

Elections and Collective Action: Evidence from Changes in Traditional Institutions in Liberia

Abstract

Numerous recent field and lab experiments have found that elections cause higher subsequent levels of collective action within groups. This article questions whether effects observed in these environments apply when traditional institutions are democratized. We test the external validity of the experimental findings by examining the effects of introducing elections in an indigenous institution in Liberia. We use a break in the process of selecting clan chiefs in Liberia at the end of the country's civil war to identify the effects of elections on collective action within communities. Drawing on survey data and outcomes from behavioral games, we find that the introduction of elections for clan chiefs has little effect on community-level and national-level political participation but it increases contentious collective action and it lowers levels of contributions to public goods. These findings provide an important counterpoint to the experimental literature, suggesting elections have less salutary effects on collective action when they replace customary practices.

How do community-level institutions affect collective action? Political scientists have long argued that elections can create senses of community, inculcate participation, and legitimize leaders in a way that facilitates subsequent collective action.¹ Furthermore, a number of recent lab and field experiments have empirically demonstrated that the introduction of elections can facilitate collective action and civic participation.²

Yet many communities that do not select their leaders by elections have also proved themselves capable of overcoming collective action dilemmas. In particular, the reliance on “traditional” leaders to mobilize communities for collective action is common in developing countries. Traditional leaders are typically not elected, yet they are argued to be effective in mobilizing collective action because of their ability to appeal to custom and long-established norms as a source of legitimacy.³ In the context of customary institutions for local governance, would elections for leaders improve collective action?

We believe this question is still open, as the findings from recent lab and field experiments may not apply in cases in which well-established indigenous institutions are democratized. On the one hand, lab experiments ask respondents to make decisions in novel environments in which non-electoral institutions may be relatively ineffective because they do not draw on established norms and expectations. On the other hand, in most field experiments conducted to date, elections have been introduced into new institutions that have *paralleled* rather than *supplanted* traditional governance structures. As a result, these studies may not capture the full effects of replacing customary methods with elections in existing traditional institutions. It is important to complement these analyses with studies in which customary methods of selecting leaders are replaced by electoral methods.

The main challenge to studying the effects of introducing elections in “traditional” institutions is developing an identification strategy. Clearly, few entrenched local leaders would volunteer to be part of an experiment that randomly introduced elections into their communities. Instead, this article takes advantage of a break in the process of selecting local leaders in Liberia following the country’s civil war. At the end of the war, some local clan chiefs were appointed by small groups of elite, while others were elected by their communities; however, virtually all clan chiefs who left office after the end of the war were replaced by chiefs selected through elections. This break permits us to identify the effect of introducing elections in traditional institutions.

We use surveys and a behavioral game conducted with clan chiefs and their subjects in 60 rural communities to measure the effects of elections on citizens' participation and contributions to public goods. In particular, we consider the effects of clan chief elections on self-reported participation in community governance, national-level participation and "contentious" (non-institutionalized) participation, as well as contributions in a public goods game. Contrary to the findings of most recent lab and field experiments, we find that elections do not significantly improve most types of collective action, and they may harm public order and the provision of public goods. Clan chief elections do not significantly increase participation in either community-level or national-level governance, but they increase participation in contentious acts, like protests and riots, and decrease contributions to collective endeavors.

Theory and Existing Evidence

Many forms of participation are subject to collective action dilemmas. Because not every member of a society usually needs to make payments toward a community project for it to be built, or to monitor the leaders of a project to prevent corruption, both of these types of activities are subject to free-riding, with every individual trying to reap the benefits from other community members' efforts without participating themselves.⁴ As a result, rates of political participation and contributions to public goods are almost always lower than optimal.

Early research on collective action focused on the effectiveness of decentralized peer-sanctioning regimes in allowing communities to overcome their collective action dilemmas. However, political scientists and economists have started to pay greater attention to the importance of local leaders in organizing collective action. In particular, a number of scholars have recently examined the differential effectiveness of leaders in facilitating "voluntary" participation in collective endeavors.⁵

The experimental research on this topic suggests that elected leaders are generally more effective than unelected leaders in organizing collective action, and not just because elections result in the selection of leaders who have higher ability with regards to organizing collective action. In addition, elections are thought to foster a sense of community among individuals living in a society, to socialize people into participating, and to give leaders a legitimacy that induces higher rates of compliance with their requests even in the absence

of an improvement in the quality of leadership.

