both transitioned away from autocratic rule to democracy in the early 1990s. Despite the two countries' many similarities, opposition parties challenging the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) in Ghana and the Kenyan African National Union (KANU) in Kenya have taken starkly different trajectories. In Ghana, opposition forces remain consolidated in on major opposition party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP). In contrast, opposition forces in Kenya splintered into a sundry set of parties. Why did the opposition unite in Ghana but fragment in Kenya? More broadly, why do some African opposition movements splinter while others do not?

This paper focuses on the role of chief strength in determining the nature of opposition fragmentation in sub-Saharan Africa. Chiefs are subnational leaders of communities. They come from the communities over which they preside and may obtain their position through hereditary channels or through appointment by the national government (Baldwin 2015). They are responsible for a variety of functions including such as settling disputes and maintaining peace and order. Their powers can shape the configuration of opposition parties, which I define as parties who are not the ruling party or in an active coalition with the ruling party, in a party system.

Using Afrobarometer survey data and electoral data, I argue that chiefs shape the behavior of political parties, encouraging them to consolidate when chiefs have more influence over citizens in the community. Countries with stronger chiefs have less fragmented opposition movements. Specifically, my analysis shows that chiefs who are more involved in solving local disputes and who have more control over the allocation of land are associated with less opposition vote fragmentation and fewer opposition parties competing in legislative elections. I explain this finding by explicating a theory that takes chief strength as its starting point and demonstrates how the power

of chiefs provides them with the ability to shape both voter and party behavior. In this paper, I test two implications of the theory. First, I test if there is in fact less fragmentation in opposition party vote shares in countries with strong chiefs. In addition, I also test a potential mechanism driving the relationship. Namely, I test whether fewer opposition party candidates enter candidates in legislative elections.

Highlighting the relationship between chiefs and the performance of opposition parties in developing democracies in Africa has a number benefits. First, existing explanations cannot fully account for the patterns of opposition fragmentation observed across the African continent and thus analysis considering the role of chiefs can help in explaining this continuing puzzle. Countries with similar levels of ethnic diversity and identical political institutions often diverge in the nature of opposition movements within each country. In some, opposition forces cohere and remain contained within a single opposition party. In others, the opposition fragments into a number of parties. I add to the literature on opposition fragmentation by highlighting how a factor not yet included in analyses better accounts for variation in opposition movement cohesion.

Additionally, opposition fragmentation is one of the key drivers of the lack of political alternation at that national level characteristic of many of the democracies of sub-Saharan Africa (van de Walle 2003). Consolidated opposition movements are also key in providing voters with a viable alternative to the governing party (Maeda 2010). Thus, understanding why opposition parties fragment and uncovering mechanisms that may encourage them to consolidate is essential if policymakers and aid donors wish to improve democratic competition in Africa.

Finally, this paper builds on the recent work emphasizing that traditional forms of authority like chiefs continue to persist and thrive in Africa after the transition to democracy (Baldwin 2015). Given that democratic institutions are seemingly destined to coexist with traditional forms of authority for the foreseeable future, understanding how they impact electoral politics is vital in understanding the nature of African democracy.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, I review the literature on factors influential in the shape of party systems, concentrating attention on the role of political institutions, social diversity, and

historical legacies. I then move to describing chiefs, their power, and how they can shape voter behavior and, subsequently, shape the mobilization strategies and consolidation of political parties. Empirical tests follow and a short conclusion rounds out the paper.

EXPLAINING FRAGMENTATION

Previous scholarship has struggled to account for the variation in across opposition movements in the region. The body of work focusing on the role of social diversity, especially ethnic diversity, cannot fully explain why some opposition movements fragment and why others do not. Scholarship offering ethnicity as the cause of opposition fragmentation argues that voters prefer candidates of their same ethnicity for two primary reasons. Voters, facing a lack of information about political candidates often turn to ethnicity and the information it contains to make voting decisions (Birnir 2007). Additionally, the promise of securing material goods and psychological benefits from the election of coethnic candidates makes voting for coethnic candidates an appealing choice for voters (Chandra 2004). For these reasons, ethnic voters should prefer co-ethnic candidates. The social diversity approach would predict that opposition parties would fragment when there is a high level of social diversity. When diversity is high, each group desires its own party and thus opposition parties fragment along ethnic lines.

However, ethnicity struggles to account for the variation in opposition fragmentation for three reasons. First, ethnicity is not always a good predictor of vote choice (Dunning and Harrison 2010). Voters often use criteria apart from ethnicity such as contextual factors such as the ethnic composition of their local area (Ichino and Nathan 2013) and evaluations of party performance (Lindberg and Morrison 2008; Hoffman and Long 2013) to inform their vote choice. Furthermore, whether or not party support falls along ethnic lines may itself be an artifact of social structure since ethnic voting patterns are endogenous to social structures and the mobilization strategies political parties employ (Koter 2013). Third, while opposition parties can fragment along ethnic lines, intra-ethnic group fragmentation also occurs, as evidenced by (1) Kikuyu politicians splitting

4

between the FORD-Asili party and the Democratic Party (DP) in Kenya's 1992 election and (2) the empirical observation that ethnically homogenous constituencies featured just as much vote fragmentation as more diverse constituencies (Lebas 2011). Thus, there are a number of factors that intervene in the process leading from ethnic diversity to the nature of party system. Explanations focusing on ethnicity alone cannot account for variation in opposition movements.

As an alternative to explanations focusing on solely on social diversity, other scholars emphasize the importance of political institutions in shaping the nature of opposition parties. Political institutional explanations focus on the impacts of different institutional arrangements, highlighting the factors that lead to more political parties in the system and thus more fragmented opposition movements. These factoros include: (1) permissive electoral systems like proportional representation (PR) paired with high levels of social diversity (Ordeshook and Shvetsova 1994; Amorim Neto and Cox 1997; Cox 1997); (2) legislative and executive elections that do not take place concurrently (Shugart and Carey 1992); (3) policy-making power distributed between the legislature and the executive (Chhibber and Kollman 2004; Hicken 2009; Hicken and Stoll 2008), and (4) gains in democratic experience (Moser and Scheiner 2012).

