Local Control: How Opposition Support Constrains Electoral Autocrats

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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' ability to punish opposition support. I show incumbent local governments (LGs) punish opposition support while opposition LGs do so less. I find that the extent to which opposition parties can disrupt or even flip the punishment regime depends on the level of de facto decentralization of the local public good in question. As a result, survey respondents in opposition LGs fear community punishment less, making it easier for them to vote on conscience. This suggests even small pockets of opposition support constrain autocrats. This study demonstrates the importance of subnational politics in the study of autocracy and suggests a more democratic legacy of decentralization than prevailing scholarship would suggest.

1. Introduction

Electoral autocrats[1] must contain threats to their rule to stay in power. Work on authoritarian politics focuses on how regimes 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 providing a 'release valve' for popular discontent (Gandhi and Lust-Okar, 2009; Gandhi, 2008; Sartori, 1976). So long as regime support remains high enough that the autocrat controls the presidency and the legislature, opposition support is not thought to meaningfully constrain or threaten them.[2] bookmark1 Autocrats often rely on distributive politics to keep regime support sufficiently high (Albertus, Fenner and Slater, 2018). Many autocrats enforce 'punishment regimes', cutting off state resources to those areas that support opposition parties to discourage defection (Magaloni, 2006; Blaydes, 2010).

Existing understandings of distributive politics in electoral autocracies[3] presuppose that an autocrat can exert their authority uniformly across space. Conceptualizing the autocrat's problem as that of a central planner, studies of regime strategy assess where regimes target resources and why. Autocrats are resource constrained but not necessarily constrained as to what they can do where. I argue that local control – who wins elected control of the local government in a given subnational unit – constrains autocrats' electoral strategies in decentralized autocracies. By overlooking these constraints, we overlook subnational variation in the autocrat's ability to punish opposition support from region to region and community to community. Thus, we overlook subnational limitations in the autocrats' ability to manage political competition and maintain their hold on power. As a result, I contend we overlook an important way opposition support meaningfully constrains electoral autocrats.

The late twentieth century saw an unprecedented wave of decentralization. The legacy of this is that most countries, including many electoral autocracies, are now decentralized to some extent. Since decentralization, local governments allocate significant state resources with control of these institutions determined by local elections. I contend that this changed the dynamics of authoritarian distribution because it made it possible for regimes to lose local control. The comparative politics

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[1] I use electoral autocrat, incumbent, and autocrat interchangeably.

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

[3] I 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."

literature broadly views decentralization as a boon for autocrats because it improves their reach to communities, monitors and distributes patronage, and screens out disloyal or inefficient functionaries (Landry, 2008; Riedl and Dickovick, 2014; Bohlken, 2016; Aalen and Muriaas, 2017). However, I argue autocrats can only reap these benefits if they retain local control.

If opposition parties win local control, they can use decentralized powers against the autocrat. In this study, I ask how local control affects autocrats' ability to punish opposition support? Given this, what implications do opposition support and decentralization have for regime durability in electoral autocracies? I make three claims in this study. First, local governments are a key part of the infrastructure in decentralized electoral autocracies. Different levels of government have different to monitor and sanction individuals, communities, regions, and so on. I argue that local governments are the conduit through which autocrats can accurately punish individual communities.

Second, local control determines the credibility of an autocrat's 'punishment regime' in a given area. Local control determines what electoral tools the autocrat can use to induce cooperation and dissuade defection. In regime areas, they can leverage the power of local knowledge to sanction voters and prevent defection. Loss of local elections forces autocrats to cede their usual infrastructure of reward and sanction to opposition parties. Therefore, the autocrat can impose greater costs for opposition support in regime-supporting areas than they can on similar voters in opposition areas.

Finally, the extent of decentralization determines how much opposition parties can use the same infrastructure to impose costs on regime support. The more decentralized a resource/provision, the more an opposition party can change its distribution. Thus, the greater the extent of decentralization, the more opposition parties can exploit control to discourage regime support and win votes for themselves. Taken together, these claims suggest decentralization may not be a boon but a double-edged sword for autocrats. If opposition parties gain enough support, they can capture local control and constrain the distributive machine that sustains many electoral authoritarian regimes.

I use a range of data from Tanzania to test these claims. I use administrative data from across Tanzania to show that opposition and regime local governments distribute state resources differently. Once opposition parties win local control, I demonstrate that they can disrupt the existing punishment regime through several local provisions, but the extent to which they can introduce their own

punishment regime depends on how decentralized the public good in question is. I supplement these data using evidence from over 100 interviews with politicians, bureaucrats, and voters. I trace how local officials[4] use local government and dense local knowledge to sanction opposition support in incumbent local governments and how this changes when the opposition takes over. I also use these interviews to explore the logic officials employ when allocating state resources. Finally, I use responses to list experiments designed to elicit truthful responses to sensitive questions to show that voters fear community sanctions less in areas where opposition parties win local control. I find that respondents in opposition local governments are significantly less likely to fear community sanctions. I, therefore, show that opposition control blunts autocrats' use of the 'punishment regimes' integral to how they manage competition.

This study makes important contributions to the academic literatures on decentralization, authoritarian politics, and opposition parties. I show that decentralization need not only be a boon for autocrats. Instead, decentralized local governments can act as an important tool for opposition parties to gain meaningful power, which may then help them win support and unseat the autocrat. This challenges the prevailing view that nominally democratic institutions, particularly opposition parties, are stabilizing for authoritarian regimes. With local control, marginalized opposition parties can exploit these nominally democratic local governments and even the skewed electoral authoritarian playing field. This study emphasizes the importance of paying attention to local politics in the study of autocracy, which is too often focused on palace rather than popular politics.

2. Decentralization in the Authoritarian World

Decentralization creates elected local institutions empowered to provide public services, moving distributive decision-makers from the center to the local level. By 2005, 75 countries had passed decentralization reforms, with the majority incorporating some combination of administrative, fiscal, and political decentralization (Ahmad, 2005). I use Hankla and Manning's (2017) definition of decentralization. A country is decentralized if it meets two conditions: 1) local governments have some degree of fiscal and administrative autonomy from the center, and 2) local governments are chosen through periodic popular elections. This definition does not require that the central government has no role in local matters, making it permissive enough to recognize the realities of decentralization. All over the world, local governments must coordinate to some extent with the central government to

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[4] I use local officials interchangeably when referring to local politicians and bureaucrats.

deliver services, largely because of fiscal constraints, technical expertise, or administrative procedure. This makes almost all local governments less de facto decentralized than de jure decentralized (Eaton et al., 2011). However, the definition captures the core idea of decentralization – local governments are chosen by the local population and are empowered to make decisions on their behalf (Hankla and Manning, 2017).

Most developing countries introduced decentralization reforms (Ahmad et al., 2005), many of which were electoral autocracies. Indeed, around half of all electoral autocracies are decentralized.[5] Decentralization was not simply window-dressing in these cases. As shown in Figure A1, many autocracies have committed to significant decentralization, usually due to a combination of external pressure and domestic incentives. Organizations like the World Bank used their leverage to push for decentralization at the same time as they were pushing for the introduction of multiparty competition (Manor, 1999).

Autocracies also stood to benefit from decentralizing. First, they stood to benefit from the development outcomes for which reform proponents advocated. Decentralization was expected to improve service provision by improving the accountability of officials (Cremer et al., 1994; Seabright, 1996), introducing competition between local authorities (Besley and Case, 1995), and allowing local policy-making to better reflect local preferences (Tiebout, 1956). Second and perhaps more importantly, decentralization was also a political boon for autocrats. Decentralization strengthens local state capacity where local state and party presence may have been weakened after structural adjustment. Many decentralization packages came with significant budgetary assistance. Like other nominally democratic institutions, local governments give autocrats new tools to manage political competition (Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007). Scholars point to a range of mechanisms – improved economic performance through competition, elite cohesion through promotions, better information on performance, better distribution of patronage, and containment of regional opposition – through which decentralization may make it easier for autocrats to keep regime support high (Cai and Treisman, 2009; Landry, 2008; Malesky and Schuler, 2011; Riedl and Dickovick, 2014; Hess, 2013; Aalen and Muriaas, 2017; Clark, 2018). Indeed, those autocrats with the strongest hold on power decentralized the most (Riedl and Dickovick, 2014).

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[5] Based 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).

In line with much of the literature on authoritarian institutions, local governments are thought to continue to exist for functionalist reasons, i.e., because they help the autocrat stay in power. As Pepinsky (2014) writes: "…in contemporary work, authoritarian institutions do exactly what their creators want them to do, and leaders adjust institutional forms when doing so is in their interest." Otherwise stated, nominally democratic institutions exist because they serve the autocrat who would otherwise legislate them away. This characterization stands to reason when we think about how decentralized institutions came into being. Scholars agree that decentralization was a process with the interests of ruling and other elites influencing the form of the eventual institutions (O'Neill, 2003; Falleti, 2005; Riedl and Dickovick, 2014).

However, other scholarship indicates that institutions are often sticky once created. For example, it is well documented that extractive colonial institutions are highly persistent and have long-lasting negative effects (Acemoglu et al., 2000; Dell, 2010; Eck, 2018). Countries often fail to rid their constitutions of legacies from the authoritarian period after democratization, even when these provisions have deleterious effects on the successor government (Albertus and Menaldo, 2014). Indeed, evidence from democracies and autocracies alike indicate that decentralization is also often sticky. Attempts to recentralize have been slow and expensive, met with popular discontent, and seldom successful in suppressing powerful local actors (Chen, 1991; Dickovick, 2011; Eaton, 2014; Madinah et al., 2015). Recentralization is generally only possible when presidents can exploit the political will that comes from resolving extraordinary crises (Dickovick, 2011).

This institutional stickiness makes the functionalist logic Pepinsky describes harder and harder to justify. While decentralization may have been prudent at the historical moment it was introduced, institutions may eventually stop serving the autocrat's interests, and they may not be able to recentralize. Once we acknowledge institutional stickiness, it opens leaders to facing decentralization's unintended political consequences. These consequences have gone under-explored because of this logic, but recent scholarship has begun to address this. Hankla and Manning (2017) find that elected local governments have put the ruling party in Mozambique under pressure to improve internal democracy, compete with new regional parties and pay more attention to 'bread and butter' governance. Farole (2021) and McLellan (2020) find that opposition parties in South Africa and Tanzania, respectively, use good performance in local service delivery to win votes from the ruling

parties. In this study, I propose that the forfeiture of their ability to punish opposition support is another unintended consequence of decentralization, threatening regime durability.

3.   Punishment Regimes and Opposition Support

Electoral autocrats rely on a mix of distributive and violent politics to keep elites and masses loyal to the regime and stay in power (Wintrobe, 1998; Svolik, 2012). However, contemporary autocrats' popular support is underpinned more by their hegemony over state resources and institutions than violence (Levitsky and Way, 2002; Diaz-Cayeros et al., 2003). They prefer to rely on distributive politics because violence is costly, and its benefits are uncertain. Violence signals to voters that the autocrat is less public-spirited and benevolent than their electoral coalition may have believed, alienating voters and making future electoral outcomes more uncertain (Guriev and Treisman, 2019; Hafner-Burton, Hyde and Jablonski, 2018). Given this, African autocrats are much more likely to repress in rural than urban areas because they are less likely to be 'visible' enough to provoke a popular backlash (Christensen, 2018). Furthermore, reliance on violence increases the power of the security services, increasing the coup risk the autocrat faces (Svolik, 2012).

