Identity Voting and the Regional Census in Malawi

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Recent election results in Malawi follow a predictable pattern: voters in the northern part of the country support the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD) or its successors; voters in the central region line up behind the Malawi Congress Party (MCP); and voters in the south vote for the United Democratic Front (UDF) or other parties running on a "southern" profile. This pattern emerged in Malawi's first democratic elections (1994), and continued in 1999 and 2004. Consequently, Malawi's elections resemble a "regional" census: where a voter lives (her region) predicts quite strongly how she will vote. Although there are many possible microlevel explanations for census elections, the most prominent remains Horowitz's expressive voting hypothesis, which argues that ethnic voters use their vote to register their identities as members of groups. Voting is therefore an act of identity expression, not a careful weighing of policy positions or performance evaluations. Elections become "head counts" in which ethnic demographics predetermine outcomes, creating permanent winners and losers and jeopardizing the stability of democracy as a whole.

The goal of this paper is to evaluate the extent to which expressive voting can explain Malawi's regional census. Specifically, are Malawians who hold regional identities more likely to be regional partisans than Malawians who identify differently? We seek not to wholly reject or accept the identity hypothesis, but rather to plumb the boundaries of its explanatory power: How far can it go in explaining the census? Are there regions of the country that it explains better than others? Do other non-identity based factors (the standard set demographic and cognitive factors like gender, education,

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and political knowledge as well as impressions of government performance and beliefs about the inclusiveness of government) also explain voting?

To preview our results, we find that identity has variable effects on patterns of partisanship. In the central region of Malawi, voters who identify with the predominant regional tribe (the Chewa) are significantly more likely than voters who identify with non-regional tribes or voters who do not identify along tribal lines at all to conform to the regional voting pattern. This finding supports the identity hypothesis. However, in the northern and southern regions of the country, we find little support for the identity voting hypothesis: voters who identify with regionally based tribes in these areas are no more or less likely to be regional partisans than voters who either identify with non-regional tribes or voters who do not identify tribally. Furthermore, in all regions of the country, views about the president (UDF in 1994 and 1999) and government exert a powerful and systematic effect on behavior: In the north and center, voters who have positive evaluations of the president's performance and/or feel cared for by him and his government are much less likely to be regional partisans. In the south (home of the ruling UDF), the opposite is true.

Our results suggest three conclusions: First, identity voting might explain the behavior of some voters some of the time, but it is not a sufficient explanation for the census outcome as a whole. Second, identity voting is a variable, not a constant: it emerges in some contexts and time periods but not others. And third, standard "politics as usual" explanations exert a more powerful and systematic effect on voting in Malawi

than identity. If we want to explain Malawi's census, we must therefore explain why

voters in the northern and center regions of the country are less impressed with the

president's performance and feel less cared for by him and his government than residents

of the south.   We speculate that the source of these patterns lies in politics past and

present: flows of patronage under Hasting Banda's long rule explain why identity voting

emerges in the center but not north and south, and current flows of patronage explain why

voters in the north and center feel less enthusiastic about the southern based UDF

government.

Malawi's Regional Census

Voting during Malawi's recent elections displays a clear regional pattern. In the

first two elections (1994 and 1999), a different party dominated each of the three regions:

AFORD won close to 90 percent of the north; the MCP won over sixty percent of the

central region; and the UDF won around 80 percent of the south. In the most recent

election (2004), this voting pattern generally persisted, but in the south the UDF's

dominance was reduced by the entrance of several new parties that were able to compete

effectively for southern voters. In all three elections, the UDF of the more populous

south won the presidency. We briefly review these regional patterns below.

In the north, several tribes consistently vote as a cohesive block: over 70 percent

in each election have supported the same party. In 1994, the north voted en masse (88

percent) for Chihana, a northern Tumbuka on the AFORD ticket. In 1999, Chihana

joined an electoral coalition with the MCP, and 89 percent of northern voters followed

him. In 2004, the northern party (AFORD) split in two, with Chihana joining the UDF.
Most AFORD members went on to form Mgode, and 73 percent of northern voters
followed suit. Thus, despite wranglings among the candidates, northern voters have
remained consistent in their cohesive support for the front-running northern party.

Similarly, in the central region, voters have shown steadfast support for the MCP
(former President of Malawi Banda's old party). During his reign, Banda (a Chewa)
favored the Chewa, who live in the central province, and this probably explains the
MCP's continued dominance there. In 1994, the MCP's candidate (Banda) pulled in 64
percent of the region's vote. In 1999, the MCP's candidate (Chakuamba), who had been
Banda's running mate in 1994, had a similar showing (62 percent). In 2004, the MCP's
candidate Tembo polled a consistent 64 percent of the central region. Thus, central
voters have steadfastly backed the MCP, a party with solid "central" credentials.