Work testing the impact of political institutions and social diversity on the number of parties in Africa come to conflicting conclusions with some arguing that findings from the political institutions literature do not apply to Africa (Mozaffar et al. 2003) and others arguing that political institutions affect African party systems in the same way as they do party systems in other parts of the world (Brambor et al. 2007). Thus, there is no clear consensus about how political institutions impact African party systems. Additionally, many African countries share similar political institutional arrangements, arrangements that often encourage majority-seeking behavior (Ferree 2010). For example, most African countries have single-member district plurality (SMD) electoral systems, hold concurrent presidential and legislative elections, and have power similarly concentrated in the executive branch. While not all countries have the same set of political institutions, even those with identical or very similar institutional arrangements have very different opposition movements. Some feature highly fragmented opposition parties while others do not.

Based on this evidence, political institutions and social diversity cannot adequately account for variation in opposition party fragmentation.

The final approach argues that the results from founding elections casts a long shadow on the prospects of opposition consolidation. van de Walle (2003) argues that the inability of opposition parties to win founding elections set the stage for repeated opposition failure and fragmentation in subsequent elections. Winning parties used their resources to strengthen their own organizations vis-a-vis opposition organizations and helped encourage defections from the opposition to the winning party, now in government. Opposition parties do not consolidate because, rather than aiming to compete to win elections, parties are organized to provide their respective party leaders flexibility in striking bargains with the ruling party. To send clearer signals of their ability to deliver votes to the ruling party, individual "big men" maintain their own small parties thereby preventing consolidation of the opposition. While this argument helps explain opposition fragmentation in most African countries, this account ignores the fact that chiefs and their persuasive powers are valuable in themselves and can provide a surrogate party organization for opposition parties. If one of the reasons opposition parties fragment is because of their inability to compete with ruling parties armed with government resources, then the organizational capacity of chiefs can help solve the resource deficit facing opposition parties. Furthermore, even in countries where the ruling party has lost the founding election, there is still variation in the degree to which opposition movements cohere and fragment.

In contrast to existing explanations, I argue that the power of chiefs is a key factor in explaining patterns of opposition fragmentation and consolidation. The argument I advance in this project builds on recent work that begins to link chief powers with political outcomes like the provision of developmental goods and vote choice (Baldwin 2015). The strength of chiefs, which I define in more detail in the next section, shapes both the set of mobilization strategies available and the efficacy of those mobilization strategies. The set of strategies shapes the behavior of opposition politicians. Strategies that rely on intermediaries encourages consolidation. Strategies based on direct voter engagement discourages consolidation.

THE POWER OF CHIEFS AND PERSUASIVE CAPACITY

Chiefs have a number of powers that make them influential over their subjects. Chiefs power and influence is spread across three dimensions covering six aspects, as shown in Figure 1. These aspects add to chiefs' power because it endows them with the ability to shape the lives of citizens in their communities. In broad strokes, we can summarize the three dimensions as follows. First, chiefs draw power from their activities in the community. The more they control access to valuable land and the more they are active in adjudicating dispute in their area, the more powerful they are since these activities have immediate effects on individuals in the community. Additionally, chiefs also draw power from their position in society. The greater their moral standing, density of their personal network, and membership in a hierarchically structured ethnic group the more powerful they are. Their position provides them with credibility and the organization capacity to spread their influence. Finally, chiefs draw strength from the nature of their origin. Chiefs that ascend to the position through hereditary or customary succession are more powerful than chiefs who enjoy their position due to state appointment. Rather than tailoring their behavior to suit the prerogatives of the state, hereditary chiefs are do not have to fear losing their positions if they defy or work against the state's agenda.

[Figure 1 about here]

Two aspects from the first dimension, activity, can help demonstrate the nature of chiefs' power and how it can translate into persuasive capacity on the part of chiefs. The first aspect of chiefs' power lies in their control over land allocation. In contemporary Africa, land is a vital resource. It is an essential commodity and access to land an increasingly major driver of political conflict on the continent (Boone 2014). Additionally, chiefs who control access to land have incredible influence over voters who are dependent on access to such a resource (Boone 2014). Chiefs enjoy considerable control over the allocation of it in states where governments have adopted customary land tenure regimes. Instead of regulating access to land through formal property rights

7

administered by the state, customary land tenure regimes leave adjudication of land rights to chiefs. Chiefs can decide who can access land. They may also reclaim land already allocated. These considerations give chiefs a wealth of power since voters, knowing that chiefs control this vital resource, will be less likely to act in ways that run counter to the wishes of their particular chief. Thus, power over land gives chiefs leverage in convincing citizens what to do, a power that extends to influencing their vote choice. This power extends over all within the chiefdom, regardless if an individual is or is not a co-ethnic of the chief.

Along with control over land, chiefs often have power in adjudicating disputes, including those over land (Boone 2003). This offers the most potential to shape the likelihood of grievances between groups at the local level and grievances that metastasize into violent conflict. Many African countries have difficulty administering rural areas beyond the urban center (Rathbone 2000) and cannot adequately project their power over all of their territory (Herbst 2000). Thus, local governance often falls to traditional authorities who live in the far flung areas away from the governmental centers of power. This means that chiefs act as the heads of government in their communities. If there is a problem or dispute in the community, citizens often have no other means of addressing it. State courts are either nonexistent or too expensive and overburdened and so many citizens rely on chiefs to rule on disputes that occur. Citizens may be motivated to remain in good standing with the chief in order not to jeopardize their ability to get adjudication decisions in their favor.

Taken together, these powers provide chiefs with the ability to shape voter behavior by providing chiefs with the means to persuade voters through two strategies. First, chiefs may be able to coerce voters to choose the candidates and parties chiefs prefer. Coercion refers to instances where chiefs induce a behavior or choice in subjects through the use of threats aimed at negatively impacting the lives of noncompliant subjects. As previously noted, chiefs have several means of coercing subjects to act in certain ways. They can threaten witchcraft, impose social isolation, or withhold access to land from noncompliers.

