

A State of Change: District Creation in Kenya after the Beginning of Multi-party Elections

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Abstract

Many developing countries have recently increased the number of their sub-national administrative units. Existing literature explains this phenomenon by suggesting that because new units serve as patronage to an area, they can help a leader meet local demand for state resources or divide opposition elites. These explanations, however, overlook the costs of new administrative units to a leader facing competitive reelection, in part, because they rely largely on evidence from non-competitive electoral systems. I posit that leaders facing competitive reelection create new units selectively, limiting the supply to electorally valuable areas where residents of the split unit can best be swayed to vote for the leader in the upcoming election. I find evidence of these claims using a unique dataset of administrative district creation alongside archival evidence from Kenya during the country's first decade after the return to multi-party elections. This article illuminates the political factors driving decentralization across developing countries that have transitioned to holding multi-party elections.

Keywords

decentralization, democratization, ethnicity, Kenya

Many countries that moved toward democracy during the third wave have increased their number of sub-national administrative units, including more than twenty in sub-Saharan Africa. Although leaders of developing countries have created new units to comply with donor demands for decentralization, there is little evidence that new units were made to explicitly remedy these countries' most pressing administrative concerns (Ayee 2013; Green 2010; Grossman and Lewis 2014; Kasara 2006; Lewis 2014; Malesky 2009; O'Dwyer 2006; Pierskalla 2016).

To explain this phenomenon, I begin from the premise that the creation of a new administrative unit serves as patronage to the receiving area, injecting the area with central government resources and public-sector jobs.¹ Much existing literature has focused on how unit creation can appease local political elites, arguing that leaders create new units to co-opt areas that demand state resources or to "divide-and-rule" areas represented by elites who oppose the government. These findings, however, may be a consequence of an empirical focus on non-competitive electoral systems.² In actuality, many leaders who oversee bouts of unit creation face competitive elections where the threat of losing power is real; they are concerned foremost about their political future.

Accordingly, this paper proposes a new theory on unit creation that takes into consideration the competitive political environment that many leaders who engage in unit creation face. I posit that a leader facing a competitive reelection selectively creates new units based on, first, the importance of the area to winning the election and, second, the likelihood that unit creation will guarantee her the electoral support of those in the new unit, which is based on the magnitude of this patronage gift to the receiving area. This theory, then, helps refine existing explanations for unit creation: leaders use this tool to distribute patronage to co-opt local threats, but these threats vary across political regime.

I examine this theory during Kenya's first decade after the return to competitive multi-party elections in 1992, a period in which the number of administrative districts—the primary tier of local governance—nearly doubled. Using an original time-series dataset of the creation date

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and boundaries of new districts, I find that new units were more likely to be created in electorally valuable areas where the local ethnic group was an indigenous minority. The creation of their own district by President Daniel arap Moi conferred material and symbolic benefits to local inhabitants that Moi expected would ensure the group's electoral support in the upcoming election. I corroborate this quantitative analysis with archival evidence. I also find support for this theory in Ghana.

The results of this study contribute to our understanding of the link between decentralization and democratization. Recent decentralization reforms within developing countries, largely imposed by Western donors and international financial institutions, have been highly politicized (Faguet 2014; Falleti 2010; Riedl and Dickovick 2014). At the same time, many countries in the third wave of democratization have not fully democratized; the plurality of developing countries are hybrid regimes, where elections are competitive but not fully free and fair (Levitsky and Way 2010). This paper suggests that leaders are tilting the playing field to win elections by actively reforming a state's structure. Instead of a progression toward Weberian states as intended by Western donors and international financial institutions, leaders are creating states that are endogenous to their political threats. To the extent that state capacity is being built, it promises to be uneven and instill a bias toward specific sub-national areas.

Literature Review: Unit Creation in Developing Countries

Advocates of administrative unit proliferation cite the potential efficiency of this form of decentralization. Beginning in the 1980s, Western donors and international financial institutions proposed a series of "Structural Adjustment Programs" aimed at remedying the economic stagnation of many developing countries (The World Bank 1994; van de Walle 2001). One key tenant of these reforms has been the decentralization of central government power to better align services with local preferences (Bardhan 2002). Politicians who advocate unit proliferation often claim that this tactic will "bring services closer to the people" (e.g., Aye 2013). Understanding decentralization reforms as an attempt to meet relative efficiency goals, however, implies that the shape of the state institutions we see should be an outcome of attempts to improve governance and public policy. While international financial institutions may provide the initial impetus for state reform, this view fails to take into account the political incentives of the leaders who oversee implementation of these reforms (Boone 2003). In actuality, decentralization in developing countries has often resulted in the creation of costly, ineffective institutions.³

Recent literature on unit creation considers the resulting patronage benefits to an area as a key feature that politicizes decentralization decisions.⁴ New units increase government resources to an area, bringing in a steady stream of central government funds and prompting an increase in the size of the local bureaucracy and service industry. New administrative hires earn a central government salary, injecting central funds into the local economy. Residents of the new unit have less distance to travel to complete administrative tasks, an important consideration given low incomes and poor road conditions in many developing countries.

Given the resulting local benefits described above, a prominent explanation for unit creation considers local demand. Within Uganda, Grossman and Lewis (2014) argue that local elites in marginalized areas demand units from the leader as a way to alleviate this marginalization.⁵ The leader acquiesces to almost all demands because this type of decentralization actually reduces the bargaining power of sub-national units against the center, as there are now more units which individually hold less clout. They also find that unit creation increased President Museveni's local vote share, thus allowing him to continue dominating elections and crowd out the emergence of a viable opposition.