The southern region was the near exclusive domain of the UDF in 1994 (when it
won 78 percent of the regional vote) and 1999 (79 percent). The party drew its strongest
support from the Muslim Yao regions (its candidate in 1994 and 1999, Muluzi, was a
Yao). Yet, the UDF has also enjoyed strong support from non-Muslim / non-Yao areas.
In 2004, the UDF's share of the vote declined to 53 percent. The decline can be
attributed primarily to the entrance of an independent southern candidate, Brown
Mpinganjira, who was able to attract 15 percent of the vote. In addition, Chakuamba,
who had been the MCP's candidate in the 1999 election, ran as the candidate of his
newly-formed Republican party, and succeeded in capturing 24 percent of the vote,

relying heavily on Chickwawa and Nsanje (where he is from) and Blantyre. Hence, the

UDF's decline in 2004 did not signal the breakdown of the basic voting pattern that had

characterized the previous two elections (the vast majority of southern voters continued

to vote for southern candidates and parties), but rather, coordination failure amongst

southern candidates.

In sum, recent elections in Malawi follow a "regional census" pattern: where in

the country a voter lives (her region), strongly predicts who she will support. In the next

section, we review the predominant explanation for census style elections.

The Expressive Voting Hypothesis

As discussed by Mattes (1995) and Ferree (2006), there can be many different

microlevel explanations for an aggregate level outcome like a census style election, and

some of them need not rely on identity based (or expressive) motivations. For example,

voters within a particular group or region might all share common policy preferences or

perceptions of incumbent performance and these factors – rather than identity – might

drive them all to vote in a similar pattern. Other explanations highlight the informational

role of ethnicity and how this can lead to bloc voting even when voters do not claim

strong ethnic identities (Dawson 1994, Mattes 1995, Chandra 2004, Posner 2005 and

Ferree 2006). However, the predominant line of reasoning remains the expressive theory

of voting.

The expressive approach sees voting as a means of expressing group allegiance. In comparative studies of ethnic politics, its most prominent advocate is Donald Horowitz, whose 1985 book *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* is still the benchmark for studies of ethnic voting. Building on the ideas of social psychologist Henri Tajfel, Horowitz locates the microfoundations of census elections in the identity attachments of voters. Because the very act of casting a vote for an ethnic party is an affirmation of identity, voters derive psychic benefits from supporting ethnic parties. Voting is not an act of choice, based on a rational weighing of alternatives, or a way to further self-interest, but an expression of group allegiance. Furthermore, allegiance to party, constructed as it is from the raw material of identity, is non-negotiable. Patterns of partisanship are fixed and rigid. Elections become a projection of demographics, a mere "counting of heads." Although Horowitz has developed this logic the most thoroughly, it also underlies other visions of elections in divided countries offered by scholars like Lijphart (1999), Snyder (1994), and Scheve and Dickson (2003). The expressive voting perspective also resonates with work by American scholars like Kinder and Sears (1981), Terklidsen (1993), Kinder and Sanders (1996), and Mendelberg (2001) that emphasizes prejudice as the key factor behind white reluctance to support African American candidates.

In sum, the expressive voting hypothesis is well established in both the Comparative and American literatures on ethnic and racial voting. Our question here is: can it explain the regional voting pattern in Malawi? Are Malawians, when they caste their vote, doing so with the intent of expressing some sort of regional identity and/or allegiance to a regional group? And, is there variation across groups of voters in the

extent to which they base their votes on identity considerations? We turn next to empirical tests in hopes of providing answers to these questions.

Some Tests

Our tests have a simple premise: individuals who identify in regional terms (who claim either a regional identity or a tribal identity that is strongly associated with one region) should be more likely to conform to the regional census pattern (support their regional "champion") than individuals who identify either with *other* regions (or tribes associated with other regions) or individuals who do not identify along regional or tribal lines at all. In conducting these tests, we use data collected in Malawi in November and December of 1999 by round 1 of the Afrobarometer, a multi-country survey that explores attitudes in new African democracies. The Afrobarometer employs nationally representative samples drawn through a multi-stage stratified, clustered sampling procedure. The sample size of the Malawi survey was 1,208.[1]

To operationalize identity, we rely on the Afrobarometer's measures of *self-identification*. In particular, we make use of a question (number 83) in the Afrobarometer that asks: "We have spoken to many Malawians and they have all described themselves in different ways. Some people describe themselves in terms of the language, religion, race, and others describe themselves in economic terms, such as working class, middle class, or a farmer. Besides being Malawian, which specific group do you feel you belong

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[1] More information on the Afrobarometer is available at www.afrobarometer.org. See also Coslow (2002) for the Malawi Codebook.

to first and foremost?" Answers to this question covered a huge range, from the predictable ascriptive and economic responses, such as "Chewa", "Muslim" or "worker" to random answers of "gentleman," "housewife," "sportsman," and "development oriented person."