However, chiefs may also persuade through more benign means. Instead of coercing voters,

chiefs may be able to persuade them through opinion leadership. Opinion leaders are "citizens who frequently discuss politics with their friends, family, and/or coworkers, and who moreover report that they sometimes persuade others to adopt their political viewpoints," (Adams and Ezrow 2009, 207). They are politically engaged, discuss politics with others (even though they may be legally prohibited from doing so), and communicate with political parties. More importantly, not only do chiefs have these attributes, they possess positional qualities (ie. moral standing and social networks) that make them trusted sources able to educate or "enlighten" the public (Lupia and McCubbins 1998). In short, chiefs have both the ability and standing to persuade. Importantly, they are also motivated to be active in the political life of the community since chiefs are guardians of the community and derive much of their prestige from the well-being of the community. Testing when and where chiefs employ these strategies is beyond the scope of this paper but the expectation is that chiefs, irrespective of persuasion strategy, are able to influence voter behavior.

THE SET AND CHOICE OF MOBILIZATION STRATEGIES

The power of chiefs outlined in the previous section shapes the set of viable mobilization strategies available to political parties. Table 1 shows the set of mobilization strategies typically available to parties in democratic countries listed by the size of the electorate the strategy can potentially mobilize and the relative efficiency of each mobilization strategy. At the top level, broad-based policy appeals have the potential to mobilize a large portion of the population. Below that, intermediary-based strategies utilizing chiefs and other types of local authority can mobilize a smaller set of the population. Though smaller than the size potentially mobilized by policy-based appeals, it is still larger than the proportion of the population that could be mobilized by voter-direct strategies such as ethnic appeals and vote buying, the bottom rank in the hierarchy.

[Table 1 about here]

9

However, in most of democratic Africa, broad-based policy appeals are not a realistic mobiliza-tion strategy and campaigns tend to select other approaches. Campaigns in the region are typically devoid of policy but focused on valence issues (Bleck and van de Walle 2013). Voters across the region also value projects and resources, awarding politicians that are able to deliver them (Lindberg 2010; Harding 2015). In Ghana, for example, chiefs "overwhelmingly hold [members of parliament] accountable for community development," and MPs respond by devoting considerable means towards providing community development in order to be re-elected (Lindberg 2010, 128). Thus, the effective set of mobilization choices for parties consists of intermediary-based strategies and voter-direct strategies.

The choice between intermediary-based and voter-direct strategies is shaped by power of chiefs. As Koter (2013) notes, parties adapted their strategies to the configurations of local authority they encountered. Where intermediaries such as chiefs were strong, parties opted to utilize the persuasive capacity of chiefs to mobilize voters. Where chiefs were weak or non-existent, parties selected voter-direct strategies such as ethnic appeals.

Mobilization via ethno-regional appeals is lowest cost strategy available to parties since parties do not have to spend resources mobilizing voters. Instead, parties can appeal to ethnic and regional solidarity, banking on the voters preferring coethnic candidates for their ability to represent their interests and deliver resources to their coethnics. The strategy is cost efficient but limited in terms of its reach. With the modal ethnic group comprising less than 20 percent of a country's population, the reach of ethnic strategies is limited. Such appeals cannot provide a party with the majority of votes it would need to win presidential elections, for example. A strategy that can bridge ethnic divides would be necessary but would also be difficult to forge. If a party decides not to engage in ethno-regional appeals, they could choose to buy votes directly. However, this is less appealing than the ethnic appeals strategy because of the increased cost of buying individual voters and the potential for voters to support another party since parties have limited ability to monitor individual vote choice. Because of the cost of such a strategy, the size of the mobilized population would likely be limited as well.

In contrast, intermediary-based strategies using chiefs have the ability to mobilize larger portions of the population since chiefs can reach across ethnic lines. On a practical level, parties are incentivized to utilize intermediary-based strategies when chiefs are strong. As Koter (2013) notes, parties cannot access voters in areas with strong chiefs. Appeals to ethnicity or other kinds of identity are likely to fail when a chief has control over the behavior of voters. Additionally, strategies using intermediaries have the additional benefit of being more *efficient* than voter-direct strategies as well. Instead of having to attempt to buy votes directly (and having to pay off each individual voter) it may be more efficacious to work with intermediaries who, though they may need to be paid off themselves, do not need additional resources to induce their subjects to vote a certain way. A party would prefer to to buy *persuasion* rather than having to buy votes directly since their resources are going to agents who may be able to amplify their message and deliver blocks of votes.

THEORY

Given the previous discussion, a chiefs-based approach to explaining opposition fragmentation starts to emerge. The approach relies on some key assumptions. First, it assumes that chiefs are influential over voters and that chiefs are inclined to use their influence for access to resources. It also assumes that politicians are motivated both to maximize vote share and a desire to win office since access to the benefits of the government and state is dependent on being elected into political office. That motivation is tempered, however, by the practical limits they face in mobilizing voters stemming from limited party organization and limited resources.