These costs are hard to justify, given the evidence that violence actually benefits regimes is mixed (Davenport, 2007; Chenoweth et al., 2017). Where violence has been demonstrated to be most effective is in disrupting opposition coordination and organization (Bhasin and Gandhi, 2013; Guriev and Treisman, 2019). Because of these trade-offs, most violence in autocracies is concentrated around election time and towards activists and politicians rather than ordinary voters (Hafner-Burton et al., 2014).

It is thus distributive politics that is the autocrat's 'bread and butter.' It is core to regime survival as it structures the electorate's incentives to remain loyal to the autocrat (Albertus et al., 2018). One prominent logic of authoritarian distribution is the use of 'punishment regimes' (Magaloni, 2006;

[Blaydes](), [2010]).[6] 'Punishment regimes' target state resources to the loyal and deny them to the disloyal.[7] In these studies and work on authoritarian politics more broadly, scholars conceive of autocrats 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 its group of beneficiaries. Voters in electoral autocracies vote based on this electoral bargain. The durability of an autocrat's tenure is therefore driven by their ability to enforce this bargain.

The credibility of punishment regimes in electoral autocracies is underpinned by the capacity of agents acting on behalf of the autocrat 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]; [Svolik](), [2012]). However, the importance of local state resources is often 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 ones. The strongest regimes are those where the state apparatus can consistently reward the loyal and sanction the disloyal. To punish opposition support, autocrats must be able to influence the distribution of these resources.

An autocrat'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

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[6] I focus on punishment regimes, but local control would also temper autocrat's ability to implement other distributive logics.

[7] Blaydes and Magaloni differ in their operationalization of punishment regimes. Magaloni defines a punishment regime as the strategy where regimes cut off state resources to opposition-supporting areas. This definition is agnostic as to how the regime then distributes to other areas. Indeed, she points to the PRI regime's targeting of marginal swing constituencies over their core supporting regions. Blaydes takes a more general approach and operationalizes a punishment regime as the distributive logic where the regime punishes or rewards an area according to its level of opposition support. She contends this is the more prevalent form of the punishment regime in hybrid regimes and autocracies. I follow this more general definition/operationalization in this study.

monitor and control brokers. Information often leaks from the chain of delegation before reaching the center where allocative decisions are made.

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

Keeping the costs of opposition high is important to regime durability, discouraging opposition support and limiting it to 'most likely opposition voters' (Magaloni, 2006). These are generally thought to be the wealthy and ideological 'activist' voters (Greene, 2007; Letsa, 2017). Opposition strongholds – often clusters of these archetypal opposition voters – are a common feature of electoral autocracies (McMann, 2018; Letsa, 2018). When the opposition wins local control in these areas, they can offset some of these costs. This makes it easier for opposition parties to retain votes and win over new voters in these areas. Furthermore, it is harder for the regime to control politics and competition in these areas. With the regime constrained in this way, opposition parties can then exploit their local powers to present themselves as a credible alternative to the regime through governance (Lucardi, 2016; Farole, 2021). By the same cost mechanism, local control also makes it easier to retain votes in these new areas of opposition local control and thus create new opposition strongholds.

By offsetting the costs of opposition support, opposition parties can exploit local control to build bigger and more stable outcrops of support. This variation in the costs of opposition support calls into question the extent to which the same 'electoral bargain' holds uniformly across a given electoral autocracy. It suggests that the regime is constrained by prior opposition support in dealing with subsequent challenges from opposition parties. Scholars of decentralization often ask how the autocrat's power at the time of decentralization affected the design of local institutions (O'Neill, 2003; Boone, 2003; Falleti, 2010; Riedl and Dickovick, 2014). In what follows, I ask how these local institutions affect the autocrat's power and opposition parties' prospects after decentralization.

4. Local Control and Sanctioning

I argue that local control – who wins elected control of local government – determines the autocrat's ability to sanction opposition support across space. When the autocrat retains local control, incumbent-loyal politicians can exploit local knowledge and use local state resources to sanction opposition communities. However, if the autocrat loses local control, it forces them to surrender some of their 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 argue that the extent to which opposition local control constrains and threatens the regime depends on the extent of decentralization. This defines the distributive autonomy the opposition party inherits when they take over local control, hence their ability to offset or flip the punishment regime. I define sanctioning as using 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.[8]

Local government control is important because local governments are better at monitoring community-by-community variation in regime support than the central government. First, local officials are responsible for a smaller number of communities. The demarcation of constituent-elected units in local government areas makes the geography of political support more 'legible' (Scott, 1998; Malesky and Schuler, 2011), and the manageable number of communities makes it easier to identify who to reward and who to sanction. Second, embedded state bureaucrats and politicians learn about levels of support in communities through their day-to-day work, information that would leak out of the system were central officials in charge of distributive decisions. They learn the partisanship of the communities they work with and can keep up to date with noticeable shifts in popular support. This long-term local knowledge also means they have an informational advantage over ad hoc brokers that the parties at the center may contract at election time.

Local government control is also important because LGs are well placed to act on this knowledge and punish communities. For example, LGs may be responsible for the allocation and maintenance of local public goods like schools, clinics, and waterpoints, technical assistance, community development budgets, and so on, depending on the level of decentralization. These kinds of provisions are locally excludable, meaning that LGs can vary access to state resources in a fine-grained way. Those acting at

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[8] By 'local government,' I refer to the decentralized level of government responsible for the allocation and delivery of local public goods and services.

the local level, therefore, have substantial leverage over the communities for which they are responsible.

The party that wins local control can exploit the information and leverage associated with that level of government. This information and leverage are highly important to the regime's punishment regime. Exploiting dense local knowledge, incumbent-held LGs reward regime loyal communities and sanction disloyal ones. They mobilize local resources to sanction opposition support both at election time and between electoral cycles making clear to voters that a new classroom, repairs to their water supply, access to development funds etc., are contingent on continued loyalty to the regime. This leverage allows them to keep the costs of opposition support high and discourage defection. Control of LGs strengthens an autocrat's hold on power by allowing them to use local distributive politics to shore up regime support.

However, the regime's access to these critical local advantages is lost when opposition parties take over. The regime has fewer eyes and ears on the ground and fewer resources to mobilize. Moreover, opposition parties now have control over this information and leverage, making it harder for the autocrat to reward loyalty and sanction opposition support community-by-community. This is dangerous for regime stability as extant scholarship indicates contemporary electoral autocrats rely more on distributive than violent politics to keep regime support high.

This does not mean the regime is now toothless in these areas. They can still use the powers and resources of the central government to punish opposition areas. However, punishment will likely become blunter, absent local information and powers. For example, instead of being able to vary access to services within an LG area, regimes often cut central transfers to opposition LGs as a whole ([Magaloni](), [2006](); [Weinstein](), [2011]()). They may also choose to police these areas more violently or administer them poorly. The regime can still hold opposition areas to the coals, but these strategies are likely to be costlier and less effective. Blunter punishments are less effective as voters know that the marginal effect of their vote choice on the level of punishment is lower. Furthermore, indiscriminate sanctioning and use of violence risks alienating regime and moderate voters. Thus, opposition local control deprives autocrats of many of their tried and tested tools on which they rely to stay in power in the long run.

What the regime loses is only half the picture. What do opposition parties gain from local control? I contend that this depends on the level of de facto decentralization. By that, I mean the extent to which the local government can distribute state resources, provide local public goods, and maintain public services without extensive coordination with the central government. When de facto decentralization is high, local control gives opposition parties significant autonomy to favor their supporters and impose costs on regime support. This is because allocative decisions can be made and implemented locally. If low, the opposition party must still coordinate significantly with the central government to fund or implement a project. That means their autonomy is limited, allowing them to do little to change the existing way resources are distributed. In intermediate cases, opposition parties have some autonomy, but it is still constrained, allowing them to shift rather than overturn the regime's distributive logic.[9]

The level of coordination required varies across different local public goods and services. It is partly explained by the nature of the public good itself. Paramount among these factors are the level of technical expertise and upfront fixed costs required. The level of coordination is also dependent on administrative procedures. While a provision or policy domain, for example, water, may be decentralized, administrative procedures may require some level of coordination to sign off on local decisions, which automatically reduces the local government's autonomy. The incumbent has control over these procedures, so if autonomy is good for the opposition, the reader may wonder why the autocrat would not simply require extensive coordination (i.e., de facto recentralization) across all policy domains.

Table 1: Distributive Logic by Local Control and Coordination Level Needed to Provide Local Public Good

		Level of coordination		
		High	*Medium*	*Low*
Local control	*Regime*	Opposition communities punished	Opposition communities punished	Opposition communities punished
	Opposition	Opposition communities punished	Punishment regime evened out	Regime communities punished

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[9] As discussed earlier, they can also use their powers to improve the quality of services to win over voters (Lucardi, 2016; McLellan, 2020; Farole, 2021). This is another important way that local control can be exploited to win support. Indeed, this strategy's success is also likely to be contingent on the level of decentralization but engaging with this strategy is beyond the scope of this study.

This seldom happens because coordination with the center is costly and forfeits the strategic benefits of decentralization I discussed above. Moving more responsibility for any given service back to center is a slow, expensive, and disruptive process requiring substantial legal, organizational, and financial changes to how bureaucrats and politicians deliver and fund services. To do so for all policy domains would be a significant burden on the central state. Given this, autocrats are likely to keep coordination relatively low, particularly when opposition support is limited, with levels of coordination relatively fixed in the short to medium term.

Thus, the extent to which opposition parties can offset the costs of opposition depends on local control and the level of de facto decentralization. This determines what, if any, autonomy the opposition has to influence local distributive politics. I summarize this theory in Table 1. When opposition parties can offset the costs of opposition, it is then easier for citizens to vote on conscience, whereas similar voters living under regime control would be motivated to remain loyal to the autocrat by the threat of sanction.

This theory points to a mechanism by which opposition parties can break out of their core constituencies and build widespread support. This has important implications for understanding how opposition support threatens autocrats. An autocrat may be hegemonic at the center, but opposition local control can disrupt an autocrat'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 keep votes from one election to the next because it is harder for the autocrat to sanction. This suggests that even small and localized pockets of opposition support may meaningfully constrain autocrats. Furthermore, this suggests that decentralization is not necessarily a boon for autocrats. Instead, I contend that decentralization may be more of a double-edged sword. With local control in the hands of a credible opposition party, that party can use the same institutions that strengthen regime support in some areas to undermine it in others.

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 local state 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 partly,

clientelistic. Given these conditions, my theory will most likely hold in low- and middle-income countries. I focus on local governments, but the logic of local control holds for any subnational institution with 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 help carry to dominant party regimes where opposition parties are ordinarily marginalized.