Self-identification is not an ideal measure of identity for at least two reasons. First, survey respondents may not answer survey questions in a truthful manner. If prevarication occurs at low levels and is more-or-less random, it most likely does not create serious problems. However, if respondents lie systematically – perhaps to cover up allegiance to normatively undesirable groups – this could introduce bias into our analysis. While this is difficult to rule out conclusively, we know that Malawians had no trouble providing ascriptive responses in general – over half of the respondents gave tribal answers to the identity question and another significant portion gave religious ones (see Tables 1-3 below). Hence, aversion to ascriptive responses was not prevalent in this sample, giving us confidence that lying about identity is not unduly affecting our results.

Second, survey responses are static and single-dimensional, whereas we know that identity is dynamic and multidimensional. A person who identifies as a "student" in one context might be a "southerner" in a different one and a "Muslim" in yet another. The Afrobarometer, and all surveys like it, give respondents the opportunity to answer in only one way, collapsing their identities to a single dimension. Furthermore, we do not know which dimension this is and whether or not it is relevant to politics. What we really

want to know is an individual's identity when he is standing by the ballot box, casting his vote. Obviously, the survey context is quite different.

While nothing short of an experimental setting could remove this problem, we believe it is attenuated in this data for the following reason: the question on identity occurred close to three quarters of the way through the survey (question 83 out of 120). Prior to answering the identity question, respondents answered a battery of questions relating to national politics, including ones on policy and issue importance, the performance of the government, corruption, political institutions, and the meaning of democracy. Indeed, the identity question directly followed questions about the government's structural adjustment program. Although these are not equivalent to putting the respondent next to a ballot box and asking her to vote (and then asking the respondent her identity), they do arguably prime for national politics. For this reason, we believe that the problem of selecting the "wrong" identity from the respondent's identity repertoire is perhaps less serious than it seems at first glance. In sum, the self-identification measures we employ are flawed but useful, at least in terms of providing an initial cut on the identity hypothesis.

Our dependent variable is partisanship for regional parties (AFORD in the north, MCP in the center, and the UDF in the south).[2] While actual vote choice would be a more direct measure of regional voting, the first round Afrobarometer (which was in the

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[2] This comes from two Afrobarometer questions: question 108 ("Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?") and question 109 ("Which party is that?").

field about a year after the 1999 election in Malawi) did not ask questions about vote choice, only partisanship. Partisanship is strongly linked with vote choice (we can assume that virtually all partisans will support the party they are close to). Therefore, understanding what makes voters feel close to certain parties is a critical first step to explaining the way they vote. The downside of looking at partisanship is that it does not allow us to explain why those respondents who claimed to be independent of partisanship eventually came to support the party that they did – this is an angle of the process generating the regional census that must remain opaque here. However, there are also important benefits to looking at partisanship. Partisanship patterns in Malawi are more variable than voting patters. As we already explained, voting is very homogeneous within region in Malawi. Partisanship is much less so, as Table 1 demonstrates. This gives us greater range of variation in our dependent variable. Furthermore, we feel partisanship generates an *easier* test for identity voting: Horowitz argues that identity creates a strong bond between parties and voters, a very resilient form of partisanship. If true, this suggests that partisans are more likely than independents to be identity voters. If the identity hypothesis holds, it is most likely to hold here. This gives us greater confidence in any negative results we find, but suggests that positive results might change if we were able to use vote choice instead.

[Table 1 here]

We do two series of tests: the first looks only at *regional* identifiers – those Malawians who claim to identify primarily with a region; the second looks at *tribal*

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identifiers – those Malawians who claim to identify primarily along tribal lines. As we will explain below, we believe that because most tribes are regionally concentrated, respondents who identify in tribal terms may be more likely to support regional party champions when the connection between tribeal group and region is expecially strong (e.g., the Chewa in the central region, the Yao in the south, and so on).

Regional Identities

The most straightforward test of the identity voting hypothesis would look at the behavior of regional identifiers (northerners who identify as "northern," for example) and compare their behavior with non-regional identifiers (northerners who select a different identity, perhaps "Tumbuka" or "farmer"). We would expect regional identifiers to be stronger supporters of regional parties than non-regional identifiers. Furthermore, if Malawi's regional census is to be explained by identity, we should expect a very high prevalence of regional identifiers in the population.