An additional explanation for administrative unit proliferation is that leaders create new units (and thus distribute patronage) to fragment the opposition—a modern-day "divide-and-rule" strategy. Malesky (2009) argues that province creation in Vietnam weakened regional opposition elites, which allowed reformers to dominate the inner circle of the Vietnam's Communist Party. Within sub-Saharan Africa, a similar "divide-and-rule" tactic would mean splitting areas inhabited by opposition ethnic groups. Green (2010) finds that Museveni created new districts to split off the support of ethnic elites associated with the opposition.

Existing literature thus largely views unit creation as an exchange between the center and local areas, where the center bequeaths central resources and, in return, local areas or elites give support. This literature assumes that the leader has long time horizons and recourse to punish areas and their elites who renege on this bargain. This assumption is valid for the non-competitive contexts studied by existing literature where presidents or parties expect their tenure to extend beyond an upcoming election (in Uganda, Museveni has won 59%–76% of the vote in each election; Vietnam is a one-party regime).

But many leaders overseeing bouts of unit creation do not have such long time horizons. For instance, of the twenty-five African countries that Grossman and Lewis (2014) document as having experienced unit proliferation, ten are classified as competitive authoritarian regimes and two as democracies (at the time of unit proliferation).

Nine experienced electoral turnovers where presidents or their parties were voted out of office. Thus, it is unclear whether the lessons from existing literature apply to contexts in which leaders face competitive elections—where elections can plausibly depose the president or her party. In these contexts, the ability of a president to punish reneging areas after an election is uncertain, given the uncertainty of her tenure in office. A second assumption within this literature is that the “supply” of units is largely unconstrained. But as I discuss below, leaders likely have a finite supply of units and thus dole them out with this constraint in mind.

Theory: Unit Creation as Selective Patronage

I present a theory of unit creation for leaders facing competitive reelection who are in control of the state’s administrative structure. In particular, I theorize unit creation for countries where ethnicity is politically salient, as in much of sub-Saharan Africa. Although the theory follows existing work that treats unit creation as patronage, it departs from earlier literature in incorporating a leader’s inability to punish “reneging” areas and her limited supply of new units.⁶ I argue that a leader facing competitive reelection will focus unit creation on those areas that are both key to winning the election and where a new unit promises to have a large likelihood of swaying the area.

Unit creation as patronage is a useful strategy for leaders facing competitive elections for three reasons. First, unit creation acts as a local public good, as established by existing literature. Unit creation allows a leader to distribute government resources to many voters at once, a necessity when more individual forms of clientelism are unavailable.⁷ Second, unit creation as patronage is useful for leaders in developing countries because it gives the semblance that the leader is complying with demands from international financial institutions and Western donors to decentralize their states (van de Walle 2001). This form of decentralization has been praised by external actors, in part because leaders in developing countries continually use rhetoric of unit creation as a beneficial public-sector reform (Green 2010). Third, incumbents have a monopoly on this good. While opposition candidates can promise to create units after their election, they cannot deliver before the election.

At the same time, features of unit creation make a leader facing a competitive reelection reluctant to engage in this strategy. A leader’s ability to punish “reneging” areas is not perfect: a leader cannot punish if she loses power. While one equilibrium might be to create units everywhere, leaders ultimately have a finite supply. Although unit creation can help meet donor demands for decentralization, other prescribed structural adjustment

programs cap the total amount of unit creation a leader can engage in: this form of decentralization actually increases the size of the public sector—through the hiring of more bureaucrats—and government debts—through the creation of a new unit that is entitled to central government resources.

Given this limited supply, a leader will target new units to areas inhabited by ethnic groups whose votes can be won. Ethnic groups tend to be both geographically concentrated and to vote as a bloc precisely because politicians can easily target patronage goods to an area, and consequently, a group; ethnic group preferences are based less on programmatic concerns, but instead on the perception of each candidate’s favoritism—and willingness to deliver patronage—toward the group (e.g., Bates 1983; Posner 2005). Ethnic groups who have a candidate in the race tend to vote at high rates for their co-ethnic. These groups are said to be “aligned” with their co-ethnic candidate (and “misaligned” from the other candidate).⁸ But other “unaligned” (or swing) ethnic groups can be co-opted and deliver support for a candidate.⁹ In other words, while it is clear how aligned groups will vote, patronage can potentially sway unaligned groups to support any candidate. With a limited supply of units, a leader will largely avoid unit creation in areas inhabited by her aligned or misaligned groups where electoral outcomes are largely set and instead focus unit creation in areas inhabited by unaligned groups. In determining which unaligned groups to target, a leader weighs which groups receive larger marginal utility from a new unit, and thus will more likely support her in the upcoming election. Leaders will create new units for those groups who value the units the most, similar to the selective targeting of the poor in patronage models (Stokes et al. 2013). Groups value the material benefits of new units but they may also receive symbolic benefits from official state recognition. The value of a group’s symbolic benefits will depend on their previous symbolic marginalization which depends on, among other things, previous persecution, their existing level of state recognition, or loss of territory to encroaching groups. I consider marginal material and symbolic utility in turn.