5. Empirical Approach

I test my theory using evidence from Tanzania. It is a case of a decentralized electoral autocracy that exhibits variation in local control and levels of de facto decentralization across public goods, allowing 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 shows Tanzania is not a highly decentralized country. It is below average on all forms (administrative, political, fiscal) of decentralization across all countries and average among all electoral autocracies. If I can show that local control matters in Tanzania, where the central government is relatively more powerful than elsewhere in my universe of cases, this will provide convincing evidence for my theory and indicate that local control, and local politics more broadly, matters more in electoral autocracies than scholars may ordinarily assume.

Second, Tanzania is an unlikely case of regime weakness and opposition strength, given existing theories of regime durability. As I discuss further below, it does not have a significant history of opposition; the Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM) ruling party elites control much of the economy, civil society is weak, and the opposition lacks loyal ethnic bases of support. The CCM is a strong party with high organizational capacity and hegemony over central state institutions and 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. This is particularly true as 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.

I use a mixed methods design. To test my theory, I have to both test if the distribution patterns fit with the expectations in Table 1 and ask if the logic behind these patterns is punishment subject to constraints rather than some alternative explanation. I use quantitative and qualitative data to deal with each of these. To understand the patterns of distribution and their effects, I test the following hypotheses:

- **H1a**: Opposition communities are punished by denying them access to local state resources under incumbent local control[10] but less under opposition local control

- **H1b:** Voters living under opposition local control fear sanctioning less than those living under incumbent local control

- **H2**: The more de facto decentralized a local government provision, the more an opposition local government can use local control to change its distribution and offset or even flip the punishment regime

Hypotheses 1a and 1b test the observable implications of my claim that loss of local control constrains the regime's punishment regime at the local level. I rely on subnational comparisons to test these hypotheses. Hypothesis 2 then tests the observable implications of my claim that the eventual distributive logic under opposition control depends on the level of de facto decentralization for that local public good or resource. I exploit the differences in coordination required with the central government to provide citizens with access to water and education to test this hypothesis.[11]

However, a true test of my theory also requires I demonstrate the intentionality behind these empirical regularities. To this end, I exploit interview data to interrogate why local officials make the distributive decisions they do. I use this evidence alongside my quantitative data to assess my explanation for these patterns alongside two primary alternative explanations. First, the regime is not constrained at all; rather, they choose not to punish opposition areas once local control is lost to try and win them back. Second, distribution patterns can be explained by differences in need rather than partisanship.

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[10] I use regime, incumbent, and CCM control interchangeably in discussion of my empirical results.
[11] I elaborate more on this in the next section.

I present evidence for my theory in three parts. First, I present interview evidence from five regions across Tanzania.[12] Drawing on the findings from around 100 interviews with politicians, bureaucrats, and votes, I explore how those acting on behalf of the regime use local institutions to sanction opposition support and ask if opposition control confounds this. I interrogate how opposition parties use their autonomy and trace their . Second, I use administrative data on local state resources and services from across Tanzania to assess if resources are distributed differently in incumbent and opposition LGs. I use data on water and education provision to ask if level of coordination with the center leads to differences in distribution in opposition LGs. In the relevant empirical sections, I describe the data I use in more detail.

Third, I assess the consequences of these differences on voters' fears of sanctions in the region. I use a survey with list experiments alongside interviews to test if voters' fears of sanctions are determined by who controls the LG in their area. This mixed method approach allows me to identify the regime's intent, how local control constrains it, and the downstream consequences for the distribution of state resources. My empirical strategy relies on triangulation, using multiple data sources to carefully identify differences by local control and level of de facto decentralization.

6. 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. Tanzania's move to multiparty competition in the early 1990s was an example of a regime 'jumping before it was pushed' (Levitsky and Way, 2010). In 1990, Nyerere called for the introduction of multiparty elections after observing the fall of the Ceausescu regime in Romania. He was quoted at the time as stating, "[Why liberalize?] When you see your neighbor being shaved, you should wet your beard. Otherwise, you could get a rough shave" (Morna, 1990). Keen to stay in the good graces of international finance institutions (IFIs) and avoid mass mobilization against the regime, Tanzania legalized opposition parties in 1992 and held its first multiparty elections in 1995. Since the founding of multiparty elections, 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.

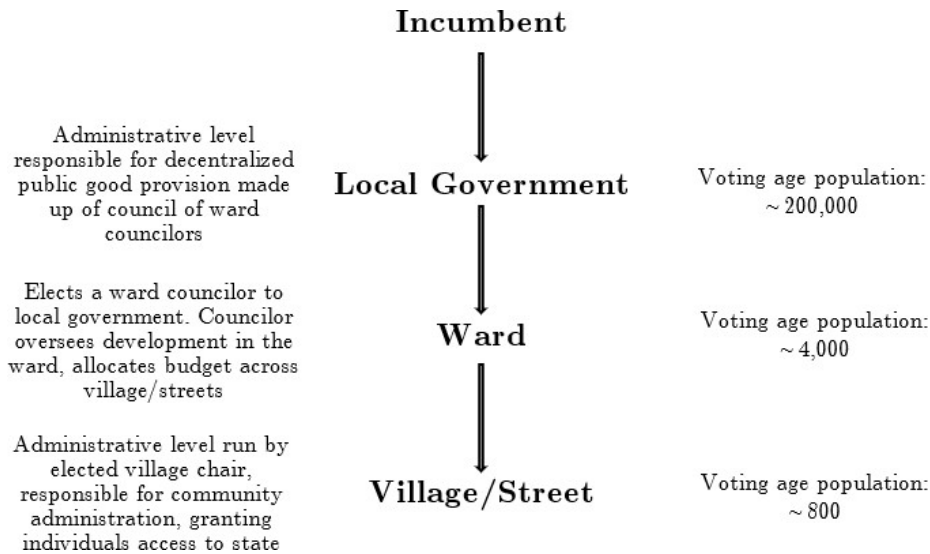[12] I account for my subnational case election in that section.

Opposition parties initially had little presence in local government. However, opposition support has spread from their initial footholds, and opposition parties controled the local government in most of Tanzania's urban areas from 2015 to 2020. Almost all local elections are now contested by at least one opposition party.

Tanzania decentralized in 2000 through the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP). Tanzania's decision to decentralize followed a similar logic to its decision to introduce multiparty elections (Bakari, 2001).[13] The LGRP gave elected politicians at the LG level authority over key public goods, including schools, clinics, roads, and water. Local governments in Tanzania are responsible for funding local services through LG budgets, the majority of which come from central transfers. The LGRP defines a formula for these transfers based on population, poverty rate, and area. However, actual transfers bear little resemblance to the predictions of this formula, and opposition councils have faced reduced transfers since they began winning power in the 2000s (Weinstein, 2011).

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. The full council, the elected local councilors under the advisement of the appointed bureaucrats/officials, decide on the budget and list of priorities annually. LG funding and projects are allocated to wards. 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.

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[13] Interviews with stakeholders in decentralization process.

Figure 1: Subnational Levels of Government in Tanzania

Incumbent

Administrative level responsible for decentralized public good provision made up of council of ward councilors

Local Government

Voting age population: ~ 200,000

Elects a ward councilor to local government. Councilor oversees development in the ward, allocates budget across village/streets

Ward

Voting age population: ~ 4,000

Administrative level run by elected village chair, responsible for community administration, granting individuals access to state

Village/Street

Voting age population: ~ 800

LGs are responsible for many important policy areas, including water, education, and health. However, this budgetary arrangement requires coordination with the central government to provide expensive, lumpy public goods with high upfront costs, such as schools. Coordination with the central government is also required when technical expertise is needed to provide a local public good. When this is the case, local councilors must work closely with centrally appointed officials who work in service delivery units at the local level. The combination of these two factors means that the level of coordination required varies between and within units.[14]

However, local governments have significant autonomy over the construction of smaller public goods (e.g., classrooms), the quality of local public services, and the environment (including public health). In addition, local governments make decisions about prioritizing different services, wards, and communities. They do so through biannual full councils where elected councilors and appointed bureaucrats vote on the allocation of funds and the local government's priorities. With some cooperation with local councilors, bureaucrats then implement the approved budget. Despite these procedures, new, ad hoc projects are fairly common and sometimes initiated at the center.

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[14] Interviews with local government bureaucrats and politicians.

In this study, I focus on water and education. The combination of technical expertise, ministerial sign-off, and cost means the remit of the water units — providing and maintaining enhanced water supplies —always requires at least some coordination with the center.[15] The construction of new waterpoints by these units requires significant coordination. Maintenance requires moderate coordination in the form of ministerial sign-off on priorities.

In contrast, there is more variation within the education unit. For example, the high upfront costs of school construction and the need for ministry sign-off means that there is also a high level of coordination required to build new schools despite this power being formally decentralized. However, allocation of educational resources like textbooks, staffing, meals, and building improvement (i.e., new classrooms, toilet blocks, etc.) do not require much coordination due to lower upfront costs, no need for ministerial sign-off, and less input from centrally appointed bureaucrats.[16] I exploit this variation to explore the implications of low, medium, and high de facto decentralization for opposition influence over distributive politics.

Historically, the CCM has had a strong local presence, but this waned towards the end of the 20th century. LGRP strengthened these formerly party 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 were historically weak and volatile. However, these reforms did lead to substantial variation in CCM local control. Opposition parties won control of three lLGs in 2005, eight in 2010, and thirty-one LGs in 2015. After the 2015 election, opposition parties controlled the majority of urban wards and LGs in Tanzania. At the end of the 2015-2020 term, about a quarter of all wards were in opposition hands. Furthermore, around two-thirds of all Tanzanian wards neighbored an opposition ward. Extant evidence suggests the CCM enforces a punishment regime between LGs. 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.

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[15] Interviews with water bureaucrats.
[16] Interview with education bureaucrats.

7. The Logic of Punishment and Its Limits in Tanzania: Evidence from Semi-Structured Interviews

In this section, I use interview data to show that local control changes how state resources are distributed across Tanzania. I trace how resources are allocated at the local level and how this varies depending on whether the CCM or the opposition controls the LG. Qualitative data has the advantage of allowing me to determine the intentions and incentives of politicians and officials. This will allow me to better account for differences in voters' access to state resources by local control in this section and using administrative data in the next.

I draw on around 60 interviews with councilors and bureaucrats from incumbent and opposition LGs from three parts of Tanzania: Northern Tanzania, including Moshi and Arusha; Central Tanzania, including Dodoma; and the Southern Highlands, including Iringa and Mbeya. These regions vary in terms of their economic profiles and experience of opposition local control. The North is Chadema's heartland, Central Tanzania is a CCM stronghold, and the Southern Highlands are a more competitive part of the country, with areas of both incumbent and opposition local control. The logic of this case selection is to include a variety of LG types– rural and urban, wealthy and poor, etc. – to show that the differences I find between incumbent and opposition local control stem from who runs the local government rather than other characteristics of these areas.