A quick look at Table 2 shows why the regional identity story cannot go very far in explaining Malawian voting behavior. Put simply, very few Malawians claim regional identities. Even in the north (which has the most consistent and strongest pattern of regional voting), only two percent of respondents chose this option. In the central and southern regions, not one respondent identified in regional terms. Thus, regional identities do not appear to animate the thoughts of Malawians: whatever drives their regional voting patterns, it is not overt identification with "region."

[Table 2 here]

Instead, as Table 2 makes clear, most Malawians either identify tribally (in the north, 65 percent pick tribal identities; in the central region, 56 percent do; in the south, 58 percent) or in non-regional/non-tribal terms (farmer, working class, etc). Furthermore (not shown in table), tribal and non-tribal identities are quite diverse: the largest group of identifiers in the north (the Tumbuka) makes up only about one third of the respondents; a similar situation holds in the central region with the Chewa, and the south is even more diverse, where the largest group of self-identifiers (the Lomwe) makes up only fifteen percent of respondents. Hence, not only are regional identities rare, the regions lack overarching identities of any sort that could explain relatively homogeneous regional behavior.

As this is a simplistic way of operationalizing "regional" identity, in the next section, we look at the link between tribe and region.

Tribal Identities as Regional Identities

If tribes are regionally concentrated such that the connection between a tribe and a region is fairly strong, then Malawians might reasonably view voting for the region as a way of expressing a tribal identity. For example, most available research identifies the Chewa as the predominant tribe in the central region. Chewas are found outside of this area, but only in small numbers. Hence, Chewas might see voting for the party of the central region, the MDP, as a way of expressing their allegiance with the Chewa tribe. A

similar story might be told for the Tumbuka in the north and the Yao in the south. If this

is true, it is not regional identities we should be looking at per se, but *tribal identities with*

strong regional roots. We might expect Malawians who identify with tribes with strong

regional roots to be more likely to conform to the regional voting pattern than Malawians

who either identify with non-regional tribes or Malawians who do not identify in tribal

terms at all.

In order to test this, we need to map tribes to region. To do this, we used the third

round of the Afrobarometer survey, conducted in 2005, which included an objective

measure of ethnicity (Question 79 "What is your tribe?").[3] Breaking the responses to this

question down by region reveals that, as suggested by prior case studies, most tribal

groups are concentrated in one of Malawi's three regions. Consequently, we coded the

Tumbuka, Tonga, Lambya, and Ndali as northern tribes; the Chewa as a central tribe; and

the Chisena, Lomwe, Mang'anja, Nyanja, Sena, and Yao as southern tribes. The only

tribe that did not seem to have a regional stronghold was the Ngoni, who are distributed

throughout the country.

Out of this mapping of tribe to region, we created two identification variables:

regional tribe identifiers and non-regional tribe identifiers. A respondent from the north

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[3] Why not also use the second and third rounds of the Afrobarometer for this paper?

Neither survey included an open ended question on identification, hence we were not able

to replicate our analysis for the later surveys.

who identified as a Tumbuka, Tonga, Lambya, or Ndali was coded as a regional tribe identifier. A respondent in the south or central region identifying as any of these groups, however, was coded as a a non-regional tribe identifier. All survey respondents who gave tribal responses were coded in this fashion.[4] We also created a third variable to capture all of the respondents who identified in non-tribal terms (as farmers or housewives or "development oriented persons," etc.).

We explore patterns of identity voting by running multinomial logit models for each region of the country. Multinomial logit (MNL) is frequently used to estimate models of vote choice in multiparty settings (Alvarez and Nagler, 1998; Quinn, Martin, and Whitford, 1999; Schofield and Sened, 2005). When there are several party choices, MNL makes it possible to estimate the probability of choosing one party relative to the other options. The results from MNL models present coefficients for the comparison of each choice to a reference category. In our analysis, we treat regional partisans as the reference category. This means that the models for each region show how the independent variables affect the likelihood of being a non-regional partisan or an independent voter rather than a regional partisan. The key assumption made by the MNL

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[4] We dropped a small number of respondents who gave tribal identities we could not place: Afrikaans speakers, foreigners, Manyika, Nkhode, Chinyungwe, Oshiwambo, Danderu, Totela, Damara, and Muchinkunda. We suspect most of these were foreign groups (eg. Mozambicans living in Malawi). There were only a few (1-5) in each category.

model is that the relative odds of selecting between two alternative parties or candidates is independent of the number of alternatives; this is known the independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA). Because this assumption can be violated in practice, some authors have advocated multinomial probit, which does not impose the IIA restriction. However, where the pool of parties competing in elections is stable, as was the case in Malawi during the 1990s, concerns about violating the IIA assumption are minimized and MNL can be used (Dow and Endersby, 2004). Moreover, because multinomial probit can be prone to a number of potential problems which may be difficult to detect, MNL is often preferable (see Dow and Endersby, 2004).