Material marginalization is highest among local ethnic minority groups within an existing administrative unit. Many existing administrative units contain multiple ethnic groups. Sometimes this is because of historical settlement patterns, with each group being “indigenous” to the area within the unit they reside. In addition, a unit may have large communities of “non-indigenous” groups that migrated to areas within the unit for personal, economic, or political reasons. Regardless of why a parent unit contains multiple groups, the unit’s *local ethnic majority* often boxes out the unit’s *local ethnic minority* from receiving the resources that are distributed within that

unit. Material marginal utility from receiving a new unit, then, is highest among a local ethnic minority group: when a new unit is created around a local ethnic minority, the group is now ensured central government resources and autonomy in unit-wide decisions.

However, symbolic benefits are largest for local ethnic minorities that are indigenous to the area.¹⁰ In agrarian and rural societies, land is central to livelihood and ethnic identity. Indigenous local ethnic minorities may feel an existential threat that they or their ancestral land will be subsumed by a larger, neighboring group (this is often the local ethnic majority).¹¹ The creation of a new unit for an indigenous ethnic group implies that the state recognizes the group and the area they inhabit. By giving an indigenous local ethnic minority group a unit that conforms to their “homeland,” the leader helps ensure the differentiation between the local minority and neighboring groups. This symbolic recognition, apart from the material benefits discussed earlier, serves to wed the group’s identity with the leader, as group members associate their new higher stature and official state recognition with the leader.

For these same reasons, units have less symbolic value for a non-indigenous local ethnic minority group whose homeland is elsewhere in the country. Furthermore, unit creation has a lower marginal utility for a local ethnic majority group; they do not gain the same symbolic value from an additional unit, and though unit creation entitles them to more state resources than they enjoyed before the reform, the group receives a steady stream of resources regardless. Opposition candidates, who themselves have a finite amount of resources, target patronage to larger ethnic groups in an attempt to create their winning coalition (Arriola 2012) which tend to already have their own unit.¹² Larger ethnic groups, then, are not only more costly to buy because other candidates are vying for their votes, but unit creation will not wholly satisfy their patronage demands because of the marginally fewer benefits unit creation imparts to them.

The main hypothesis of this theory, then, is that leaders facing competitive reelection will create new administrative units among areas dominated by unaligned indigenous local ethnic minority groups within their homeland areas. While this hypothesis may seem narrow, in actuality, it has broad applicability within sub-Saharan Africa, the world region that has seen the largest amount of unit proliferation. Most countries have numerous ethnic groups that are a minority within their existing unit, as in the Kenyan and Ghanaian examples examined below.

The hypothesis put forward gives different predictions than existing work about where we should expect leaders to create new units. Green (2010) predicts that new units will be concentrated in areas aligned with the opposition,

whereas I suggest that leaders target areas dominated by unaligned (indigenous local ethnic minority) groups. Grossman and Lewis (2014) predict that new units are responses to local demand, whereas I predict that new units are limited to helping the leader maintain political power. Furthermore, they hypothesize that units are created for local ethnic minorities; however, I hypothesize that a leader will limit creation of new units to *indigenous* local ethnic minorities.¹³

A country’s specific electoral rules can also determine whether some unaligned or local ethnic minority groups are more important than others. In countries with regional voting requirements (as in Kenya, described below), leaders will further target new units to those unaligned groups located in areas necessary to surpass the winning requirements. On the contrary, in countries with first-past-the-post systems, all else being equal, there is no reason to expect that a leader will prefer some groups to others solely based on where within the country they reside.

One implication of the theory is that only leaders facing competitive reelection, or leaders in a strong, institutionalized party that is up for reelection, will engage in this strategy. Leaders in weak parties who are in their lame-duck term have little need to win popular support.¹⁴ But because they still have the authority to create units, they may choose to engage in unit creation as patronage to overcome other political constraints that they may face before their time in office is over.

Background Information on Kenyan Case

Kenyan Administrative Districts and Local Ethnic Minorities

The Kenyan state is centralized and unitary, organized into five administrative tiers. In order of size, these are the province, district, division, location, and sub-location. By the country’s return to multi-party elections in 1992, the country’s forty-one districts, which had all been around since the independence era, were the principal administrative tier at which the state governed the population and dispensed central resources (Barkan and Chege 1989). The central government allocates each district a lump sum of money to be used on internal infrastructure and development projects. Disbursements for specific projects are determined by each district’s political and administrative elites at district funding meetings. Furthermore, recruitment for coveted public-sector jobs—such as teachers, nurses, and police officers—occurs at the district level.

District boundaries by 1992 were largely an outgrowth of boundaries from the colonial era, which closely followed the “homelands” of the country’s different ethnic

groups—indeed, many districts were named for the largest ethnic group living there. At the same time, complete ethnic separation was not possible. Although administrative elites in the colonial era attempted to ensure the ethnic homogeneity of districts, more than half of all districts were home to a local ethnic minority that comprised at least 5 percent of the district population.¹⁵ Kenya has more than forty ethnic groups and most comprise only a fraction of the national population. Smaller groups were considered too small to warrant their own district and were granted, instead, their own lower-tiered administrative division within a district that one of the country's larger ethnic groups dominated. By 1992, the local ethnic majority in thirty districts was a local ethnic majority in another district. In addition, many larger ethnic groups migrated to other parts of the country after independence. In many cases, these communities became large enough to comprise a district local ethnic minority, even though they were not indigenous to the area.