The causal process starts with the persuasive capacities of chiefs. Their ability to persuade and shape voter behavior make them appealing agents of mobilization for resource-limited parties looking to augment their limited party organization and mobilize voters. However, chiefs do not provide their mobilization services free of charge. Instead, chiefs prefer to support parties who can deliver resources to them. During the election period, parties looking for access to chiefs may

engage in a bidding war to win the allegiance of chiefs. The challenge opposition parties face is being able to bid high enough to access the mobilizing capacities of chiefs. Ruling parties with access to the resources of the state are at a great advantage to fragmented opposition parties who each, on their own, may only be able to offer a fraction of what the ruling party can offer. However, if opposition parties can consolidate, they can pool their resources together and offer to chiefs a bid that closer matches bids from the ruling party. They may not be able to match the bid completely but the combined opposition bid may be enough to persuade chiefs to help the opposition side.[1] Thus, the persuasive capacities of chiefs encourage consolidating behavior in opposition parties. They consolidate to increase their ability to win the bid for access to the voters chiefs control. This leads to the primary hypothesis tested below:

- (H_1): *Increasing levels of chief influence should be associated with lower amounts of vote fragmentation across opposition political parties.*

This preference of trading only with parties able to deliver resources and win the bidding war vis-a-vis the ruling party reduces the likelihood that additional candidates will enter political competition since new parties trying to win seats and the presidency will find it difficult to mobilize voters without the support of chiefs. With chiefs already bound to existing parties, new entrants have a considerable challenge in mobilizing voters. This deters potential entrants and makes it exceedingly difficult for new entrants to gain the votes necessary to be viable competitors to the existing opposition parties. Put differently, new parties face great difficulty in winning elections because of they have a tough time convincing chiefs to persuade their subjects to vote for them. Chiefs would be loath to throw their support behind an upstart party that lacks both the ability to secure the chief's endorsement upfront through a payment and a reasonable probability of winning

---

[1]An alternative perspective would argue that, in light of the resource limitations typical of opposition movements, the party in power would be incentivized to offer lower bids to chiefs in exchange for their efforts. However, there are reasons to suspect that ruling parties may have incentives to maintain the value of their bids. First, parties and chiefs interact repeatedly. A chief is likely to be suspect of a party wishing to reduce how much it is willing to pay for the mobilization efforts of chiefs. Second, ruling parties have an incentive to keep the price high enough to make it difficult for opposition parties to match their bid. By lowering the bid they offer, the ruling party would risk matching bids from opposition parties and would risk encouraging some level of consolidation in the opposition who may see the value of working together if the bid level they need is lower than it previously has been.

office.

The consolidation effect works in two arenas: within electoral districts and across electoral districts. Within electoral districts, chiefs are able to limit competition by restricting the ability of individual politicians from winning the votes needed to win the legislative seat. Chiefs can direct their subjects to support the chiefs' preferred party. This prevents splintering of the opposition in two ways. First, it makes it difficult for other parties to win votes. Second, by limiting their ability to gain votes, other opposition parties cannot credibly gather enough that will enable them to send a credible signal to candidates in future elections that they will be able to deliver votes in exchange for resources. Across electoral districts, candidates and parties assess their chance of winning by observing their performance and standing in other districts in the country. Upon observing their comparatively weak position across the regions of the country, new parties are less likely to enter into competition. Voters and chiefs too recognize this and are less likely to support nationally weak parties. This discussion leads to the following hypothesis:

- (H_2) *As the influence of chiefs increases, there should be fewer opposition parties running candidates in electoral constituencies.*

Of course, chiefs may, on their own, be unable to deter all alternatives to the current opposition party. Other competitors may still enter competition. But chiefs can limit the number of viable competitors. Voters, knowing their chief's preferred party and candidates, should be able to vote strategically. They have enough information to determine which of the parties is a likely winner and which are likely losers based upon the preferences of their respective chief. Thus, chiefs can improve the informational environment for voters, making it easier for them to coordinate on the top opposition parties and thereby reduce vote fragmentation. Furthermore, chief endorsements are more reliable than opinion polling as sources of information for voters since voters may not trust the opinion polls available to them (Horowitz and Long 2013).

None of this is to say that chiefs think in systematic ways all the way down to how they would like the party system to look like. Rather, it suggests that the incentives and influence of chiefs create incentives for politicians and political parties, incentives that have aggregate-level effects.

The individual micro-level decisions of politicians and parties aggregates up to a macro-level, party system pattern.

To summarize, where mobilization occurs through direct voter contact like vote buying or through ethno-regional appeals, parties face less incentive to consolidate. When appeals work through intermediaries, as is the case when chiefs are strong, incentives to consolidate are much stronger. As chiefs get stronger and enjoy more control over their subjects, the greater value they have as electoral intermediaries. It is not chief strength leading directly to consolidation; rather, it is the ability of strong chiefs to alter the value of mobilization strategies from the set of mobilization strategies that encourages consolidation.

TESTING THE FRAGMENTATION HYPOTHESIS

I test my primary hypothesis using electoral data spanning 18 countries over 77 elections from 1990 to the present. I operationalize opposition fragmentation, my dependent variable, using a measure of the total vote share of the largest opposition party in legislative elections. This variable, *largest opposition vote share*, has a theoretical range of zero to 100. If opposition parties are consolidating, the vote share of the largest opposition party should increase since the anti-ruling party vote is no longer split among several parties. Instead, the votes are concentrated in a single party. This measure is preferred over alternatives such as the effective number of opposition parties (ENOP) used in Maeda (2010), which is calculates in the same manner as the more familiar effective number of electoral parties (ENEP) measure used in literature on electoral and party systems.[2]

The main independent variable is chief strength, a concept difficult to measure empirically

---

[2]ENOP and ENEP are not ideal measures since the same number can apply to a variety of party system constellations, giving the appearance of uniformity despite the variation that actually exists below. For example, an ENOP of 2 could come from two parties of similar size or from a single large party paired with a bevy of small parties. Additionally, an ENOP number closer to 1 could be indicative of a consolidated opposition movement but the ENOP number does not, on its own, provide a context about how meaningful that consolidated opposition movement is. The opposition may be consolidated but it may mean little for democratic competition if the opposition movement earns only 10 percent of the national vote. For these reasons, using the vote percentage of the largest opposition party, is the preferred operationalization.

and cross-nationally. To my knowledge, there exists no dataset that provides detailed information about the strength of chiefs across a number of countries. In light of this difficulty, I rely on two measures, both based on responses to questions on Round 4 of the Afrobarometer survey. The first operationalization, *Land Control*, is the percentage of respondents in a country indicating that the local chief is responsible for the adjudication of land in their community. The second measure, *Adjudication*, is coded the same way. Both measures are weighted for representativeness. Higher percentages denote higher levels of chief strength. For both measures, I expect the coefficient in the models below to be in the positive direction. As chiefs get stronger, the degree of opposition vote fragmentation should decrease and the largest opposition party should receive a higher proportion of the opposition vote. These measures capture two related powers that provide chiefs with the means to influence the vote choice of voters and thus the strategic choices of parties. I expect the coefficient on both measures to be in the positive direction since greater power should lead to more vote share for the largest opposition party.