Our main independent variables are regional tribe identifiers, non-regional tribe identifiers, and non-tribal identifiers. In all specifications, non-tribal identifiers are the reference category, so all results should be interpreted relative to them. We also include, as robustness checks, a dummy variable for the Ngoni, who were coded in all regions as a regional tribe but may be different from other regional tribes because of their ubiquity in the country; and dummy variables for prominent regional tribes (the Tumbuka in the north and the Yao in the south; because the Chewa and Ngoni are the only regional tribes for the central region, controlling for the Ngoni is equivalent to controlling for the Chewa). If the identity hypothesis holds, we expect respondents who identify as members of regional tribes to be more likely than everyone else to support a regional party, and less likely than non-regional tribe identifiers to support a non-regional party. We also expect both kinds of tribal identifiers to be less likely than non-tribal identifiers to claim to be independent.

We also controlled for several additional factors. Class and education could matter for a number of reasons. Early modernization theory held that development would free individuals from tribal attachments (Lipset, 1959; Lerner, 1958), hence we might expect respondents with less education and greater ties to the traditional rural economy to be more likely to conform to the regional census. On the other hand, Bates (1974) speculated that modernization increased the attraction of ethnicity. Under this logic, perhaps it is the well-educated urban elite who generate the census. We might also expect class to matter for more proximate political reasons: the southern based UDF has the support of the majority of the business sector of the country as well as heavy influence over the media (Wiseman 2000). We might therefore expect better educated and informed voters to support it regardless of region. To test this, we include variables measuring education (Question 113)[5], whether or not the respondent lives in a rural area (Question 122B), and informational sophistication (as measured by newspaper readership and radio listening).[6] In addition to these, we tried a variety of occupational variables.[7]

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[5] Following Miguel and Posner (2006), we recoded Question 113 (highest level of schooling achieved) into multiple categories: no education, some primary education, primary completed, some secondary, secondary completed, and some post-secondary. The only variable that appeared to matter was no education, so we simplified our final specifications to include only this.

[6] For newspaper reading: question 42C. We recoded this to dummy variable "newspaper reader" if respondent read the newspaper once a day. For radio listening: question 42A.

These were never significant in any formulation so we dropped them in our final regressions. Finally, we included gender (Question 125), as several studies have found this to be a factor in explaining African voting behavior (Wantchekon 2003; Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi 2005).

In addition to these socioeconomic and demographic factors, we included a number of variables that measured the respondent's feelings about the president and government in general. A prominent line of research (Downs, 1957; Fiorina, 1981; Gerber and Green, 1998) identifies performance evaluations as critical in shaping voting behavior. We therefore include a performance measure in our models, coded 1 if the respondent approves or strongly approves of the president's job performance in the past year, 0 otherwise (Question 66). As the president is a member of the southern based UDF, we expect that positive views of his performance should reduce regional voting in the northern and central regions, but increase regional voting in the south.

Finally, we included a dummy variable "president uninterested" if the respondent thinks the president is not at all interested or not very interested in her well well-being

We recoded this to a dummy variable "radio listener" if the respondent got news from the radio every day.

[7] Question 118. Following Miguel and Posner (2006), we recoded this into white collar, blue collar, student, business, farmers and fisherman, and a general "other" category.

(Question 64); and an additional dummy variable "government exclusive" if the respondent thinks the government represents the interests of one group only rather than all Malawians (Question 88). While there are many possible interpretations for these variables, we believe they capture the extent to which the respondent feels the president and his government "care" about her, where "care" probably involves some sort of material connection. Respondents in the north or central areas who feel connected to the UDF controlled government and presidency and perceive themselves to be beneficiaries of its largesse should be less likely to conform to the regional voting pattern than respondents who feel unconnected and excluded. The opposite should hold for the south.

Our results are contained in Tables 3, 4, and 6. Table 3 shows the multinomial logit model for the north. Looking first at the identity variables, the picture is clear: there is no evidence that identity voting accounts for regional voting in this area of the country. The identity variables are insignificant for all three dependent variables. Northerners who identify as members of regional tribes are no more or less likely than northerners who identify as non-regional tribes or northerners who do not identify tribally at all to cross-over to a non-regional party or to proclaim independence from partisan ties. This is also true of Tumbuka and Ngoni identifiers. Hence, patterns of regional and tribal identification have no discernable relationship with patterns of support for regional parties – a finding obviously at odds with the identity voting thesis.