I argue that local control is so important because local officials have the information necessary to accurately target communities for reward or sanction. Interviews show that local officials are confident about their knowledge of the distribution of political support, describing themselves as the 'eyes and ears' of the regime. Local government bureaucrats interviewed were all confident they knew the geography of need in their area well, while eighty-five percent were confident they knew the political geography well. Indeed, almost all affirmed that they know substantially more about local political support than the central government. Local government officials point to personal connections and community interactions when explaining how they know the fine-grained distribution of political support.

When asked how well they[17] could pinpoint areas less loyal to the regime, a bureaucrat replied, "Very

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[17] I use 'they' as a singular third person pronoun throughout.

well – I know the parties, I know the leaders, I know the people. Tamisemi[18] does not know any of this." Indeed, local officials make clear that the central government relies on them for this information. When asked if they knew more than the central government, one said: "Definitely – that information they have is from us. They could not have this without us." Another responded: "Yes, I am in the grassroots. They know very little, and if they know anything, it's through me."

Local officials also have an edge on central officials because sanctioning within a smaller number of units is much more tractable. A bureaucrat explained why:

> Tamisemi and the ministry deal with the whole country. Here we have [number, units redacted for anonymity], and I know much more about what is going on in each of these [number, units redacted for anonymity] than the center ever could.

Local bureaucrats often question the decisions made by central bureaucrats when they overrule them: "Sometimes they will pick something, and it will be a bad decision because they are not here and they do not understand."

When the local government is under incumbent control, officials act on this local knowledge to punish opposition communities at the regime's behest. I interviewed bureaucrats to probe if sanctioning was a factor in their distributive decisions.[19] Bureaucrats are centrally appointed and accountable to the head bureaucrat of the local government (managing director), a presidential appointee. Interviews showed that local government bureaucrats felt pressure to follow the orders they got from both, either the head bureaucrat or the ministry. One bureaucrat described how they feel pressure to prioritize projects in CCM areas: "The central government tells us to build and prioritize these areas that are useful to CCM. We have additional pressure to deliver services in CCM areas." Another described how they face pressure to undermine projects brought by opposition councilors in incumbent LGs:

> All politicians have an agenda. But they cannot all push their agenda. It is not often that an opposition politician can. Even if he is pushing for good, he is pushing for bad in the eyes of the central government. If [the] opposition pushes us to do their project first, then the opposition party may get credit. The others from the ruling party may try and undermine me if I do try and help the opposition.

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[18] Tamisemi is the short form of the President's Office for Local Government and Regional Administration.
[19] I provide further details on the decision-making process I describe in SI.

The logic of sanctioning underpins how local state resources are distributed across Tanzania. In a widely circulated video from a by-election rally in a CCM LG in the 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.[20]

Interviews show that sanctioning is commonplace in all my subnational cases under incumbent local control. I included urban and rural CCM LGs in my subnational case selection, some of which are strongholds, and some are more competitive. I find that opposition support is punished in all these jurisdictions.; interviewees in all incumbent LGs point to clear bias in the allocation of local development projects.[21] Opposition politicians point to this discrimination, and some incumbent politicians and bureaucrats even acknowledge they engage in this discrimination.

In CCM-controlled Dodoma, opposition community officials report significant discrimination. For example, a Chadema local leader complained that their street had been all but cut off from state resources since their election in 2014: "It is very hard for us to get funds since I've taken over. Any funds allocated to my street come from TASAF.[22] All other projects were cancelled." Another Chadema local leader highlighted how their community is treated differently compared to CCM communities: "For other wards under CCM, the situation is different. For example, there is a school that has been given three new classrooms, but my school is left without any additional classrooms – all those being favored are CCM areas." I asked voters in Dodoma MC what they worried about if their community voted for an opposition party. Several explicitly mentioned fears about access to state resources: "we would not get help anymore from the government. We won't have peace."

In Iringa DC, a comparable rural regime stronghold, interviews show similar sanctioning dynamics. A

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[20] Speech by CCM councilor, Manyara region, 2018.
[21] Development projects are small public good projects, which are proposed by the community and funded by LG.
[22] TASAF is a World Bank funded central government program which includes conditional cash transfers and grants for the country's poorest citizens.

local government bureaucrat complained about how politics often dominated need: "Iringa DC is, unfortunately, all under CCM, so the influence comes from the CCM. There are other wards that are under Chadema, but they have less influence. For now, it is CCM wards that are getting prioritized." A citizen who does not vote described how Chadema communities are treated: "Chadema chairs have to do everything alone. They can't get help from above. Some issues will not be seen to and will not be implemented; it will be harder for them to do their duties."

If the CCM retains control of the local government, they will have majority control of the council and be able to pass budgets that punish opposition communities. Moreover, they can generally rely on the bureaucrats to go along with this as bureaucrats face real professional and personal consequences if they do not, as I discuss below. Thus, with local control, the regime can mobilize local government capacity to sanction.

Interviews show that these dynamics do shift when opposition parties take over local government. Opposition LGs explicitly aim to disrupt sanctioning of their own voters once they take power. As one politician put it, they try "pull the string to [their] own voters" in a system where the odds are stacked against them. They stressed the importance of making promises to their voters and delivering on them to stay in power. As one councilor put it, the aim of opposition councilors was to "support your people and bring projects to your area." Opposition politicians agree that local control gives them an opportunity to change how local resources are distributed to their advantage but that there are real hurdles to doing so. Where incumbent-held LGs are working within a broader system dominated by the same party, opposition LGs have to contend with that same system. They can use this system to frustrate opposition autonomy and subvert these LGs' decentralized powers. Opposition LGs receive significantly lower central transfers than comparable incumbent areas across multiple specifications, as shown in Table 2.

Given these fiscal restrictions, it is harder for opposition local governments to deliver new public goods without central assistance.[23] Formally, the provision of schools and waterpoints (e.g., pumps, enhanced wells, piped water, etc.) are decentralized. However, the construction of new public goods is expensive. It often requires substantial financial capital that local governments and communities

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[23] To offset these fiscal deficits, research shows that opposition local governments raise more taxes to make sure they can.

cannot afford. This allows the center to exert pressure over the distribution of public goods. A bureaucrat in a Chadema LG said the money often "comes with specific projects in the directive…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."[24] Central bureaucrats claimed these directives were necessary because opposition politicians could not be trusted.[25]

Table 2: Central Transfers by Local Control

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Dependent variable:				
	Log(Development Transfers)				
Opposition LG	−0.137	−0.156	−0.265**	−0.237**	−0.323**
	(0.115)	(0.106)	(0.104)	(0.112)	(0.157)
N	455	455	455	455	455
Population control	N	Y	Y	Y	N
LG type control	N	N	Y	Y	N
Tax base controls	N	N	N	Y	N
LG fixed effects	N	N	N	N	Y

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

Note: OLS regression with robust standard errors. Controls and local government fixed effects included as indicated.

However, my interviews show that some things are easier to change than others. For example, I find that the ease with which opposition parties can change how local resources are distributed depends on the extent of coordination with the center required. When services can be provided by local politicians and officials spending local money, they have significant autonomy. However, when ministries and central appointees are involved, the opposition is much more constrained in how they can govern. For example, those interviewed were clear that local officials and politicians had little control over building new large public goods like schools and big water projects even though these powers are formally decentralized.

In interviews inopposition LGs, opposition politicians described the most important powers they have: local road construction, access to water, school classroom construction, school performance, environmental cleanliness, and public health management. The kinds of projects opposition politicians mention may seem trivial compared to big infrastructure projects often studied. However, opposition politicians were consistent in interviews that these powers are significant in their efforts to build

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[24] Interview #9074.
[25] Interview #8627.

credibility in the eyes of the voters and make meaningful changes to people's access to public services. Politicians and bureaucrats repeatedly mentioned they had autonomy over the construction of things like classrooms and toilet blocks. Opposition councilors explained that if they used 'own source' money, i.e., local taxes, they could do projects like these without real coordination with the center. They could also prioritize which schools would receive more staff and teaching resources. Bureaucrats in the education units of opposition councils agreed that these were local issues. CCM politicians in these areas complained that for these smaller projects, "there is a lot of politics. There are only 7 of us and 20 of them. Most of the difficulties are caused by political considerations and the use of majority votes, so it's a problem for us." Otherwise stated, the majority vote in the council allows opposition parties to control local budgets and meaningfully shift the distribution of resources between schools.

Interviews suggested that maintenance and upkeep of water infrastructure were more intermediate cases. The center similarly dominated large projects, but day-to-day LG water responsibilities were more centralized than running schools. This was because water engineers and bureaucrats were more closely controlled by the Ministry and more regularly cycled than education bureaucrats. As a result, they were more bound by directives than their education counterparts and had less autonomy to go along with opposition plans. As one engineer explained, "Councilors come all the time and whenever they want. We can give them advice, but if their request is financial, then you have to refer it up." An engineer in another opposition LG described how water projects destined for opposition areas may be reallocated by ministries: "Sometimes if someone wants to support an opposition councilor, there might be a conflict and they [the ministry] may want to reallocate the project or they don't want us to work on a project outside of ruling party areas."

Dealing with bureaucrats with competing loyalties to the center like this is a common problem for opposition politicians. Most bureaucrats are loyal to the ruling party, even if the law formally requires they are not party members.[26] 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 one contentious and narrowly opposition LG, cooperation with opposition leadership had left many posts unfilled during my visit after several previous employees had been cycled out to other postings.

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[26] Recent work by investigative journalists in Tanzania suggest that many senior local government bureaucrats are in fact failed CCM legislative and local government candidates.

An opposition councilor in Iringa MC described the problems they faced because of these competing loyalties:

> The work of opposition is a lot, and it is hard. You are not on the payroll of the ruling party. You may work with the bureaucrats, but they may then be called to the central government, and they might be told to stop helping you and have their loyalty questioned... Service delivery bureaucrats are often sent away if they are too helpful. They will be demoted and sent to CCM areas. They bring in more loyal people to replace them from outside the area. You may see a bureaucrat suddenly wearing CCM clothes when the minister is around. They are scared.

This interview was done under Magufuli's highly restrictive regime. However, since decentralisation, another councillor from the North explained, bureaucratic interference has been a fact of life for opposition-controlled areas: "They (the bureaucrats) will try and drag their feet on our policies and do central government policy. These people are stuck in the middle between us and Tamisemi (Local Government Ministry), between the devil and deep blue sea."

Despite this, I find that opposition communities are, in practice, sanctioned less despite these directives and pressures when opposition politicians have local control. According to one Chadema local leader in Moshi, a high-income town in the North: "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."[27] Chadema politicians in opposition LGs talked about their relative ease in securing funding for public goods. Opposition local control denies the autocrat their usual clientelist tools. As one voter in the same 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."[28]

In Iringa, a low-income town in the South of Tanzania, CCM politicians who lost local control in 2015 complained about how opposition control shifted the allocation of resources. When Iringa was under incumbent control, CCM politicians strongly favored CCM areas. After the handover, things changed as one councilor explained, "the problem comes with distribution. Any fund that is directed towards

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[27] Interview #4567.
[28] Interview #3809.

our projects, the opposition party will try and pull it." Another councilor in Iringa affirmed that Chadema had successfully shifted away from the CCM's distributive priorities. When asked if Chadema being in power was bad for the town, they said: "Yes, it's bad. They try and make a lot of decisions, and they are not good ones. There is a lot of discrimination and a lot of political dealings. I can't get resources to my area because it's a CCM area, and my ideas won't be considered." These quotes are important because it indicates that opposition parties, even in low-income places like Iringa, can use their autonomy to change how resources are allocated even when the ruling party disapproves of their choices.