Both of these measures are constant for each country. Thus, the effective N for the statistical test is not the 77 elections but the 18 country clusters. Additionally, because the measures of chief strength are constant within each country it is not possible to include fixed-effects to account for unobserved differences across countries. In light of these constraints, I cluster my standard errors at the country level and compare results from a standard linear regression model to the results from a multilevel model with random intercepts. The use of a random-effects approach is necessary step in evaluating the linear regression model since there may be a positive correlation among the observations nested within in country. Finally, given that the number of units and observations is rather small, the random effects model is an appropriate modeling strategy (Clark and Linzer 2014). These additional models (not shown) provide statistically and substantively similar results.[3]

In my specifications, I include a number of control variables that cover the approach emphasiz-

---

[3]The random effects are a middle ground between a model that pools all the observations, as I do in the specifications provided, and a set of models that runs a separate regression for each country. The random effects weight the contribution of each country cluster to the estimated coefficients. Clusters with a greater number of observations provide more information to the coefficient estimate than clusters with fewer observations (see Gelman and Hill (2007) for more).

ing the role of formal political institutions and social diversity in shaping opposition fragmentation. To control for the effects of electoral systems in shaping opposition fragmentation, I include a dummy variable, *SMD*, which is coded 1 if the country uses single-member district plurality electoral rules in their legislative elections. I also include a dummy, *presidential* coded 1 if a country's executive is presidential in structure. The variable *concurrent* is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the legislative election is concurrent with the executive election in that country. Additionally, to account for gains in experience with electoral rules, I include *election number*, a count of the number of elections that have taken place in the country since independence in the same regime and using the same electoral rules. . To control for the effects of social diversity, I include a standard measure of national-level social diversity, *ethnic fractionalization*, as provided by Fearon (2003). I also interact the fractionalization index with SMD to specify the interactive relationship between electoral institutions and social diversity used in the institutions literature. Finally, I include scores of political rights provided by Freedom House to help control for the quality of elections through time in each country. Higher values indicate lower levels of democratic quality.

ANALYSIS

The results from linear regression models with standard errors clustered by country are shown in Table 2. In Column 1 I regress the dependent variable, largest opposition vote share, on Land Control and a suite of control variables accounting for the primary alternative hypotheses of political institutions and social diversity. The coefficient is in the expected positive direction and is statistically significant. For a percentage increase in the number of respondents indicating that chiefs have primary control over land, the largest opposition party gains approximately 0.3 percent in vote share. For a standard deviation increase in Land Control (approximately 18 percent), the largest opposition party receives an additional 5.5 percent of vote share. In this specification, none of the included controls are statistically significant at the traditional levels. In terms of the relevant alternative explanations, political institutions do not seems to make a difference and nor does the

16

level of social diversity. The results from a model using Adjudication rather than Land Control returns similar results thought the substantive size of the result is slightly larger. For a standard deviation increase in Adjudication the largest opposition party receives an additional 7 percent of vote share.

[Table 2 about here]

In Columns 3 and 4 I include a control for the colonial history of each country, *British Colony*, and a control, *Ruling Vote Share* for the percentage of votes won by the ruling party in the first election in the current democratic period. Like before, I run separate models for each of my measures of chief strength. In Column 3, the coefficient on Land Control is still statistically significant and in the expected positive direction. Its magnitude, however, is reduced by a third, going from 0.31 to 0.17. Column 4 shows a similar result for the Adjudication measure. In both specifications, the coefficient on British Colony is substantively large and statistically significant. Former British colonies have opposition movements earning about 14 percent more of the vote than opposition movements in countries with a different colonial history. Thus, even controlling for the powerful effects of colonial history. These models also show sizable increases of around 10 percent in the R-squared compared to models without these two controls.

[Table 3 about here]

In Table 3 I run additional specifications that include a dummy variable, *presidential runoff*, that controls for whether a country uses a two-round majority electoral system to elect its president. Previous work has found that the two-round system discourages consolidation of parties. In columns 5 and 6, the main result is substantively and statistically similar to the previous specifications. Land control and adjudication are still positive, statistically significant, and substantively unchanged in magnitude. In column 7, I run one additional specification that includes the entire

set of control variables used in previous specifications but replaces the separate measure for Land Control and Adjudication with a single aggregate score for chiefs' capacity to influence, *Combined Strength*. As before, the coefficient on the chief strength measure is positive and statistically significant. In all models, the gains in explanatory power provided by the additional control is minimal. The R-squared values are roughly the same as the previous specifications in Columns 3 and 4. Together, these models show support for my primary hypothesis. Stronger chiefs are associated with less fragmentation in opposition vote share.

TESTING ONE MECHANISM: WITHIN-DISTRICT CANDIDATE ENTRY

As noted above, one mechanism linking chief strength to opposition party fragmentation is the within-district deterrent effect. We should see fewer opposition parties enter candidates in legislative elections as chiefs get stronger. To test this, I utilize a dataset of district- level electoral returns covering multiple elections in six sub-Saharan African countries from 1990 to 2013. The countries are all former British colonies, are all presidential systems, all use single-member district plurality electoral rules for legislative elections, and all have concurrent legislative and presidential elections.[4] Thus, the sample holds several alternative explanations of opposition fragmentation constant.