[Table 3 here]

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So what does explain voting in the north? Although this region remains poorly

explained (at least relative to the other two), a few patterns are evident. There is some

suggestion that education matters: the coefficient on no education is negative and

borderline significant for non-regional partisans, indicating that respondents with no

education are more likely to be regional partisans than non-regional partisans. More

important are opinions about the inclusiveness of government. Respondents who believe

the government represents the interest of one group rather than all Malawians are more

likely to be independents than regional partisans. Quite possibly, these respondents feel

excluded from the government's largesse, and this – not the extent to which they identify

with northern tribes – explains why they are regional partisans.[8]

Turning to the central region of the country (Table 4), we find that several

variables matter, including those relating to identity. Identifying as Chewa (captured here

by the coefficient on regional tribe) significantly reduced the probability of being an

independent or feeling close to a non-regional party. In contrast, identifying as Ngoni

had the opposite effect, decreasing the probability of being a regional partisan. These

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[8] We worried that the 1999 electoral alliance of AFORD with the MCP might be

affecting our results (though our use of partisanship rather than vote choice should

mitigate this), so we re-ran the specification regression using AFORD *and* MCP as the

regional parties. As the number of respondents in the non-regional category was very

small, we used a simple logit model where the dependent variable was support for a

regional party. The results are very similar and contained in Appendix 1.

results very nicely confirm the identity voting hypothesis: those who identify with the

regional tribe, the Chewas, are much more likely to conform to the regional voting

patterns than those who do not identify this way. The only result that seems to contradict

the identity hypothesis concerns non-regional identifiers: they appear less likely to be

independents than regional partisans. We have no explanation for this, except that non-

regional identifiers may be a relatively small category in the central area and therefore

may be affected by outliers.

[Table 4 Here]

We find no support for modernization variables in the central region, but views of

the president and government clearly matter. Respondents who give the president

positive overall ratings are more likely to be independents and non-regional partisans.

Furthermore, respondents who believe the government is exclusive and the president does

not care about them are less likely to be independents or non-regional partisans (more

likely to be regional partisans).

In order to unpack the substantive impact of these variables, we used Clarify

(King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000) to generate predicted values for supporting a

regional party for eight different scenarios, ranging from the best case scenario for the

governing UDF to the worst case scenario (or the strongest conditions for regional

partisanship). These are contained in Table 5. The best case scenario is in the top left

corner of the table: here respondents have positive ratings of the president and

government's performance and believe he is interested in their well-being and his government is inclusive. We calculated the probability of supporting a regional party under these conditions for Chewa and Ngoni identifiers. As expected, Ngoni identifiers are less likely than Chewa identifiers to support a regional party. However, even Chewa identifiers are not very likely to be regional partisans under these conditions (about twenty percent would be).

[Table 5 here]

The worst case scenario for the government is in the bottom right corner of the table, where respondents had negative views of the president and government's performance and felt marginalized by him and the government. Chewa identifiers are more likely than Ngoni identifiers to support a regional party, as expected. However, in these conditions, nearly half of the Ngoni supporters would also support the regional party. Hence, while patterns of identification matter, they are far from overwhelming. Also interesting to note: as conditions deteriorate, identity matters more. The difference between Chewa and Ngoni identifiers when everything is going well (top left) is less than twenty percentage points. When things are going poorly (lower right), it is over forty percentage points. Thus, when people feel pleased with the president's performance and feel cared for by the government, identity has less impact on partisanship.

Turning at last to the southern region (Table 6), we again find little support for the identity variables. Southerners who identify with one of the regional tribes are no more

or less likely to feel close to the regional party (the UDF), or to support a non-regional party, or claim to be independent, than southerners who identify with a non-regional tribe or southerners who do not identify tribally at all. Patterns of identification appear to have no discernable impact on partisanship.

[Table 6 here]

In contrast, the modernization variables do emerge as important. Living in a rural area decreases the chances that a respondent will be independent (vs. a regional partisan), whereas reading newspapers increases them. Hence, well-informed, literate, urbanites are the likely independents of the south. Also important are perceptions about performance: positive views about the overall performance of the president (a member of the southern based UDF) decrease the chances that a respondent will be a non-regional partisan, while increasing her chances of being a regional partisan. Finally, mirroring results in other areas of the country, respondents who believe the president is uninterested in their welfare are less likely to feel close to the regional UDF and more likely to feel close to a non-regional party or to proclaim independence. Similarly, respondents who believe the government is exclusive are more likely to be non-regional partisans than regional ones (although interestingly, the same is not true of independents).