Lab and field experiments have generally found positive effects of elections on rates of participation and public goods provision. Tables 1 and 2 review recent lab and field experiments respectively that have randomized the institution of elections as a procedure for making decisions. We have attempted to be comprehensive in identifying articles or working papers published in the past 10 years that randomize elections and then examine the effects of elections on collective action. Specifically, we include all studies that examine the effects of elections on either contributions to public goods or participation in politics.⁶ We have identified 5 lab experiments and 5 field experiments on this topic. All of the lab experiments introduced elections in the context of public goods games, one of the field experiments introduced elections as means of selecting development projects, and four of the field experiments introduced elections for local committees as part of broader community-driven development projects.⁷

The lab experiments in table 1 randomly introduced elections to determine some aspect of the rules of a public goods game and then examined whether individuals were significantly more likely to contribute to public goods. These studies consistently show that elections to determine some aspect of the game environment result in higher levels of voluntary contributions to public goods compared to situations where rules are set by the researcher or randomly determined. Furthermore, Dal Bo, Foster and Putterman show that these effects are independent of the informational effects of elections, and Grossman and Baldassarri show these effects are independent of any changes in the quality of leaders caused by elections.⁸ This suggests the positive effects of elections are in part due to the direct effects of participation in elections on the behavior of participants (rather than being the result of outcomes of the electoral process).

The field experiments included in table 2 all introduced elections in a subset of communities, and then followed up on subsequent rates of participation in the provision of public goods and in governance more generally. Half of the relevant studies find a positive effect on contributions to public goods.⁹ All but one of the five studies find at least some level of support for the hypothesis that elections increase subsequent levels of civic participation, whether this is measured by participation in community decision-making, participation in local government, or a mix of formal and informal political participation.¹⁰ Thus, although the results from the field experiments are more mixed, the experimental evidence is generally supportive of the hypothesis that elections improve subsequent collective action within communities.

But, in theory, elections for community leaders could also have negative effects on collective action within communities. For example, if the median voter has a shorter time horizon than the individual responsible for appointing leaders under non-electoral regimes, elections may result in the election of populists who will underinvest in public goods that would benefit the community in the long-run.¹¹ In addition, rather than creating a sense of collective fate among community members, election campaigns could divide communities, and result in the selection of leaders with the legitimacy of only a plurality of citizens.¹²

The costs of introducing elections may be particularly likely to outweigh theoretical benefits when the non-electoral methods of selecting leaders are rooted in community custom. In particular, “traditional” community leaders are rarely selected through electoral methods.¹³ Yet, these leaders are nonetheless often viewed as legitimate by community members.¹⁴ Consequently, they may be highly effective in fostering both a sense of altruism toward other community members and high levels of compliance with instructions from the leader.

Although the methods by which communities select traditional leaders vary dramatically across different places and inevitably evolve over time (in some cases, also quite dramatically), many communities have shared ideals regarding the proper “customary” method of selecting these leaders.¹⁵ For example, the Cochiti Pueblo in New Mexico are governed by a popular traditional theocracy, in which leadership positions are selected by the supreme religious leader.¹⁶ Villages in Malawi are led by traditional leaders selected from within the “royal family” of their villages, and this connection with their village’s original founders is thought to underpin their power and legitimacy.¹⁷ Among the Akan in Ghana, a chief’s authority is legitimated through the process of being selected by the “queen mother.”¹⁸

From a theoretical perspective, then, it is not clear that democratizing the method of selecting customary leaders will improve community collective action. Customary non-electoral methods of selecting leaders may share some of the anticipated benefits of elections in fostering a sense of community and giving leaders legitimacy, while avoiding some of the costs of elections. The findings from the lab and field experiments reviewed in tables 1 and 2 also cannot speak directly to this empirical question.

The lab experiments in table 1 compare the effects of elections in the context of stylized games that were new to the players. In this context, behavioral patterns are likely to be weakly established, and the non-electoral decision-making process – in which the researcher determined the rules of the game or selected

them at random – is likely to have limited legitimacy in the eyes of participants. As a result, elections may bestow legitimacy on institutions relative to the non-electoral control group in this setting, but may not have the same positive effects when the method of appointment has greater precedent in the community, as is often the case in the selection of customary leaders.