When they have local control, opposition parties can ensure opposition communities are included in the spending of the local government budget and then oversee the bureaucrats to make it more likely that it is implemented. One bureaucrat in an 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.[29] Where opposition politicians and government-appointed technocrats cohabit, central government preferences over which areas receive projects and which are passed over no necessarily longer dominate as opposition politicians become a competing center of power. Under incumbent local control, the regime can use local resources to punish opposition communities. My interviews show that this ability is blunted when opposition parties win local control, providing support for Hypothesis 1a. While they face many hurdles, they can meaningfully shift the distribution of local state resources from the ruling party's desired distribution. The level of de facto rather than de jure decentralization then defines how they can offset or even flip a punishment regime in line with Hypothesis 2. In the following sections, I use the variation I found in my interviews to inform my analysis of administrative data, where I test these two hypotheses quantitatively using data from across Tanzania.

8. Access to Local Public Goods: Evidence from Administrative Data

In this section, I analyze administrative data on local government service provision. I use this data to test whether opposition local control disrupts the regime's punishment regime (H1a) and the extent to which the opposition's ability to do so is contingent on the level of coordination required with the center to provide local government services (H2).

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[29] Interview #1782.

8.1 Data and empirical approach

In this section, I use an original dataset of public good construction and functionality from Tanzania. First, I combine internal government data from several government ministries to produce a geocoded dataset of approximately 80,000 water points, 12,000 primary schools and 4,000 secondary schools built before and since decentralization. For around 90% of these public goods, I have the year of construction/registration.[30] Next, I combine these data with school and water quality data from Tanzania's Open Data Platform to create measures of waterpoint functionality and repair, sixth form classroom construction and school performance from 2012 to 2017.[31] These data give me a fairly comprehensive picture of public goods provision in Tanzania, spanning those goods over which local governments have the most control to those where they have the least. Next, I use ward-level results from 2005, 2010, and 2015 local elections to measure local support. I then use these to calculate which party holds majority control of each local government.[32]

I use this data to assess how the regime can enforce a punishment regime in opposition LGs vs. incumbent-controlled LGs. I select measures of public goods provision, which vary in terms of the level of coordination with the center necessary to change their allocation to assess how the level of de facto decentralization influences the regime's reach and opposition parties' agency. First, I look at the construction of new public goods between 2000 and 2016 (waterpoints, primary schools, and secondary schools), an example of a high coordination de facto decentralized power, to see how local control affects the distribution of these kinds of expensive, lumpy public goods. If Hypothesis 2 holds, I should find that local control has little to no effect on distribution. Second, I use data on waterpoint functionality from 2015 and 2017 to measure in which wards local governments did repair work.[33]

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[30] For schools, I have year of registration. I lag secondary school construction by two years and primary school construction by one year. This coding decision is based on interviews with bureaucrats in the Ministry of Education on the process from allocation of a construction project to date of initial registration with the Ministry. Waterpoint data lists year of construction.

[31] Most of the public goods constructed in my dataset were built before 2015. These measures allow me to study the dynamics of public good provision and funding after 2015 when opposition support became much more widespread, and many more councils became opposition run.

[32] These data are not without its limitations. There is a good chance that some of the dates of construction or registration are 'guesses.' As with all administrative data work on electoral autocracies, there is a risk that these data have been manipulated in some way. That said, this data remains the most comprehensive single administrative data-set available on public good provision in Tanzania. It is important to be up front about the limitations inherent in using administrative data but there is still a lot to learn from it.

[33] 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.

Maintenance of water and use of technical expertise requires moderate coordination with the center as work plans and unit priorities require ministerial sign-off. Thus, if my empirical expectations hold, I would expect to see some evening out of the punishment regime in areas under opposition control versus incumbent control. Finally, I look at school administration data to see how local control affects low coordination of local public good provision. I look at secondary classroom construction between the 2010 and 2015 elections.[34] I also analyze school performance data from 2012 to 2016. I use data on primary school pass rates and the proportion of pupils who achieve satisfactory grades on standardized tests.

If I find the differences in access to state resources by local control and coordination I expect (see Table 1), this lends support to my hypotheses. However, assignment to local control is not random. Politics may differ in opposition and incumbent LGs because of the characteristics of these LGs, influencing voters' willingness to support opposition parties. That means any differences I find may be driven by these characteristics rather than local control. To ameliorate these concerns, I use panel data where possible to isolate the within-unit effect. However, some of my measures are only cross-sectional. Where within-unit analysis is not possible, I include controls for units' demographic characteristics, e.g., population, population density, education level, time and geographic fixed effects where appropriate, to alleviate concerns that these patterns are driven by the difference in need and rural/urban status. My qualitative work in the previous section is also intended to support my account for these differences.
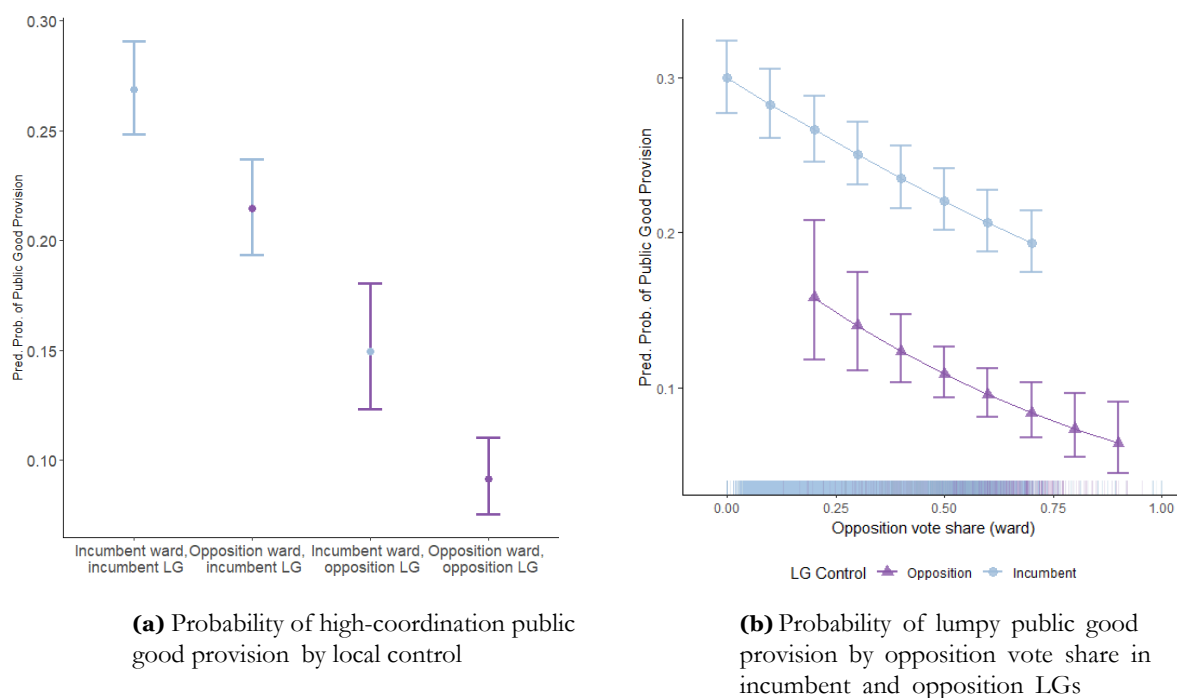
9. Results

9.1 High coordination public goods

First, I start with high coordination public goods provision. I use data on the construction of new schools and waterpoints (gravity pumps, enhanced wells, other forms of improved water sources, etc.) between 2000, when Tanzania decentralized, and 2016. As discussed, building new public goods like

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[34] I 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 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.

these is expensive and requires support, funding and coordination with the central government and relevant ministries. As a result, I expect to find that opposition local control does not disrupt the punishment regime that the CCM can enforce. To analyze this data, I use logistic regression to test if being under opposition versus incumbent local control changes the probability that an incumbent or opposition ward receives a new public good project. I control for demographic and geographic variables at the ward level and include region and year fixed effects. As a robustness test, I also run the OLS models of the same specification. I then also look at the extent to which opposition vote share at the ward level predicts public goods provision in that ward.

Figure 2: Use of High-Coordination Public Goods in Punishment Regime by Local Control

(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

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, and 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 2 shows the results of this analysis. In panel a), I plot the predicted probability of a community receiving a new public good project broken down by local control at the LG level and the party of that ward's local councilor. These results indicate that the CCM can enforce a punishment regime regardless of local control when it comes to high coordination public goods. Incumbent communities are more likely to receive new public good projects under both incumbent local control and opposition local control when compared to opposition communities in the same LG. Opposition communities under incumbent local control actually do significantly better than incumbent communities under opposition local control. This is likely to stem from the substantial cuts in funding that opposition LGs face when local control is handed over. I find similar results in panel b) when I look at ward vote share. Given local control, the higher the opposition vote share, the less likely a community will get a new public goods project.

To ensure that the specification of the model does not drive this result, I run a non-parametric model for robustness in the SI. I use LOESS regression to estimate how CCM vote share at the ward level predicts public goods provision. I find similar results to my baseline results. Figure A2 shows that the probability of public goods provision increases in CCM vote share across all LGs, although this is not strictly monotonic at the distribution extremes. When broken down by local control, I find similar results in Figures A3 and A4.

Thus, I find strong evidence that when coordination with the center is high (and therefore, de facto decentralization is low), opposition parties can do little to affect the distribution of local state resources. This lends support to Hypothesis 2. However, it does not support Hypothesis 1a – that opposition local control disrupts punishment regimes. The results I find in this subsection align with prevailing characterizations of opposition parties in autocracies. Even when they hold office, they have little power, so scholars conclude that opposition parties' participation in the regime is more stabilizing than destabilizing. In the following subsections, I assess whether, with more meaningful decentralization, opposition parties can move the needle and actually constrain the regime's reach and influence.