Transition to Multi-party Elections

Kenya transitioned to multi-party elections in 1992, as a result of external demands for political liberalization. President Daniel arap Moi, an ethnic Kalenjin who had led the country's one-party authoritarian regime under the Kenya African National Union (KANU) since 1978, contested for reelection in 1992 and 1997, and won both times. That said, KANU was a weak party that was held together largely through Moi's personalistic ties and state-funded patronage (Hornsby 2011; Widner 1992). During these years, Kenya is best classified as a competitive authoritarian regime (Levitsky and Way 2010). Each election only had a handful of viable opponents with sufficient financial resources and political clout to credibly challenge Moi.¹⁶ These viable opponents in 1992 were Mwai Kibaki, representing the Democratic Party (DP), and Kenneth Matiba, representing the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy–Asili (FORD-A). The 1997 election again pitted President Moi against Kibaki. Moi stepped down in 2002, following promises as early as 1998 that he would not run again.

Under Kenya's electoral rules, a successful presidential candidate had to win a plurality of the votes nationwide and at least 25 percent of the votes in five of the country's eight administrative provinces (one administrative tier higher than districts). This "25 percent rule" was considered to be a larger hurdle than the plurality rule for presidential candidates throughout the 1990s because of the ethnic diversity of each province, and thus created the need to build a coalition comprising many different groups.¹⁷ In fact, though Moi handily won the plurality of votes in each of his reelections, he only met the 25 percent threshold in five provinces each election.

Multi-party Elections and the Impetus for District Creation

Archival material on one local ethnic minority, the Tharaka within Meru District, helps demonstrate that the return to multi-party elections was the impetus for district creation, and that the creation of new units was, in part, an attempt to co-opt indigenous local ethnic minorities. I focus on this case as its creation is the best documented within the Kenyan archives.¹⁸

There were numerous requests for new districts made during Moi's one-party authoritarian regime (1978–1992), yet none succeeded during these years. This was the case for demands made by Tharaka residents within Meru District. The majority ethnic group in the district was the Meru, who comprised 89 percent of the population. The Tharaka comprised 7.2 percent of the district population and 2.2 percent of the larger Eastern Province (1989 census). Tharaka residents petitioned President Moi for a new district throughout his tenure under one-party rule. Residents personally asked him during his rallies in the area,¹⁹ Tharaka elites made resolutions within district meetings claiming that a new district would improve "administrative expediency" in the area,²⁰ and civil society groups wrote letters arguing that a new district would allow for the "[d]ecentralization of services with resultant development activities as at the moment, the outlying areas are marginalized in favor of Meru Town [the district capital]."²¹ But government elites denied the requests for the district citing the financial costs, claiming that "at the moment, the government funding levels does not allow us to initiate new projects."²² As of late 1991, there were no definitive plans to create a new district.²³

In the run-up to the 1992 election, it was unclear which candidates would meet the 25 percent threshold in Eastern Province. There were no concentrations of Kalenjins or Kikuyus (aligned with Moi and the opposition, respectively) within Eastern Province, meaning that none of the viable candidates could make credible ethnic appeals there. Instead, the government's electoral strategy in the province was twofold. First, Moi attempted to win votes from the province's largest ethnic groups. The Kamba were 54 percent of the province's population, and the Meru 27 percent. But the voters of these larger ethnic groups were more costly to buy because opposition candidates were directing their patronage appeals within Eastern Province to these same groups. DP candidate Kibaki, especially, was targeting the Meru and specifically the Imenti, the largest and most politically dominant Meru subgroup, with patronage promises before the 1992 election (Kanyinga 2000; Throup and Hornsby 1998). Second, Moi attempted to solidify KANU support among local

Table 1. District Splits by Province Type and Electoral Period.

Province status	Parent districts	New districts (1992)	New districts (1993–1997)	New districts (1998–2002)
Aligned	22	1	4	3
Misaligned	6	0	2	0
Unaligned	13	5	11 ^a	4 ^a
Total	41	6	17	7

This table summarizes unit creation by province status and electoral period.

^aOne district that was officially opened in 1998 began splitting before the 1997 elections. The district is counted as having split in the 1993–1997 period (Wave 2).

ethnic minority groups in the province to ensure meeting the 25 percent threshold, given the inability to count on votes from the province's largest ethnic groups.

It is within this context that Tharaka-Nithi District was created in June 1992. In discussing unit creation in the area, the head administrator of Eastern Province wrote to the Permanent Secretary in charge of administrative units (and their creation) claiming, "The residents themselves of the area are KANU supporters, and if we could divide [their existing units], this will be quite an asset to us politically . . . another additional asset to the ruling party."²⁴ In describing the creation of the district, the administrator wrote,

[The people of Tharaka-Nithi] specifically requested your officers to be given their own district and they have received the news of the creation of the new district with a lot of jubilation. They were fed up being administered through Meru District headquarters which is situated within the [sub-group] of the Imenti.²⁵

President Moi and numerous political elites attended the three-day "opening ceremony" for the district, whereby they stressed the area's ethnic and political distinctness from the rest of Meru District. Moi and other political elites told the Tharaka that they were now "free" of the Imenti and should thus reward Moi electorally, the patron who granted them a district.²⁶ In drawing Tharaka-Nithi's final boundaries, government elites specifically sought to make the district for the Tharaka and exclude neighboring areas that had Imenti residents because the ensuing "political and tribal wrangles would kill the good spirit the people already have in the new district."²⁷

The archival material thus supports two central tenets of the theory. First, though the Tharaka had demanded a new unit for years, it was not supplied until it was politically expedient for Moi. Second, Moi stressed the symbolic meaning of the new unit by reiterating the group's distinctiveness from the Meru and by ensuring that the area corresponded to their, and only their, homeland. While this is only one example of district creation for a local ethnic minority, similar patterns can be seen in aggregate data on districts created by President Moi during this period as explained in the next section.