In contrast, the field experiments in table 2 introduced elections in real-life contexts, complete with pre-existing norms. But, to date, field experiments have introduced elections in institutions that have paralleled rather than replaced existing governance institutions. Although the resulting situation of “dual authority” within communities has many real-world parallels, it does not shed light on the effect of democratizing traditional institutions. In particular, the dual authority structures created by these experiments leave open the possibility for elected local leaders to collaborate with the unelected leaders who remain atop the community’s traditional governance institutions in order to collectively mobilize communities. As a result, these field experiments may not capture the full costs of replacing customary selection methods with elections.¹⁹

This underscores the importance of complementing existing field and lab experimental studies with analyses of the effects of introducing elections in traditional institutions. We expect non-elected traditional leaders to frequently have greater legitimacy than the non-electoral institutions in the experiments referenced above.²⁰ As a result, it is possible that elections will have less salutary effects on collective action and could even potentially depress the ability of traditional leaders to organize communities to contribute to collective endeavors. We began this investigation uncertain about whether elections for traditional leaders would have beneficial effects on leadership capacity and citizens’ levels of political participation, or whether they would harm the ability of traditional leaders to organize collective action.

[Table 1 about here.]

[Table 2 about here.]

Empirical Case

We study the effects of elections for traditional leaders on subsequent collective action within communities drawing on evidence from clans in Liberia. Specifically, we take advantage of the fact that – although clan

chiefs were selected by a variety of methods during the civil war – following the end of this war, communities converged on elections as a method of selecting clan chiefs.

In Liberia, clans were traditionally the largest political entities within most ethnic groups.²¹ Historically, clans consisted of towns and villages joined together through strong kinship bonds in a defensive alliance. The clan was governed by the clan chief, who was responsible for the defense of the clan, the organization of major collective work projects, and hearing appeals from the courts of lower chiefs.²² Historically, chiefs were usually from the ruling family of a clan and ruled for life. However, succession rules often entailed a degree of flexibility, and in some cases, elders might select individuals outside the ruling family. Secret societies, such as the poro, often played an important role, both in appointing clan chiefs, and in reinforcing (or checking) their power.²³

In the first half of the twentieth century, the Liberian government attempted to regularize the governance of the country. Clans became a formally recognized division of local government, and clan chiefs became official government authorities. As a result, they became responsible for administering government activities in their clan, in addition to their traditional roles in organizing collective action and resolving disputes. Rural Liberia is currently divided into 476 clans, with lower-level town chiefs existing below the clan chief. During the Liberian civil wars (1989-1996 & 1999-2003), large numbers of chiefs were displaced or killed. However, compared to the formal state apparatus, traditional institutions showed surprising resilience during this period. For example, experiments conducted after the war show that Liberians are more likely to comply with instructions from traditional leaders than instructions from the central government or peacekeepers.²⁴

Under the rule of William Tolbert (1971-1980) and Samuel Doe (1980-1990), clan chiefs were supposed to be elected for fixed terms, but elections were never organized with any regularity, and in some areas, they were never organized at all.²⁵ During the war, many communities reverted to non-participatory methods of selecting chiefs, with elders, secret societies and leaders of armed groups appointing chiefs without broad popular input.²⁶ In many cases, it was not possible to organize a large community gathering at which to elect a new chief. In particular, in communities with strong poro institutions and high levels of displacement, clan chiefs were typically appointed by secret societies or higher level leaders during the war. In contrast, in communities without poro institutions and without massive displacement, clan chiefs were usually selected through electoral processes.²⁷

At the end of the war, it became possible to organize large public meetings again, and when chiefs were replaced, communities converged on elections as the appropriate method of selecting the new chief. The convergence on elections as the appropriate method of selecting chiefs after the end of the war is potentially explained by three things. First, civil-war exposure has been found to be associated with increased participation, and the widespread violence in Liberia could have resulted in high levels of post-war participation across the country.²⁸ Second, most communities in Liberia had a great deal of exposure to international peacekeeping and international NGOs at the end of the war, and it is possible that these institutions spread democratic ideals across the entire country. Third, elections were the method by which clan chiefs were supposed to be chosen according to Liberian law. Although the central government did not officially organize elections in any communities at the end of the war, communities may have felt it appropriate to revert to this procedure following the removal of extraordinary barriers to organizing community-wide elections during the war.²⁹

The fact that these elections were locally initiated has both benefits and costs for our research. On the plus side, this allows us to compare indigenously selected electoral and non-electoral rules, which is important in so far as locally selected rules may be viewed as more legitimate.³⁰ On the other hand, this means that the electoral processes used to select leaders vary across communities and often fall short of adhering to international standards regarding free and fair elections; typically community members select among candidates who have been vetted by community elders, and the vote is public.³¹ We view this as a necessary trade-off, and also note that these electoral institutions are similar to those introduced elsewhere in the world during efforts to democratize traditional institutions.³² It is also important to note that we view the elections mainly as a process that allows voters to select their preferred leaders, rather than a mechanism for holding leaders to account, as clan chief elections have not historically been regularly organized.³³