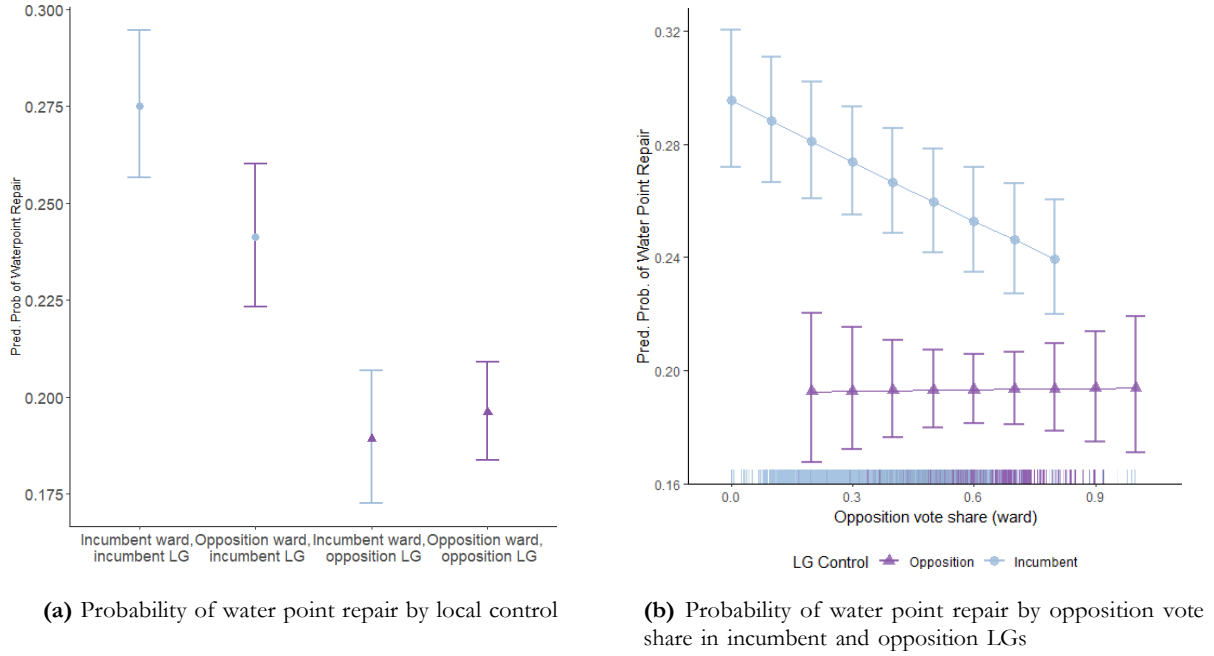### 9.2 Medium coordination public goods

Now I look at public goods provision that requires moderate coordination with the center. If my theory holds and there is more de facto decentralization, opposition parties should be better able to

use their powers to shift how state resources are distributed. If this is the case, opposition parties have the agency to disrupt the regime's clientelist electoral strategies and even access the same resources to curry favor with voters.

To do so, I look at how local governments deploy their technical capacity. Local governments are staffed with bureaucrats with technical expertise that ensure 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 decide which communities' services get prioritized or receive help in an emergency. However, because these officials are subject to ministerial oversight, they have to wrangle with competing instructions from opposition local politicians and their bosses in the ministries. Interviews suggest that these bureaucrats are under pressure from above to prioritize CCM communities and punish opposition communities, especially at election time in all LGs. However, under opposition local control, opposition local politicians can prioritize opposition communities in official budgets and work plans and 'follow up' with bureaucrats to ensure work in opposition communities is done. Thus, opposition local control re-balances priorities and allows opposition parties to offset the punishment regime. In these places, I would expect LGs to direct technical capacity to favor CCM communities less than in incumbent LGs.

I analyze cross-sectional 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 use logistic regression to test if the probability that repair work is done between 2015 and 2017 is higher in opposition communities under opposition local control than if they were under incumbent local control. I control forward demographics, distance to groundwater (to capture difficulty to repair) and legislative vote at the constituency level and include region-fixed effects in some specifications.

Figure 3: Effect of Local Control on Use of Technical Capacity to Sanction

(a) Probability of water point repair by local control

(b) Probability of water point repair by opposition vote share in incumbent and opposition LGs

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.

I plot these results in Figure 3, and the full results are shown in Table A2. Figure 3a) shows that a punishment regime is in operation in incumbent LGs. Figure 3b) shows that repair work on waterpoints is negatively and strongly associated with opposition vote share under incumbent control. However, these plots show that this punishment regime is offset under opposition control. I find that repair work is allocated more evenly with the opposition ward, and the opposition vote share an insignificant predictor of repair under opposition local control. This result is robust to controls, various specifications, and the use of OLS.

The reader may note that less repair work is done overall in opposition LGs. This is because opposition LGs are generally allocated less funding for running costs and staffing. 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, if constrained, power over the allocation of technical capacity.

This subsection provides evidence for my theory. The work of technical bureaucrats in Tanzania's water units resembles a punishment regime under incumbent local control but is fairly even under opposition local control. This suggests that opposition politicians can 'pull the string in their direction' and change how this local state capacity is allocated. This is important because it shows that opposition parties, given even a limited amount of de facto decentralization, can change distributive politics to their advantage. In what remains of this section, I look at what opposition parties can do with local services that require minimal coordination with the center.

9.3 Low coordination public goods

If my theory holds, I would expect opposition parties to be able to 'flip' the punishment regime for those public services that require little coordination with the center. In these instances, the opposition can use the same resources the regime uses to punish opposition voters in most of the country to favor them and punish regime voters. If this is the case, opposition parties in decentralized autocracies need not be the co-opted and non-threatening actors they are often portrayed as in the prevailing literature on authoritarian politics and institutions. Instead, they can engage in clientelist electoral strategies, which may go some way to evening the playing field between opposition and incumbent.

In this subsection, I focus on the running of schools by local governments in Tanzania. School improvement work is done almost exclusively from the local government budget, reducing the central government's spending oversight. Furthermore, school bureaucrats have less ministerial oversight than other more 'technical' service delivery units at the local government level.

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 and an electoral priority for the opposition. In Figure 4, 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 can shift the distribution of local state resources and flip the punishment regime in favor of their own voters.

Figure 4: Secondary School Construction between 2012 and 2016[35]
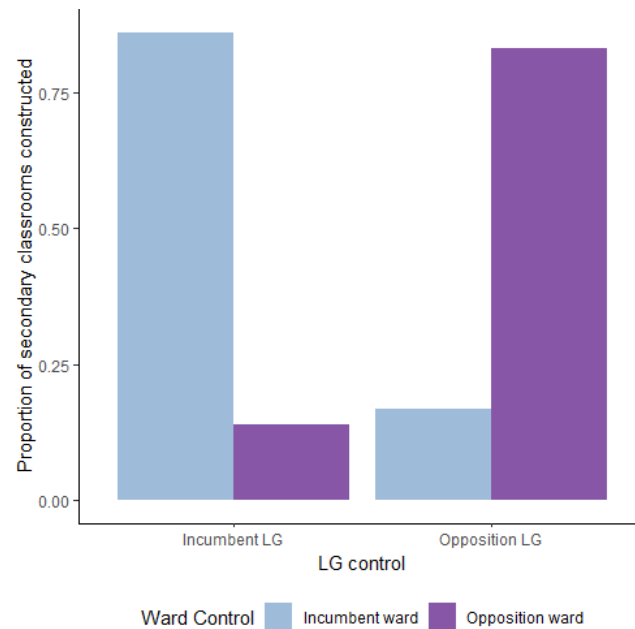
Second, I look at school performance. Many factors determine school performance, and local governments are responsible for several of these: buildings, materials, oversight, fundraising, meals, sanitation, and so on. Local politicians and bureaucrats also determine what schools are prioritized in the budget. Research in education shows that these kinds of inputs can significantly affect children's performance on tests, even in the short term. Therefore, I use school performance results as an indirect way of testing if opposition parties can meaningfully favor schools in opposition communities contrary to the prevailing punishment regime logic in force in the rest of the country. If my theory holds, the regime would like to favor those schools in CCM communities but can only 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.

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[35] This 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 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.

This school performance data is particularly useful because it is panel data which runs before and after a set of local government elections. This allows me to estimate the 'within-school' effect of an LG shifting from incumbent to opposition local control. I present the results of this analysis in Table 3. In Models 5 and 6, I conduct two-way (school, year) fixed effects regressions, including a control for legislative support in Model 6 to ameliorate concerns that national political support may influence public goods provision more than local. I do not include demographic controls in these models because they do not vary within the analysis period, as the census was conducted in 2012. Across both specifications, I find that the interaction term between opposition ward and opposition LG is positive, large, and significant, showing that opposition wards perform relatively better under opposition LGs. The uninteracted opposition ward term is negative and significant, suggesting that opposition wards' schools perform worse under incumbent local control. These results are robust to school and year-fixed effects, which makes it more plausible that we can interpret them as the causal effect of local control. For robustness 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 and find similar results.

Table 3: Relationship between Local Control and School Performance from 2012-2016

	Dependent variable:					
	Pass Rate					
	OLS					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Opposition LG	9.253***	9.239***	2.927***	1.031	0.688	0.660
	(0.883)	(0.912)	(0.934)	(0.955)	(0.791)	(0.788)
Opposition ward	2.308***	3.214***	0.339	−0.578	−1.047**	−1.233**
	(0.458)	(0.461)	(0.465)	(0.466)	(0.502)	(0.492)
Opp LG *Opp ward	4.281***	3.345***	4.346***	3.929***	1.974**	2.050**
	(1.137)	(1.149)	(1.143)	(1.162)	(0.952)	(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 period.

The results indicate that incumbent LGs favor those schools in incumbent areas and opposition LGs favor those in opposition areas. Together with data on classroom building, this subsection demonstrates that with local control, opposition parties significantly influence low coordination public good provision. This lends support to both Hypotheses 1a and 2.

9.4 Discussion

Taken together, the results in this section are very significant in understanding the limits of an autocrat's reach and the agency of opposition parties in decentralized electoral autocracies. While opposition parties are indeed unable to move the needle when it comes to high coordination public goods, they do actually have significant influence over the distribution of the more de facto decentralized provisions. Depending on the level of coordination, they can either offset the punishment regime or flip it on its head. This demonstrates that authoritarian incumbents are meaningfully constrained by opposition office-holding. Opposition local control limits their reach and ability to use their tried and tested clientelist strategies and hands control of these to their opponents.

Scholars of decentralization in democracies may find these results unsurprising as this is just how decentralized service provision is supposed to work. However, these findings are significant because scholars of authoritarianism seldom expect nominally democratic institutions to function like their democratic counterparts. I show here that opposition parties are not hamstrung by their marginalized role in authoritarian systems. Instead, they can use their local powers to engage in clientelist electoral strategies that may allow them to carve a larger role in that system over time. In the final section of this study, I look at the downstream effects of disrupting punishment regimes on voter calculus.

10. Voters' Fear of Sanctioning: Evidence from a List Experiment in Kilimanjaro

I turn to a survey with experimental components conducted in the Kilimanjaro region. The evidence presented so far has primarily focused on measuring differences in access to local public goods and attributing these differences to local control. In this final section, I test the observable implications of my theory for voter calculus. I test Hypothesis 1b – those living under opposition control fear sanctioning or support the opposition significantly less than their peers living under regime control.

I selected Kilimanjaro because it exhibits substantial variation in opposition control at the community and LG levels. 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. Kilimanjaro is in the North of the country, bordering 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, with a population of less than 200 000. The rural LGs in Kilimanjaro are mostly composed of villages of between 500 and 4000 people. All the rural LGs have 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. The Kilimanjaro region is one of the wealthier regions in Tanzania, although there is substantial variation within the region. As such, public goods provision is comparatively less reliant on the state than in other parts of the country, and the autocrat has a weaker capacity to sanction. If sanction risks worry potential opposition voters in a region where the autocrat has a reduced 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. The LGs I selected varied on opposition control at the time.