The dependent variable is the number of opposition candidates and is measured at the electoral constituency level. The variable is a raw count of the number of non-government parties running candidates in the legislative election in each constituency as provided by the Constituency-Level Election Archive (CLEA). This operationalization directly captures the deterrent effect chief strength is hypothesized to have on the entry of opposition parties to competition. Higher counts of non-government parties running indicate higher levels of fragmentation in the opposition. Using a raw count has the disadvantage of treating all non- government parties equally despite the considerable variance in the viability or likelihood across non-government parties to actually win votes. However, despite this drawback, examining the count is useful because it highlights one

---

[4]The exceptions are the 2000 and 2005 elections in Zimbabwe.

mechanism that can contribute to reducing opposition vote fragmentation. If vote fragmentation increases as the number of choices increases, reducing the choice set of candidates from which voters may select can help reduce opposition vote fragmentation.

I use Land Control disaggregated to the regional level as my main independent variable. Like the models testing for vote fragmentation, I include a control for electoral experience. Second, to control for opposition fragmentation due to the ethnic diversity, I include ethnic fractionalization, which is the level of ethnic fragmentation at the country level as measured by Fearon (2003). The expectation for this variable is that higher values of diversity increase the number of opposition party candidates.

Because my dependent variable is a raw count and thus cannot take on negative values, I estimate my models using a negative binomial regression.[5] Using ordinary least squares (OLS) to estimates models with counts as the dependent variable can lead to inefficient, inconsistent, and biased estimates (Long 1997). Standard errors for all models are clustered by country-election. Because several of the control variables are invariant-though-time country-level variables, including fixed-effects to control for unobserved country-level effects is not possible.

[Table 4 about here]

Table 4 displays the results from negative binomial regression models regressing the number of opposition party candidates on chief strength and a set of controls. The coefficient on Land Control is in the expected negative direction and is statistically significant. The model shows that the number of opposition candidates is reduced by approximately 12 percent for a standard deviation increase in the power of chiefs over land. The control variables are not statistically distinguishable from zero. Election experience, ethnic fragmentation, and political freedoms do not show a statistically distinguishable relationship with the number of opposition candidates.

To get a better sense of the relationship between chief strength and the number of opposition

---

[5]Model diagnostics show overdispersion. Thus, the negative binomial is preferred to the Poisson count model.

party candidates, I computed predicted probabilities (shown in Table 5) of observing different counts of opposition candidates ranging from 0 to 9. I computed predicted probabilities using the twenty-fifth percentile and seventy-fifth percentile of observed country-level averages of chief land and held all other variables at their mean. This approach isolates the impact of chief strength on the number of opposition candidates.

[Table 5 about here]

Looking at Table 5, chief strength is positively associated with a greater probability of lower counts of opposition candidates. For high values of chief strength, there is a higher probability of 3 or fewer opposition candidates per district. For example, the predicted probability of 2 opposition candidates is 0.21 for high values of chiefs land while it is only 0.14 for low values of chiefs land. The difference between the two probabilities is distinguishable from zero at the 95 percent confidence level. In comparison, low levels of chief strength are associated with higher predicted probabilities of a larger number of opposition party entrants. For most counts, the difference in the predicted probability between high and low values of Land Control are statistically distinguishable from zero.

Examining differences in the expected count of opposition candidates for different levels of chief strength provides additional insight into the association of chief strength and the number of opposition candidates. The bottom row of Table 5 provides the expected number of opposition candidates given different levels of covariates. Like the predicted probabilities discussed above, the expected counts were computed using the lowest and highest observed country-level values for chiefs land with all other variables held at their mean. The expected counts show that there is a statistically distinguishable difference of approximately 0.9 (effectively 1) fewer candidates in countries with high levels of chief strength compared to countries with low levels of chief strength. Taken as a whole, the results support the hypothesis that higher levels of chief strength are associated with fewer opposition candidates entering competition in each constituency.

Conclusion

In this paper, I provide statistical evidence supporting my argument that strong chiefs help reduce opposition fragmentation. In countries with strong chiefs, the degree of opposition vote fragmentation is lower than in countries with weak chiefs. Furthermore, I have shown preliminary evidence that strong chiefs are associated with lower numbers of opposition party entrants at the constituency level during legislative elections. Where voters perceive that chiefs have more control over land and adjudication, fewer opposition party candidates run in legislative elections. The findings suggest that one way to shape African party systems and make opposition movements less fragmented is to strengthen chiefs at the local level. Giving additional power over land can be one component of strengthening chiefs but the results suggest that a broader approach to empowering chiefs may be more efficacious in preventing opposition fragmentation. Strong chiefs can help counteract the fissiparous tendencies characteristic of opposition movements across the continent.

The evidence provided in this paper is suggestive. Future work exploring the relationship between chief strength and opposition party competition would benefit from measures of chief strength that include additional dimensions of their power. As ever, collecting more electoral data to capture as much of the population of African elections would allow for more conclusive tests of the hypotheses presented here. In particular, collecting more constituency-level electoral data would vastly improve our ability to observe the constituency-level mechanisms driving national-level patterns. Future work should look beyond the entry of candidates into competition and analyze how chief strength impacts the performance of opposition candidates in elections conditional on the number of opposition entrants. This would help shed light on whether or not limiting the number of opposition candidates actually impacts the electoral performance of opposition parties.

REFERENCES

Afrobarometer Data, Merged Dataset, Round 4, 2008, available at http://www.afrobarometer.org

Adams, James and Lawrence Ezrow. 2009. "Who Do European Parties Represent? How Western European Parties Represent the Policy Preferences of Opinion Leaders," *The Journal of Politics* 71(1): 206-223.

Amorim Neto, Octavio and Gary W. Cox. 1997, "Electoral Institutions, Cleavage Structures, and the Number of Parties," *American Journal of Political Science* 41(1): 149-174.

Baldwin, Kate. 2014. "When Politicians Cede Control of Resources: Land, Chiefs, and Coalition-Building in Africa," *Comparative Politics* 46(3): 253-271.

Birnir, Johanna. 2007. *Ethnicity and Electoral Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bogaards, Matthijas. 2004. "Counting Parties and Identifying Dominant Party Systems in Africa." *European Journal of Political Research* 43: 173-197.