District Creation under President Moi

Overview of District Creation

I construct a time-series dataset of district creation in Kenya from 1992 to 2002 using archival administrative records that list the country's districts at that point in time. I summarize district creation under President Moi in Table 1.²⁸ The table indicates the number of new districts created by province status and electoral period. Three provinces—Coast, Northeastern, and Rift Valley—are classified as aligned either because it was majority Kalenjin, Moi's co-ethnics, or was populated by ethnic groups that had aligned with the Kalenjin since the pre-independence era (Anderson 2005; Hornsby 2011). Furthermore, Moi won the province and no other candidate met the 25 percent threshold. Two provinces—Central and Nairobi—are classified as misaligned, as they contained a high percentage of Kikuyus, co-ethnics of the opposition, and Moi came in last among the viable candidates in 1992. Three provinces—Eastern, Nyanza, and Western—are classified as unaligned (*Unaligned Province*) because at least one of the province's ethnic groups that comprised more than 25 percent of the population was unaligned. Furthermore, Moi did not come in first or last place, or more than one candidate met the 25 percent threshold. Given Kenya's electoral rules, these are the provinces where meeting the 25 percent threshold was in doubt for President Moi in the run-up to the 1997 election.²⁹

The table suggests that district creation during these years follows the tenets of the theory. First, the majority of districts were created *before* President Moi's final reelection campaign, suggesting an electoral logic to district creation. Second, the majority of district creation occurred in the country's three unaligned provinces while the majority of districts in aligned and misaligned provinces were never split.

Empirical Strategy

The following quantitative analysis is broken into three waves. Wave 1 includes those districts created before the

1992 election, Wave 2 includes those districts created in-between President Moi's electoral campaigns (1993–1997), and Wave 3 includes the districts created from 1998 to 2002. The unit of analysis is the division-wave.³⁰ The dependent variable is whether an administrative division (which is one tier lower than a district) “split” from a parent district to become part of a new district in a particular wave. I use a standard logistic model where I cluster standard errors at the original district level (those units in place before 1992) to account for concerns about the independence of geographically proximate units.³¹

I determine the presence of a local ethnic minority using ethnicity information from a division-level sample of the Kenyan 1989 census, the most recent census before unit creation began. I code a division as having a local ethnic minority if the division's largest ethnic group is different from the most populous ethnic group within the district. Of the 255 divisions in each wave, I count thirty divisions that contain a local ethnic minority in Wave 2 and twenty-five in Wave 3. The theory indicates that new units should be created in areas where the local ethnic minority is indigenous to the area so I further code whether the local ethnic minority lives in their “homeland.” I use the 1962 census to determine whether the division was dominated by the same local ethnic minority group in the pre-independence era. The main explanatory variable is an interaction term between *Local Ethnic Minority–Homeland* and an indicator variable for whether the division is located in an *Unaligned Province* as defined above because the theory predicts that unit creation should only occur in areas that are both dominated by an indigenous local ethnic minority and in an electorally valuable part of the country. As an additional test, I rerun the regressions where the main explanatory variable is *Local Ethnic Minority–Not Homeland*. The theory predicts that this variable (and its interaction with *Unaligned Province*) should not be significant.

I control for alternative explanations based on past work on unit creation. To test if district creation was driven by administrative concerns, I include the logged division area (in square kilometers) and 1989 population (*larea* and *lpop*). The model includes the percentage of residents within a division who use electricity (*Electricity*) or piped water (*Piped*) as a proxy for economic marginalization.³² It may be the case that a division's political elites were able to lobby for districts so I include a dummy variable for whether a division's Member of Parliament (MP) was a cabinet minister (*Minister*). Because this is a panel dataset, I control for whether a division was split in a previous wave (*Previous Split*) and for its lagged vote share for President Moi (*Lagged Vote Share*).³³ I list summary statistics in the Supplemental Information (SI; <http://prq.sagepub.com/supplemental/>).

In the ideal, I would run the model with all above variables and controls during both Waves 1 and 2, as Moi was running for reelection in 1992 and 1997. However, it is not possible to compute *Unaligned Province* nor the control variable *Lagged Vote Share* for the run-up to the 1992 election (Wave 1) because there do not exist reliable measures of support for Moi during the one-party authoritarian era. For Wave 1, I run a simplified model where the main explanatory variable is only *Local Ethnic Minority–Homeland*. The full analysis begins with Wave 2. The analysis also leverages unit creation in Wave 3, those years during Moi's lame-duck session. Because Moi announced soon after his 1997 victory that he would not contest in 2002, we should not expect unit creation to follow the strategic electoral logic delineated by the theory above.

Results

The results, listed in Table 2, provide strong and consistent evidence for the theory. *Local Ethnic Minority–Homeland* for the Wave 1 analysis is in the expected positive direction and significant. For Wave 2, the interaction term is in the expected positive direction and significant. Furthermore, the lower order terms are not significant, indicating that Moi did not target unit creation solely to divisions in electorally valuable areas nor to local ethnic minority groups, but only to those local ethnic minority groups whose votes would help him meet the 25 percent threshold. In the SI, I rerun these models with *Local Ethnic Minority–Not Homeland* as the main independent variable. I find a strong *negative* relationship between the term and unit creation. This result indicates that Moi did not create new units among all local ethnic minorities, but only where there was both a material and symbolic value. Instead, Moi may have been wary of creating a unit for a non-indigenous group outside their homeland as this may have created a backlash by the area's indigenous residents.