I conducted a pre-election survey in Kilimanjaro in 2015, selecting three LGs: one opposition and two CCM.[36] In each LG, communities were categorized as opposition or incumbent and then randomly selected from each list. A total of 20 villages were included in the sample, with a total of 766 respondents. Households were selected using the 'random walk' method from the centroid of each village. This survey included list experiments. Respondents are likely to avoid or lie when asked direct questions about sensitive topics, so list experiments use an item count technique, where respondents report several 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 and control groups. 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.

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[36] I do not name LGs due to safety concerns.

How many of these things would you worry about in voting for the opposition?

The sensitive item was:

> **If we vote opposition, my community may lose out; for example, the community may receive fewer projects and grants to improve life here, and 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 the SI (p11).

Before presenting my survey results, I will discuss some qualitative evidence from interviews with voters in the region. Interviews suggested that voters in opposition LGs generally felt freer to openly discuss politics and felt less pressure to keep quiet than those in incumbent LGs. Similarly, moderate voters felt less pressure to stay loyal to the regime. I contend that this is because voters make political decisions with a reduced fear of sanctioning. Interviews clarified 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 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 sanctioning. 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 realized, 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 in the next electoral cycle.

To provide further evidence for H1b, I now turn to my survey data. I use maximum likelihood estimation to identify the estimated proportion of respondents concerned about each kind of sanction,

controlling for standard covariates like age, gender, income, etc. Table A3 shows the estimated proportion of respondents who agree with the sensitive item, i.e., fear community sanctioning, 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 main result in Figure 5. I find that those living in opposition LGs fear community sanctioning less than those in incumbent LGs. The difference between these two values is significant but falls short of the 0.05 level when I include a control for individual partisanship ($p = 0.07$).

This result provides evidence for H2 that local control determines voters' fear of sanctioning. One plausible objection to this finding is that voters in regime LGs might be more skeptical about opposition parties or fear regime reprisals in general. That could mean that the difference I find may be a 'false positive' driven by regime 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 A3. I asked voters the same question but instead included a sensitive item capturing the fear of individual sanction.[37] 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. However, I find no evidence across all specifications that LG control influences 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 H1b.

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[37] The 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."

Figure 5: 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 A3
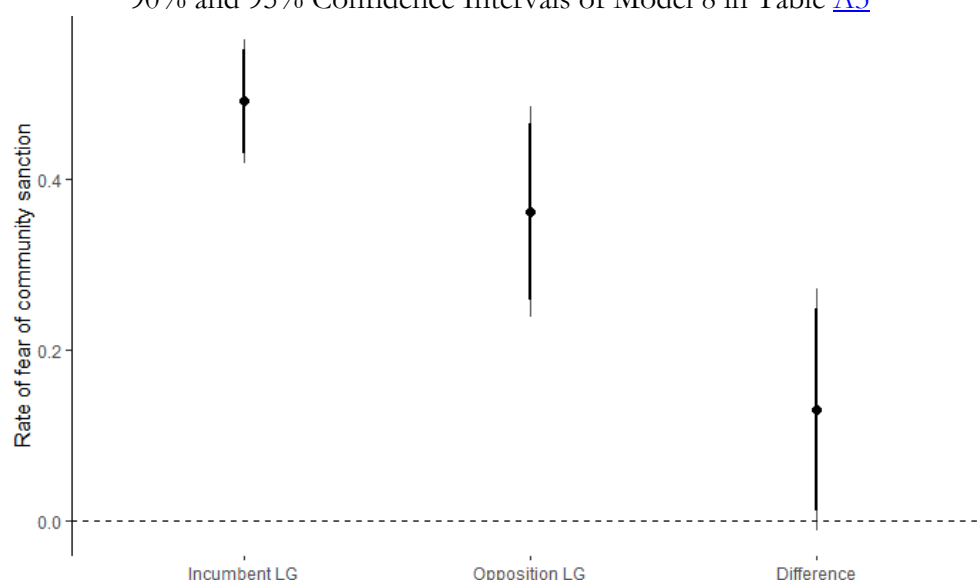

Alongside my qualitative evidence, these results suggest that local control determines the regime's capacity to punish opposition support in Kilimanjaro. These differences in control create radically different environments for opposition supporters across the region. Opposition voters in the North, where 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 change their votes 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. The CCM can control politics far more when they have local control. When they lose local control, it becomes harder for them to contain the spread of opposition support. Figure 6 shows how opposition LG control persisted in Katavi (one of only three opposition LGs in 2005) and Moshi (opposition-controlled after 2010) and spread from there. 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 spread.[38]

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[38] Lucardi (2016) shows local opposition performance can lead to the diffusion of opposition support in electoral autocracies.

Figure 6: 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
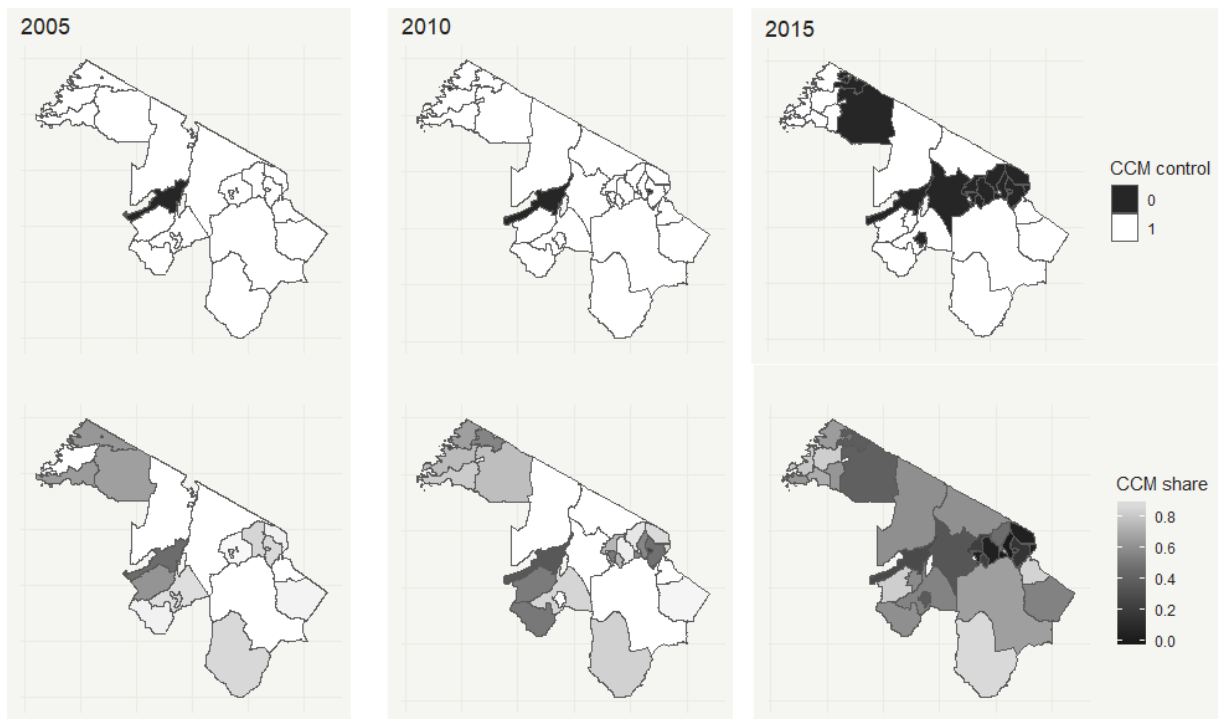
11. Conclusion

In this study, I use interviews and administrative data to show that local control determines how able the regime is to punish opposition support in decentralized electoral autocracies. I demonstrate that the incumbent CCM in Tanzania is constrained in its ability to implement its punishment regime across space when the opposition wins control of LGs. When the autocrat retains control of LGs, it can credibly threaten to sanction disloyal communities. Once the LG is under the opposition, the regime loses control of decentralized resources and hence loses the ability to direct these to sanction disloyal communities to the same extent. Using extensive administrative data, I show that the central government and regime LGs distribute state resources using a clear punishment regime, and interviews underline how central punishment is to the CCM's distribution logic.

However, I find that opposition control undermines this punishment regime. In areas where opposition parties are popular enough to win local office, the autocrat becomes less able to punish opposition support. This changes how we think about regime strategy. Autocrats may win enough votes to maintain an elite coalition at the center, but doing so does not imply they have hegemonic

control over state resources, nor full territorial control. I show that there are areas where the incumbent faces serious limitations on their ability to use 'quieter' forms of coercive distribution. This demonstrates that opposition support does meaningfully constrain electoral autocrats, even when it falls well below the bar for legislative control or presidential victory.

Furthermore, I show that the extent to which the CCM regime is constrained (and conversely, the opposition is empowered) is a function of how decentralized local government is. When local governments can provide public services without extensive coordination with the central government, they can offset and even flip the punishment regime. Using a range of measures of public goods provision, varying by level of de facto decentralization, I demonstrate that opposition parties in Tanzania can move the needle, protect their voters from punishment, and even begin to favor them. The more decentralized a local government, the greater the powers of the state are ceded to opposition parties when they win local control. Importantly, they can then use that to even the electoral playing field.

Consequently, 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. As a result, voters can vote on conscience, making it more likely they will switch their support to opposition parties.

When autocrats retain local control, they can use fine-grained targeting of reward and sanction to 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 using these methods. 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 introducing institutions that can meaningfully empower

autocrats 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 regime hegemony, this study shows that authoritarian institutions do not necessarily have a stabilizing influence on authoritarian power. Instead, local control limits the autocrat'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 the 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