Boone, Catherine. 2003. *Political Topographies of the African State: Territorial Authority and Institutional Choice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Boone, Catherine. 2014. *Property and Political Order in Africa: Land Rights and the Structure of Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Brambor, Thomas, William Roberts Clark, and Matt Golder. 2007. "Are African Party Systems Different?" *Electoral Studies* 26(2): 315-323.

Chandra. Kanchan. 2004. *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Chhibber, Pradeep and Ken Kollman. 2004. *The Formation of National Party Systems: Federalism and Party Competition in Canada, Great Britain, India, and the United States*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Clark, Tom S. and Drew A. Linzer. 2014. "Should I Use Fixed or Random Effects?" *Political Science Research and Methods* 3(2): 399-408.

Cox, Gary W. 1997. *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the WorldÕs Electoral Systems*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Dunning, Thad and Lauren Harrison. 2010. "Cross-Cutting Cleavages and Ethnic Voting: An Experimental Study of Cousinage in Mali," *American Political Science Review* 104(1): 21-39.

Fearon, James D. 2003. "Ethnic Structure and Cultural Diversity by Country." *Journal of Economic Growth* 8 (2): 195-222.

Ferree, Karen. 2010. "The Social Origins of Electoral Volatility in Africa." *British Journal of Political Science* 40(04): 759-779.

Gelman, Andrew and Jennifer Hill. 2007. *Data Analysis Using Regression and Multilevel/Hierarchical Models* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Harding, Robin. 2015. "Attribution and Accountability: Voting for Roads in Ghana," *World Politics*, 67(4) 656-689.

Herbst, Jeffrey. 2000. *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hicken, Allen. 2009. *Building Party Systems in Developing Democracies.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hicken, Allen and Heather Stoll. 2008. "Electoral Rules and the Size of the Prize: How Political Institutions Shape Presidential Party Systems," *Journal of Politics* 70(4)" 1-19.

Hoffman, Barak and James D. Long. 2013. "Party Attributes, Performance, and Voting in Africa," *Comparative Politics* 45(1): 127-146.

Horowitz, Jeremy and James D. Long. 2013. "Ethnicity and Strategic Voting in Kenya," *working paper*. Dartmouth College and University of Washington.

Ichino, Nahomi, and Noah L. Nathan. 2013. "Crossing the Line: Local Ethnic Geography and Voting in Ghana." *American Political Science Review* 107(2): 344-361.

Kludze, A Kodo Paaku. 2000. *Chieftaincy in Ghana*. Lanham: Austin & Winfield Publishers.

Kollman, Ken, Allen Hicken, Daniele Caramani, David Backer, and David Lublin. 2014. Constituency-Level Elections Archive. Produced and distributed by Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan.

Koter, Dominika. 2013. "King Makers: Local Leaders and Ethnic Politics in Africa," *World Politics* 65(2): 187-232.

Laakso, Markku, and Rein Taagepera. 1979. "Effective Number of Parties: A Measure with Application to Western Europe." *Comparative Political Studies* 12(1): 3-27.

Lindberg, Staffan I. and Minion K.C. Morrison. 2008. "Are African Voters Really Ethnic or Clientelistic? Survey Evidence from Ghana," *Political Science Quarterly* 123(1): 95-122.

Lindberg, Staffan I. 2010. "What Accountability Pressures Do MPs in Africa Face and How do They Respond?" *Journal of Modern African Studies* 48(1): 117-142.

Long, J. Scott. 1997. *Regression Models for Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Lupia, Arthur and Matthew McCubbins.1998. *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Maeda, Ko. 2010. "Divided We Fall: Opposition Fragmentation and the Electoral Fortunes of Governing Parties," *British Journal of Political Science* 40(2): 419-434.

Moser, Robert G. and Ethan Scheiner. 2012. *Electoral Systems and Political Context: How the Effects of Rules Vary Across New and Established Democracies.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ordeshook, Peter C. and Olga V. Shvetsova. 1994. "Ethnic Heterogeneity, District Magnitude, and the Number of Parties," *American Journal of Political Science* 38(1): 100-123.

Mozaffar, Shaheen, James R. Scarrit, and Glen Galaich. 2003. "Electoral Institutions, Ethnopolitical Cleavages, and Party Systems in Africa's Emerging Democracies," *American Political Science Review* 97(3): 379-390.

Shugart, Matthew Soberg and John M. Carey. 1992. *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

van de Walle, Nicolas. 2003. "Presidentialism and Clientelism in AfricaÕs Emerging Party Systems." *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41: 297-321.

van de Walle, Nicolas. 2007. "Meet the New Boss, Same as the Old Boss? The Evolution of Political Clientelism in Africa," in Herbert Kitschelt and Steven Wilkinson (eds.) *Patrons or Policies? Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition*. 50-67. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Weakest		Strongest
Limited control over land access / land not valuable	**Activity**	Strong control over land access / high value land
Little adjudication activity		High adjudication activity
Low moral standing	**Position**	High moral standing
Limited personal network		Dense personal network
Non-hierarchical ethnic group		Hierarchical ethnic structure
State appointed	**Origin**	Hereditary or customary succession