The results from Wave 3 do not follow the patterns exhibited by earlier waves.³⁴ The interaction term for Wave 3 is not significant, suggesting that Moi did not follow the same electoral logic in doling out districts during these years. The predicted probability of a local ethnic minority living in their homeland within a swing province receiving a new district over a local ethnic minority living in their homeland within an aligned or misaligned province is 66.0 percent in Wave 2 (95% confidence interval [CI] = [31.7%, 91.7%]) and 0 percent in Wave 3 (95% CI = [–0.0%, 0.0%]).

Instead, the positive direction and significance of *Minister* in Column 3 indicates that Moi created new units for political elites during Wave 3. In explaining this result, existing scholarship points to the increased

Table 2. District Split on Division Ethnic Characteristics.

Variable Name	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3
<i>Local Ethnic Minority–Homeland</i>	3.05*** (0.83)	1.75 (1.36)	–15.13*** (1.08)
<i>Unaligned Province</i>		0.54 (0.78)	1.25 (0.80)
<i>Local Ethnic Minority–Homeland · Unaligned Province</i>		18.33*** (1.42)	–1.12 (1.38)
<i>Minister</i>		–0.42 (0.86)	1.54* (0.69)
<i>Electricity</i>	–2.32* (1.16)	0.17 (1.13)	–3.04 (1.80)
<i>Piped</i>	4.66*** (1.27)	0.79 (1.30)	2.16 (1.78)
<i>lpop</i>	4.64*** (1.05)	2.40* (1.07)	0.63 (0.83)
<i>lsqkm</i>	–0.55 (0.71)	0.08 (0.61)	–0.48 (0.57)
<i>Lagged Vote Share</i>		0.37 (1.42)	0.90 (1.50)
<i>Previous Split</i>		–17.78*** (1.08)	–2.10 (1.14)
<i>Intercept</i>	–24.17*** (6.11)	–14.62* (6.62)	–5.20 (4.46)
Number of observations	255	255	255

Logit regressions of whether a division split to create a new district in a particular wave on division characteristics. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the parent district level.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

strength of the legislature after the beginning of multi-party elections.³⁵ KANU dropped to 53 percent of the legislature in the 1992 session and just 50 percent in the 1997 session. With their numbers, opposition MPs implemented internal reforms to strengthen parliament and initiated multiple waves of constitutional reform to limit executive power.³⁶ To ensure a legislative majority, Moi needed to dole out patronage to KANU MPs to ensure that they did not cross the aisle as well as to opposition MPs with significant influence that were willing to cross into, or at least vote with, KANU.³⁷ Indeed, 1997 third-party candidate Raila Odinga and the twenty-one MPs on his National Democratic Party ticket entered into a parliamentary coalition with KANU after the election and helped limit constitutional reform. In return, Odinga asked for patronage goods including a ministerial position and that Moi split his familial home district of Siaya, as well as neighboring Kisumu district. Yusif Haji, an Assistant Minister in the Office of the President and a prominent leader of the Somali parliamentary delegation, asked Moi to create a new district for Somalis (Kasara 2006). Haji remained a steadfast supporter of Moi in parliament and helped oppose the introduction of significant formal constraints on executive power.

Extensions

Effects of Unit Creation

I provide suggestive evidence that district creation in the run-up to both of President Moi's 1992 and 1997 reelection campaigns increased his vote share in the receiving areas in the SI. I also provide evidence that unit creation had no electoral effect on the "parent" district. Separately,

I present evidence that Moi only slightly punished new districts that did not increase vote share for him by slightly reducing their central allocations.

District Creation under Moi's Successor

District creation in Kenya continued after Moi left office. Mwai Kibaki, Moi's main opposition candidate in 1992 and 1997, won the 2002 election with 66 percent of the vote. Kibaki was elected by a multi-ethnic coalition that had support from the country's largest ethnic groups (Arriola 2012). By 2007, however, this coalition broke down and Kibaki faced a competitive reelection campaign against Raila Odinga. Head-to-head polls in the run-up to the election showed a dead tie or gave Odinga a narrow advantage.

Among numerous other strategies that he employed to win votes, Kibaki began to promise new districts to areas inhabited by unaligned ethnic groups in the lead-up to the election. Just weeks before the election, the number of proclaimed districts had more than doubled from 71 to 145. Of the more than seventy districts he announced, only five were in his home (aligned) province. He only announced three in areas dominated by the misaligned Luo, co-ethnics of Odinga, despite persistent demand. Instead, Kibaki, like Moi, announced many districts among unaligned indigenous local ethnic minority groups. Importantly, because Moi had created districts for the majority of local ethnic minority groups, Kibaki targeted smaller sub-ethnic groups or even clans.³⁸ As under Moi, these districts were in a (sub) group's homeland and were often named after the (sub) group to further impart symbolic benefits to the group. Overall, district creation during Kibaki's first term implies that the same electoral logic as had persisted

under Moi held. New units largely went to unaligned groups that would receive the material marginal benefit from a new unit and whose votes were up for grabs.

While it may seem that Kibaki did not have a cost constraint for creating new districts, in reality, his constraint was so high that most new districts were not operational before the 2007 election. Budgetary allocations from 2007 to 2008 reveal that money was only allocated to districts that had been in existence since 2002. Most new districts did not have sufficient staff to open the district headquarters until 2009. Furthermore, in 2009, the Kenyan High Court declared the unilateral creation of districts by a president unconstitutional. The court declared that presidents only had the authority to “gazette” a new district, or make known the government’s intention to create it. Final legal approval ultimately rested with the legislature (this rule was bypassed completely under Moi). In a compromise with Kibaki to approve those districts that he had gazetted, parliament pushed through a new unit creation policy stating that “every constituency is a district and every district a constituency.” By 2012, Kenya had 290 districts based largely of parliamentary constituencies. Thus, while district creation under Kibaki’s first term was similar to Moi’s and followed the contours of the theory, units were created in his second (lame-duck) term in an attempt to appease parliament.