To briefly summarize our results to this point, we find support for the identity hypothesis in one region of the country, the central region, especially amongst voters who have negative impressions of the government. We also find scattered evidence in favor

of various modernization variables, which overall suggest that less educated, less literate, and less informed voters tend to be regional partisans. Our strongest evidence, however, comes for attitudes about the president and government: the respondent's assessment of the president's performance and the respondent's beliefs about how much the president cares about her and whether or not the government is inclusive. Some combination of these variables matters for all regions of the country, and at least one of them is significant in five out of six of our specifications. In contrast, the identity variables mattered in just two regressions, both in the central region.

Given the importance of attitudes about the president and government in our individual level regressions, we decided to look at the regional distributions of these variables (Table 7). Table 7 reveals a very consistent pattern. Respondents in the north had negative opinions about the president's performance and believed he did not care about them. They also tended to believe the government looked out for the interests of only one group of Malawians, not the whole country. In contrast, respondents in the south had positive views of the president's performance and believed he cared about them. They also believed the government was inclusive. Hence, the north and the south diverged significantly in how they viewed the president and whether or not they felt included in his circle of beneficiaries. The central region was somewhere in between: they were a bit more positive than negative, but nowhere near as positive as the south. In sum, views of the president and government – which we now know are powerful predictors of regional partisanship at the individual level – *are not randomly distributed* in Malawi. Rather, they diverge significantly by region, mirroring overall patterns of

partisanship as well as vote choice. Malawi's regional census therefore appears rooted in *political* variables, not purely social ones.

[Table 7 here]

Conclusion

We set out in this paper to evaluate the extent to which identity voting accounts for the regional census in Malawi. Our goal was not to wholly reject or accept this hypothesis, but to explore where and when it might explain regional affiliations. We found robust support for identity voting in one of the country's three regions: in the central part of the country, individuals who identify with the regionally dominant Chewa tribe were more likely to be regional partisans and less likely to be non-regional partisans than individuals who identified with other tribes or did not identify tribally at all. This appeared to be especially true of respondents who already held dim views about the president and government. In contrast, we found no support for the identity hypothesis in the northern and southern areas of the country – ironically the regions where regional voting and regional partisanship are most entrenched. Hence, identity voting helps explain the behavior of some voters some of the time, but cannot account for the overall regional census pattern. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explain why residents of the central region of Malawi engage in identity voting whereas those in the north and the south do not, but we would speculate that the answer probably lies in the past, during the lengthy rule of Hastings Banda. While in power, Banda and the MCP favored Chewas and the central region, directing disproportionate patronage funds in their direction.

Perhaps those individuals who most benefited from Banda's largesse came both to identify in tribal terms (as Chewas) and to form strong bonds of partisanship with the MCP. Individuals left out of patronage networks were less likely to identify as Chewas and also less likely to be hardcore MCP partisans. If true, this would suggest identification does not drive partisanship. Rather, both identification and partisanship are shaped by political factors like patronage. We hope that future work can further explore this conjecture.

In addition to evaluating the identity hypothesis, we sought to evaluate the extent to which other variables – specifically those relating to modernization and attitudes about the president and government – might help explain the census. We found suggestive support for various modernization variables. Although the effects were uneven and manifested themselves differently across regions (sometimes working through education, sometimes through media exposure), the overall picture that emerged was that less educated, less literate, and less informed voters were more likely to support regional parties.

Far more systematic, however, were our results pertaining to attitudes about the president and government. Across all regions of the country, evaluations of the president's performance, beliefs about his level of concern in the respondent's well being, or views on the inclusiveness of the government had strong impacts on partisanship. Where respondents awarded the president positive evaluations, believed he cared about them, and thought his government looked after the interests of all Malawians, they were

far more likely to support his party (the UDF). In the north and center, positive views of the president and government translated into a breakdown of regional partisanship. In the south, home of the president and ruling UDF, they strengthened regional partisanship. Thus, unlike the identity variables, evaluations of the president and government exert a systematic and powerful influence on partisanship *throughout* Malawi. Furthermore, attitudes about the president and government are not randomly distributed: northerners are far more likely to hold negative views than southerners, with residents of the central region somewhere in between.

If we want to account for Malawi's regional census, we need to explain first and foremost why people who live in the north feel so negatively about the government's performance and why they believe that the southern-based president is not interested in their well-being and find his government exclusionary. Quite possibly, these views are rooted in a pattern of patronage and support for some regions and not others. If so, then the regional census in Malawi has much less to do with identity, and far more to do with politics, both past and present.