Additional Quantitative Evidence

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

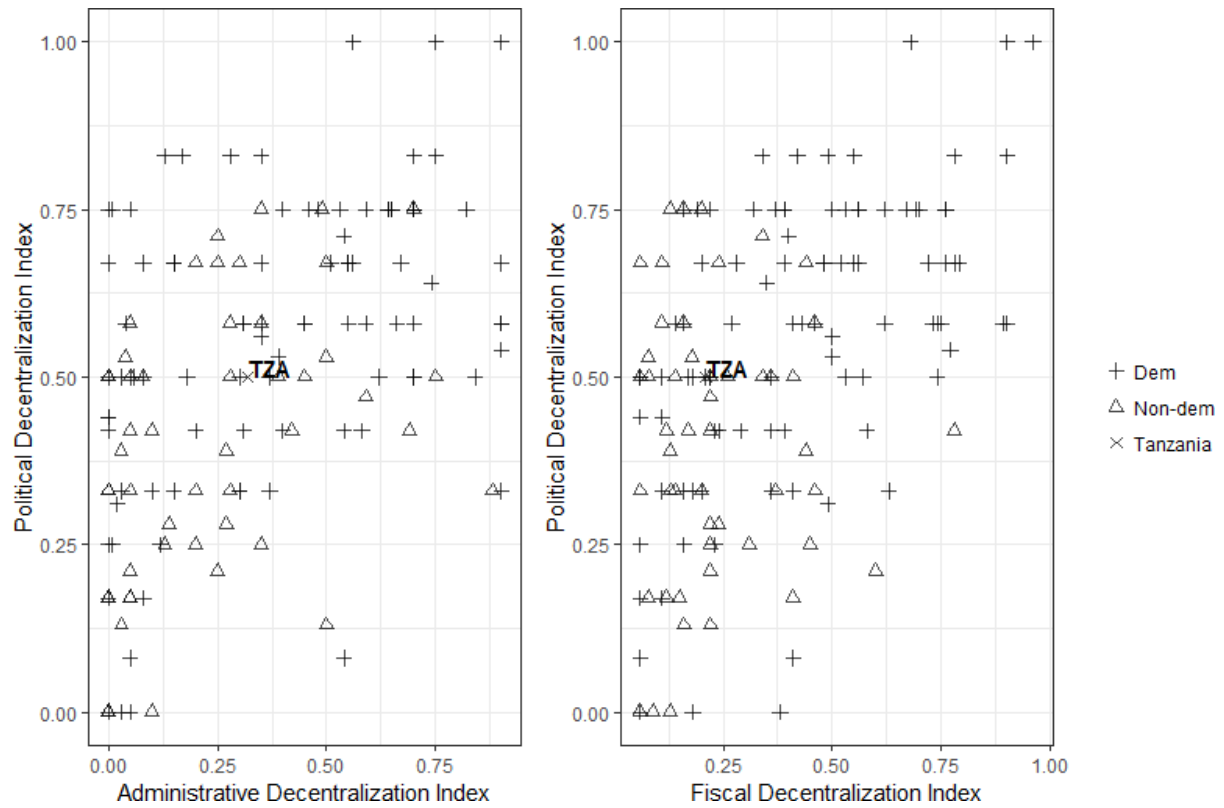**Table A1:** Relationship between local control and secondary classroom construction

	Dependent variable:			
	New classroom constructed			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Opp Ward	0.082	0.081	0.069	0.124
	(0.205)	(0.211)	(0.211)	(0.220)
Opp LG	−1.901*	−1.904*	−1.909*	−1.986*
	(1.014)	(1.018)	(1.019)	(1.018)
Opp Ward*Opp LG	2.148**	2.149**	2.166**	2.150**
	(1.069)	(1.069)	(1.071)	(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.
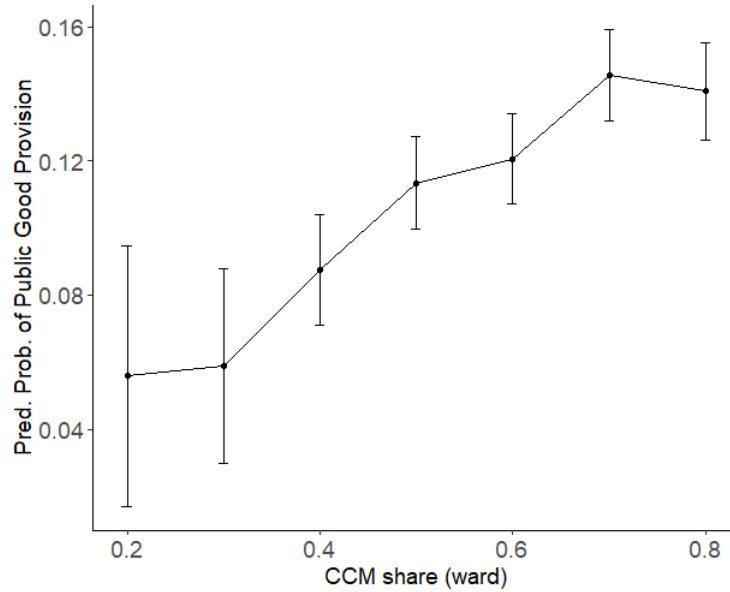
Figure A2: Results of LOESS regression of effect of CCM vote share on predicted probability of public good provision

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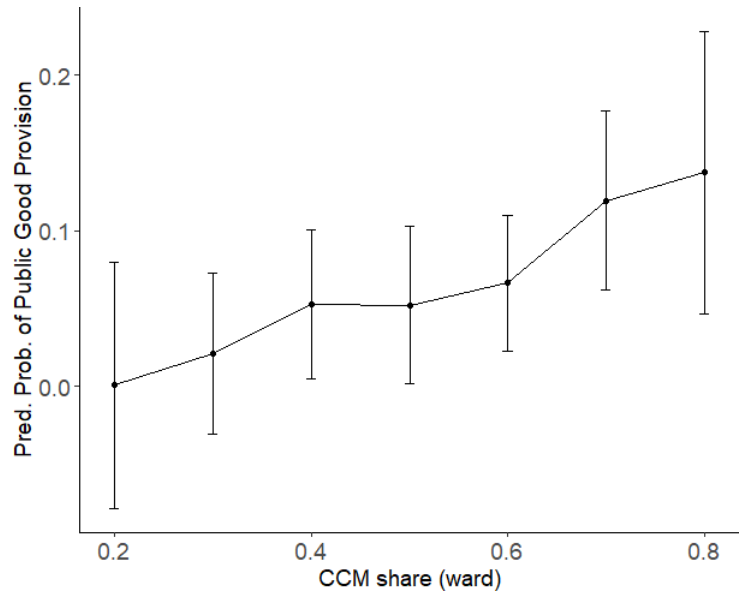

Figure A4: Results of LOESS regression of effect of CCM vote share on predicted probability of public good provision under incumbent local control
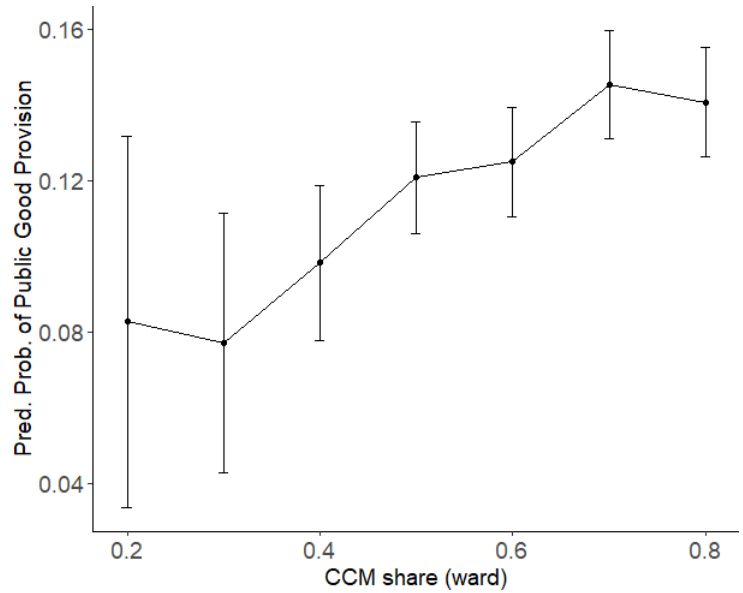
Table A2: Relationship between local control and LG waterpoint repairs

	Dependent variable:		
	Waterpoint repaired		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Opp Ward	−0.065**	−0.177***	−0.170***
	(0.028)	(0.030)	(0.029)
Opp LG	−0.182***	−0.487***	−0.472***
	(0.045)	(0.052)	(0.047)
Opp Ward*Opp LG	0.222***	0.222***	0.118*
	(0.058)	(0.064)	(0.062)
Observations	79,668	79,668	73,774
Controls	N	N	Y
Region fixed effects	N	Y	Y
Note:		*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: Effect of local control on fear of sanctions

| | *MLE estimate of proportion of affirmative responses to the sensitive item* | | | | | | | |
| | **Fear of individual sanction** | | | **Fear of community sanction** | | | | |
	(Model 1)	(Model 2)	(Model 3)	(Model 4)	(Model 5)	(Model 6)	(Model 7)	(Model 8)
LG control: *Incumbent*	0.435***	0.418***	0.417***	0.503***	0.501***	0.486***	0.488***	0.4911***
	(0.040)	(0.039)	(0.040)	(0.037)	(0.038)	(0.037)	(0.036)	(0.037)
Opposition	0.318***	0.304***	0.326***	0.3284***	0.331***	0.334***	0.369***	0.3615***
	(0.064)	(0.063)	(0.067)	(0.0825)	(0.060)	(0.061)	(0.063)	(0.062)
Difference	0.119	0.114	0.091	0.175***	0.169**	0.152**	0.119*	0.1296*
	(0.076)	(0.075)	(0.078)	(0.070)	(0.071)	(0.071)	(0.073)	(0.072)
N	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
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

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. The sections are marked with a thematic title to identify which paragraph each section corresponds to.

CCM advantage in public goods distribution:

Local public goods in Tanzania are allocated through a participatory planning process. Village and street development committees (VDC) draft a plan that 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 levels.

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 the 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 requested from higher levels of the local and national government.

Decentralization and dynamics of public goods 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 punitive as Chadema grew more powerful. The CCM wanted to be seen as 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 the 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 regime 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 funds for their eligible constituents compared to their colleagues in CCM-held parts of the same LG. There is substantial evidence to suggest that autocrats 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 the loss of local institutions restricts their ability to do so using their usual clientelist resources.

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[39] In 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:

1) They do not understand this community

2) Ukawa[40] are promising too much

3) They are inexperienced and may perform poorly in local and national government

4) There are too many divisions within Ukawa already

5) If we vote opposition, my community may lose out; for example, the community may receive fewer projects and grants to improve life here, and 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.

Because of permission limitations from the regional authority, the survey was underpowered as I was only able to go to a small number of communities. I negotiated permission with the regional, local government, ward and community authorities in each EA. Households were selected using 'random walk' from the centroid of each village. Individuals were assigned to treatment or control via a coin flip.

The core of the survey was a short battery of 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

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[40] Ukawa is the opposition coalition headed by Chadema

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.

For inference to hold, two assumptions must hold: the 'no design effects' assumption and the 'no liars' assumption (Li, 2019). The 'no design effects' assumption states that the text of the sensitive item must not affect respondents' answers to control items (ibid). I designed the control items so that they pertained to national-level politics rather than local politics. That means I am confident that the sensitive items on local clientelism did not influence respondents' answers to the control items. The 'no liars' assumption states that respondents must give truthful answers for the sensitive item (ibid). In practice, Li states that the 'no liars' assumption fails if 'a treated respondent who favors all or a large number of control items and the sensitive item may be reluctant to answer truthfully, as it reveals with certainty or a high probability that the respondent favors the sensitive item.' This is sometimes called a ceiling effect. The converse, i.e., where a respondent may not answer truthfully because they would be reluctant to respond positively to any control item, is referred to as a floor effect. Estimation of effects in list experiments is biased if there are floor or ceiling effects. To assess the plausibility, I use the techniques described in Blair and Imai (2010) to assess the risk of floor and ceiling effects in my data. I find no evidence of significant floor or ceiling effects for the two list experiments included in this study.

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). A small number of respondents could not complete the list experiments, and they were dropped from the sample. The rest of the survey included questions on basic demographics, political support, political behavior, community behavior and cooperation and political information.