Since then, districts have become less relevant as units of governance *because of* rampant proliferation. With passage of Kenya’s new constitution in 2010, and full promulgation in 2013, the main tier of governance shifted to the newly created counties. District proliferation since 1992 made it difficult for the state to govern effectively through the multitude of districts, which not only were significantly smaller than before but lacked capacity. Indeed, Kenya’s counties have the same boundaries as districts in 1992 and are governed as they had been before proliferation (Hassan 2015).

Unit Creation in Greater Accra Ghana

In this section, I briefly examine unit creation in another country—Ghana—to show how the theory travels. In Ghana, the number of administrative districts has increased from 65 to 212 since the country transitioned to multi-party elections in 1992. In line with the theory, and similar to the Kenyan case, district creation spiked during election years (Ayee 2013). Yet, despite this tripling of administrative units, many communities and traditional leaders complain that the government has not responded to all of their unit creation demands (Ayee et al. 2011).³⁹

As in Kenya, many of the new Ghanaian districts were created specifically for local ethnic minorities in their

“homeland.” This is most clearly seen in the Greater Accra region (regions are one administrative tier higher than districts). The region has urbanized rapidly over the past twenty years making the indigenous Ga ethnic group a minority both in the region and within districts in the region as migrants from the rest of the country settle in the city.⁴⁰ According to the 2010 census, the Ga comprise 27.4 percent of the city’s population and 7.4 percent of the country’s population. The Ga are unaligned with the county’s two major political parties and have swung between them since elections began.

As the theory predicts, most of Greater Accra’s new districts were carved out specifically for the Ga. In the year leading up to the 2012 election, for instance, the government created five new districts in Greater Accra. According to official district reports published by Ghana Statistical Services, four of the five are now dominated by the Ga. The one district not created for the indigenous Ga, Madina Municipality, was carved out for Muslims from Ghana’s north who had resettled in Accra in the pre-independence era. These residents migrated to the area long before the city grew into the metropolis it is today. While Accra is not their homeland, they are seen as more indigenous than the other groups that have settled there in recent years.

Despite the brevity of this case study, unit creation in Greater Accra suggests that the theory developed in this paper has the ability to travel outside the Kenyan case.⁴¹ The material and symbolic benefits of a new unit make unit creation to indigenous local ethnic minority groups a useful patronage strategy for a leader in the context of a competitive reelection campaign.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that decentralization in the form of sub-national administrative unit proliferation is targeted selectively by leaders facing competitive reelection. Given a limited supply of new administrative units, leaders dole them out to areas in a manner to best secure votes. New units are not only targeted to areas that are electorally valuable but to areas which will be more appreciative of this patronage good. I find support for these claims through an in-depth analysis of the Kenyan case and a brief examination of unit creation in Ghana. The evidence also suggests that unit creation during periods when a leader is not seeking reelection can be doled out as patronage, but done to alleviate other political challenges to her rule. Future research on unit creation in weak parties should theorize the conditions under which leaders choose between different patronage strategies to meet different political goals.

These findings push the policy community to re-weigh decentralization reforms’ potential political effects

alongside their ability to remedy the economic stagnation of developing countries. Institutional design of Weberian state institutions proves difficult in countries with weak states and strong executives because the intended effects are not fully realized when leaders can implement reforms to better secure their grip on power. Until executive power weakens, meaningful institutional change by policy makers will require institutional designs that recognize—and accommodate—the electoral environment that leaders face.

The findings also speak to larger debates about the role of the state in the construction of ethnic identities, giving further pause to continued efforts to decentralize these countries. Existing work suggests that the salience of ethnic cleavages arises from informal state institutions in the colonial or immediate post-independence era (e.g., Miguel 2004; Posner 2003), or from coalition building in response to a country's specific formal political institutions (Posner 2005). This paper implies that the emergence of salient ethnic groups is also bound to a state's administrative structure. Precisely because administrative units affect the distribution of state resources, leaders—and communities themselves—make politically salient preexisting ethnic differences in light of existing administrative institutions and electoral logics. The codification of the link between these groups to territorial places and to the state helps further entrench the salience of their ethnic identity. This creates a self-reinforcing cycle of ethnicity as a basis for political competition.