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Table 1: Regional breakdown of regional voters, non-regional voters, and independents (Percentages)

Region	Partisans of regional party	Partisans of non-regional parties	Independents
North	48	26	15
Central	38	35	22
South	69	14	15

Notes: Table does not include respondents who either refused or answered "other."

Table 2: Self Identification by Region (Percentages)

	Regional	Tribal	Non-tribal
North	2	65	33
Central	0	56	44
South	0	58	42

Table 3: Multinomial Logit Model of Partisanship in the North

	Independents	Non-regional partisans
Regional tribe identifiers	0.762	0.712
	(0.363)	(0.227)
Non-regional tribe identifiers	-0.042	0.877
	(0.978)	(0.335)
Tumbuka identifiers	0.193	-0.616
	(0.798)	(0.300)
Ngoni identifiers	0.584	-0.469
	(0.602)	(0.652)
No education	-33.903	-1.786
	(1.000)	(0.109)
Rural	-0.319	0.363
	(0.710)	(0.624)
Female	1.117	0.540
	(0.060)	(0.217)
Newspaper reader	0.856	1.408
	(0.544)	(0.153)
Radio listener	-0.937	-0.238
	(0.121)	(0.613)
President's performance	0.729	0.274
	(0.358)	(0.693)
President uninterested	-0.951	-1.099
	(0.189)	(0.064)
Gov't exclusive	-1.627**	-0.093
	(0.009)	(0.873)
Constant	0.229	-0.389
	(0.858)	(0.727)
Observations	133	133
Pseudo R^2	.15	

p values in parentheses   * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%
Reference Category: Regional Partisans

Table 4: Multinomial Logit Model of Partisanship in Central Region

	Independents	Non-regional Partisans
Regional tribe identifiers	-0.883**	-0.669*
	(0.005)	(0.028)
Non-regional tribe identifiers	-2.836**	-0.036
	(0.007)	(0.933)
Ngoni identifiers	1.298*	1.428**
	(0.015)	(0.005)
No education	0.155	-0.057
	(0.660)	(0.873)
Rural	0.448	0.265
	(0.298)	(0.475)
Female	-0.180	-0.466
	(0.521)	(0.076)
Newspaper reader	0.086	0.216
	(0.903)	(0.715)
Radio listener	0.545	0.450
	(0.072)	(0.118)
President's performance	0.762*	1.697**
	(0.028)	(0.000)
President uninterested	-0.762*	-1.192**
	(0.025)	(0.000)
Gov't exclusive	-1.317**	-0.914**
	(0.000)	(0.002)
Constant	-0.254	-0.249
	(0.665)	(0.644)
Observations	467	467
Pseudo R^2	.21	
p values in parentheses	* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%	
Reference Category: Regional Partisans		

Table 5: Simulated Probabilities (with 95 Percent Confidence Intervals) for Central Region				
	President Cares, Government is Inclusive		President Does Not Care, Government is Exclusive	
	Chewa Identifier	Ngoni Identifier	Chewa Identifier	Ngoni Identifier
Approve of President's Performance	.20 (.13, .29)	.03 (.01, .07)	.66 (.49, .80)	.20 (.06, .43)
Do Not Approve of President's Performance	.48 (.31, .65)	.11 (.04, .24)	.88 (.81, .92)	.46 (.20, .71)

Table 6: Multinomial Logit Model of Partisanship in Southern Region

	Independents	Non-regional Partisans
Regional tribe identifiers	0.235	-0.039
	(0.423)	(0.917)
Non-regional tribe identifiers	-0.499	-0.332
	(0.616)	(0.727)
Yao identifiers	-0.475	-0.210
	(0.378)	(0.776)
Chewa identifiers	0.324	0.487
	(0.763)	(0.634)
No education	-0.419	-0.244
	(0.413)	(0.681)
Rural	-0.666*	0.480
	(0.035)	(0.265)
Female	-0.061	0.272
	(0.817)	(0.409)
Newspaper reader	1.184**	1.111
	(0.004)	(0.057)
Radio listener	-0.082	-0.074
	(0.785)	(0.835)
President's performance	0.208	-1.954**
	(0.669)	(0.000)
President uninterested	1.448**	1.514**
	(0.000)	(0.000)
Gov't exclusive	0.520	1.440**
	(0.122)	(0.000)
Constant	-1.679**	-1.637*
	(0.007)	(0.015)
Observations	525	525
Pseudo R^2	.22	

p values in parentheses   * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%
Reference Category: Regional Partisans

Table 7: Region and Attitudes about President and Government (Percentages)

	Approves of President's Performance	Believes President is Interested in Respondent's Well-being	Believes Government is Inclusive
Northern Region	16	22	24
Central Region	54	57	64
Southern Region	84	83	78