Figure 1: Chief strength spectrum
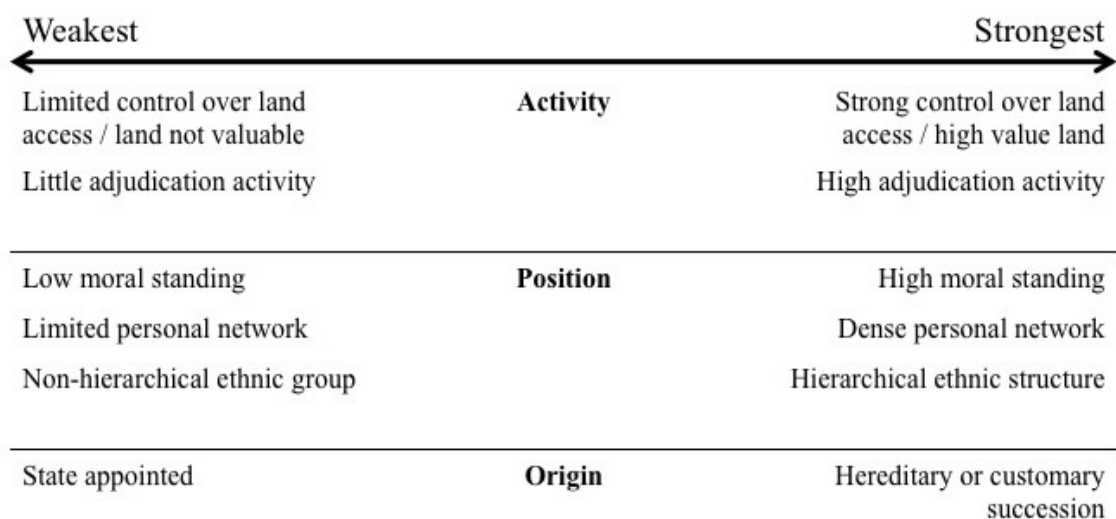
Table 1: Mobilization Strategies and Electorate Mobilized

Mobilization Strategy	Size of Electorate Potentially Mobilized	Efficiency
Policy-based appeals	Large	High
Intermediary-based strategies	Moderate	Moderate
Voter-direct strategies	Limited	Moderate-Low
1) *Ethno-regional appeals*		*Moderate*
2) *Vote buying*		*Low*

Table 2: Estimates of the Impact of Chief's Powers on Largest Opposition Party Vote Share

DV= Largest Opposition Vote Share	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Land Control	0.31**		0.17**	
	(0.11)		(0.06)	
Adjudication		0.33**		0.21**
		(0.08)		(0.04)
SMD	−3.05	1.03	−6.37	−3.45
	(7.19)	(7.78)	(6.01)	(5.67)
Presidential	3.36	7.77*	4.06	6.55**
	(3.74)	(4.25)	2.78	(2.95)
Concurrent Elections	0.62	0.64	3.97	3.82
	(2.53)	(2.80)	(2.48)	(2.34)
Election Number	1.25	0.38	1.45*	0.92
	(0.78)	(0.77)	(0.79)	(0.79)
Ethnic Fractionalization	−0.01	0.14	0.01	0.11**
	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Political Freedom	0.88	0.89	1.54	1.53
	(0.86)	(0.95)	(0.90)	(0.98)
Ethnic * SMD	0.08	−0.04	−0.04	−0.11
	(0.12)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.07)
British Colony			13.95**	13.50**
			(3.84)	(0.05)
Ruling Vote Share			−0.06	−0.07
			(0.07)	(0.05)
Constant	2.19	−9.67	−1.44	−9.25
	(11.91)	(12.04)	(8.82)	(8.86)
Observations	77	77	77	77
Number of Country Clusters	18	18	18	18
R^2	0.39	0.41	0.49	0.52

Standard errors clustered by 18 country clusters in parentheses.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$

Table 3: Estimates of the Impact of Chief's Powers on Largest Opposition Party Vote Share

DV= Largest Opposition Vote Share	(5)	(6)	(7)
Land Control	0.17** (0.05)		
Adjudication		0.25** (0.04)	
Combined Strength			0.12** (0.02)
SMD	−5.27 (7.57)	1.87 (7.35)	−1.63 (6.78)
Presidential	2.91 (4.36)	2.05 (4.32)	2.18 (4.09)
Concurrent Elections	4.50 (3.03)	5.64 (3.05)	4.59 (2.77)
Election Number	1.41 (0.83)	0.67 (0.86)	1.07 (0.78)
Ethnic Fractionalization	0.01 (0.06)	0.12 (0.04)	0.07 (0.04)
Political Freedom	1.43 (1.08)	1.06 (1.09)	1.22 (1.01)
Ethnic * SMD	−0.05 (0.10)	−0.17** (0.08)	−0.09 (0.08)
British Colony	14.62** (3.82)	15.42** (2.37)	14.06** (2.65)
Ruling Vote Share	−0.08 (0.07)	−0.13** (0.06)	−0.10 (0.06)
Presidential Runoff	1.15 (2.48)	4.84* (2.56)	3.02 (2.36)
Constant	−0.53 (9.73)	−7.93 (8.33)	−5.13 (8.78)
Observations	77	77	77
Number of Country Clusters	18	18	18
R^2	0.49	0.53	0.52

Standard errors clustered by 18 country clusters in parentheses.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$

Table 4: Estimates of the Number of Opposition Party Candidates Per Electoral District

DV= # Opposition Candidates	(8)
Land Control	-0.46^{**}
	(0.22)
Election Number	0.05
	(0.06)
Ethnic Fractionalization	0.26
	(0.49)
Political Freedom	-0.06
	(0.05)
Constant	1.38^{**}
	(0.55)
Log Alpha	0.04
	(0.04)
Observations	2,880

Estimates generated by negative binomial regression.

Standard errors clustered by 18 country-elections clustered in parentheses.

** $p < 0.05$

Table 5: Probability of predicted counts of opposition candidates

Number of Opposition Entrants	(1) Low Land	(2) High Land	(3) Difference
0	0.02	0.04	0.04
1	0.08	0.14	0.08**
2	0.14	0.21	0.09**
3	0.18	0.21	0.05
4	0.18	0.17	−0.01
5	0.15	0.11	−0.05**
6	0.11	0.06	−0.07**
7	0.07	0.04	−0.06**
8	0.04	0.02	−0.04**
9	0.02	0.01	−0.02
Expected Rate =	4.15	3.25	−0.89**

Predicted probabilities computed using the lowest an highest country-level average of Land Control
holding all other variables at their mean. For Land Control, Low = 0.19 (Kenya) and High = 0.713 (Ghana).
** Denotes the difference between predicted probabilities is distinguishable from 0 at the 95% confidence level.