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Notes

1. This has been argued widely by existing literature on administrative unit proliferation. For example, see Malesky

- (2009), O'Dwyer (2006), Green (2010), and Ayee (2013).
2. Green (2010) and Grossman and Lewis (2014) examine Uganda, where President Museveni has won a large majority of the vote each election. Malesky (2009) studies Vietnam, a one-party regime.
3. Aside from the role of corruption in undermining decentralization (e.g., Bardhan and Mookherjee 2006), decentralization can be ineffective in devolving power if lower tiered units lack capacity (see Olowu 2003).
4. The patronage benefits imparted to recipient areas have been thoroughly discussed by recent work on unit creation.
5. Pierskalla (2016) finds similar results within Indonesia. Indonesia is outside the scope of the theory, however, as executives there cannot unilaterally create units but instead need legislative approval.
6. I follow existing literature and treat unit proliferation as distinct from gerrymandering or the creation of new electoral constituencies.
7. Clientelism is largely unavailable in weak party systems. Sustained patronage relationships require deep networks of clientelistic brokers working through strong political parties (Stokes et al. 2013), a feature absent in many African countries, including Kenya.
8. This language of ethnic "alignment" borrows from Baldwin (2014).
9. Sometimes, non-co-ethnics of a candidate can align strongly with a candidate and for all intensive purposes be considered aligned. This can occur for many reasons, including historical alliances between the groups, geographic/cultural similarities, or sustained patronage relationships.
10. Grossman and Lewis (2014) also discuss the symbolic nature of unit creation but in reference to local ethnic minorities writ large. They do not differentiate between the symbolic benefits to indigenous and non-indigenous groups. As I find empirically, Moi only created new units for indigenous local ethnic minorities.
11. The creation of a unit that serves as a homeland for a local ethnic minority need not push out residents from other groups. While in some countries unit creation may be accompanied by the devolution of land administration to local elites, in other countries (such as Kenya) land administration does not change.
12. For this reason, it is unlikely that unit creation will affect voting behavior in "parent" districts. Those areas in the parent district are likely being co-opted by more traditional patronage appeals by the president herself.
13. This work also gives different predictions than when unit creation is regulated by the legislature. Most notably, Pierskalla (Forthcoming) predicts that ethnically heterogeneous areas will ask for new units. To the extent that heterogeneity plays into my theory, *homogeneity* is more likely to lead to a new unit.
14. Weak parties are personalistic vehicles for their leader and do not last past her tenure.
15. This claim applies to both the immediate post-independence era and the time period in the analysis (see the 1969 and 1989 censuses, respectively).

16. See Arriola (2012) on these elections' viable candidates.
17. Interview with former Permanent Secretary (1991–1996), Nairobi, Kenya, July 1, 2012. Interview with 1997 candidate Raila Odinga, Boston, MA, May 22, 2014.
18. The letters in this section are from Folio BB/11/138 from the Kenyan National Archives.
19. Letter from Permanent Secretary to Eastern Provincial Commissioner, "Sub-division of Meru District" May 22, 1989.
20. Letter from Permanent Secretary to Eastern Provincial Commissioner, "Sub-division of Meru District" May 22, 1989.
21. Letter from Meru People Resident in Nairobi, August 24, 1990.
22. Letter from Permanent Secretary to Eastern Provincial Commissioner, May 22, 1989.
23. Letter from Meru District Commissioner to Eastern Provincial Commissioner, April 11, 1991.
24. Letter from Eastern Provincial Commissioner to Permanent Secretary of Provincial Administration, November 9, 1992.
25. Letter from Eastern Provincial Commissioner to Permanent Secretary of Provincial Administration, April 2, 1992.
26. Interviews with former Permanent Secretary of PA, June–July 2012, Nairobi, Kenya.
27. Letter from Eastern Provincial Commissioner to Permanent Secretary of Provincial Administration, April 2, 1992.
28. I include the full breakdown of new districts in the Supplemental Information (SI; <http://prq.sagepub.com/supplemental/>).
29. The results for unaligned provinces largely hold if we examine district creation within each province individually (SI).
30. Divisions represent the universe of hypothetical new districts as new districts were created from one to five existing divisions.
31. One observation in Wave 2 is deleted due to missingness, and one observation in Wave 3 is omitted because of coding uncertainty.
32. I do not include a measure of each division's ethno-linguistic diversity, a main explanatory variable in Pierskalla (2016) because of concerns about double counting given the use of *Local Ethnic Minority*. Including ethno-linguistic diversity does not change the results (SI).
33. Vote share is at the constituency level. Constituencies largely follow division boundaries. In cases where constituencies span more than one division, I code all divisions within the constituency as sharing the same vote share.
34. I rerun the models over Waves 2 to 3 using a differences-in-differences analysis in the SI. The results corroborate those shown here.
35. The succession struggle within Kenya African National Union (KANU) was too convoluted for Moi to have created units to win votes for his anticipated successor. Many of KANU's elite members were implicated in the country's 1991–1997 election-related violence and thus considered unelectable. Capitalizing on this leadership dearth, many of KANU's new guard threatened to defect if Moi chose someone else as his successor (Hornsby 2011). To maintain the support of each new guard leader—and their co-ethnics—for as long as possible, Moi did not choose a successor until six months before the 2002 election. Moi created only one district after naming his successor. That said, Kasara (2006) finds that this district was an attempt to woo area residents.
36. See, for instance, Barkan (2008) and Opalo (2014) on the strength of the Kenyan legislature during this period.
37. This finding speaks to Hassan and Sheely (2016), who find that *lower-level* administrative unit proliferation was motivated by a president's attempt to distribute patronage to aligned MPs and keep her party together.
38. Many of the groups that Kibaki recognized do not have their own census category making a quantitative analysis of unit creation for local ethnic minorities during these years impossible.
39. Unlike Kenya, Ghana has strong political parties. Although presidents are barred from seeking a third term, they have an incentive to continue creating units to help their party win the presidency. Indeed, there is no systematic variation in unit creation during election years where incumbents are running or not (Ayee 2013). This is in line with the theory as an *incumbent party* is still seeking reelection.
40. See Nathan (2015) for Greater Accra's urbanization and its political effects.
41. Furthermore, this case helps demonstrate the prevalence of indigenous local ethnic minority groups across Africa.

Supplemental Material

Replication data for this article can be viewed at <http://dx.doi.org/10.7910/DVN/WBCK5Y>.

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