Identification Strategy

At the end of the civil war, some Liberian communities had elected chiefs and some communities had appointed chiefs, and these communities differed from each other in important ways, as discussed above. However, in cases where the chief in power at the end of the civil war has been removed from office for

exogenous reasons – that is, he died of natural causes, moved away or had his fixed mandate end – he has been replaced by electoral methods. In the case of clans with appointed chiefs, the removal of chiefs in some communities but not in others following the end of the civil war provides a quasi-random source of institutional variation. We use a difference-in-difference estimation strategy that compares the size of the effects of chief replacement in communities with elections prior to the end of the civil war (where replacement is not associated with institutional change) and without elections during this time period (where replacement is associated with institutional change) to identify the effects of elections on collective action and participation, as explained in more detail below.

Specifically, there are four types of communities in our analysis, depicted in table 2. First, there are communities where the chiefs in power at the end of the civil war were elected and have not subsequently been removed from office (cell A1). Second, there are communities where the chiefs in power at the end of the war were elected, have subsequently been removed from office for exogenous reasons, and have been replaced by another elected clan chief (cell A2). Third, there are communities where chiefs were appointed before the end of the civil war and have not subsequently been removed from office (cell B2). Fourth, there are communities where chiefs were appointed before the civil war ended, the chief has been removed from office for exogenous reasons, and the current chief is elected (cell B2).³⁴

[Table 3 about here.]

Among villages where the chief in power at the end of the civil war was appointed, the communities where the chief has subsequently been removed and replaced by electoral methods (cell B2) should have similar characteristics to the communities where the chief has not been removed and the current chief is not elected (cell B1). However, a simple comparison of these villages does not let us isolate the impact of elections from the impact of having a new leader (and the various leadership characteristics that might be associated with that). We can measure the impact of having a new leader independent of institutional change by comparing the villages in cell A2 and the villages in cell A1; these villages – all of which have elected clan chiefs – should be otherwise equivalent except that some of them have had a new clan chief installed since the end of the civil war. If we assume that the effect of getting a new chief (and the various changes in leadership characteristics associated with this) is constant across both sets of villages, we can identify

the effect of elections for chiefs through a difference-in-difference approach. Specifically, we compare the differences in the outcomes of the communities in cell B2 and cell B1 to the differences in the outcomes of the communities in cell A2 and cell A1:

$$\delta_1 = (\bar{y}_{B2} - \bar{y}_{B1}) - (\bar{y}_{A2} - \bar{y}_{A1}) \quad (1)$$

Our difference-in-difference strategy differs from standard designs in which a change is introduced that induces variation in exposure to the treatment within the sample.³⁵ In our set-up, we are relying on variation in the method of selecting chiefs before the end of the civil war to identify the effects of elections, using the convergence on elections post-war to parse the effects of elections from the differences between the sets of communities that historically held elections and those that did not. The identification strategy hinges on the assumption that the communities in cell A1 and cell A2, and cell B1 and cell B2, differ in similar ways. As a result, all differences between the four sets of communities except for the process by which they select leaders can be captured by fixed effects for group A and group B respectively, and a variable capturing the difference between communities with a change in leadership (group 2) and without a change in leadership (group 1). We do not depend on communities with new leaders being otherwise identical to communities without new leaders in the absence of the introduction of elections, but instead on the slightly less demanding condition that communities in cells A1 and A2, and cells B1 and B2, are similar except for by a difference that is constant across the two pairs.³⁶ For example, it is not a problem if new chiefs are systematically younger or less experienced than old chiefs, as long as the difference in the characteristics of new chiefs would be the same across the pairs of communities in group A and group B in the absence of the institutional change in group B.

We address the plausibility of these assumptions in three parts. First, we discuss the causes of the change in leadership in some communities but not in others following the end of the civil war. Second, we present data on the characteristics of communities at the end of the civil war, and we show that communities in cells A1 and A2, and cells B1 and B2, are very similar respectively. Finally, we discuss the most plausible reasons we might suspect the parallel-trends assumption is violated, causing the difference between cells A1 and A2, and cells B1 and B2, respectively to differ even in the absence of the introduction of elections

in the latter pair, and we provide evidence against these scenarios.

The causes of the change in leadership after the end of the war were threefold. Either the previous chief died of natural causes (54 %), had their fixed mandate end (23 %), or moved away for economic or security reasons (23 %).³⁷ In the case of the first two types of turnover, the timing of leadership changes should be unrelated to political dynamics in local communities. Indeed, it is rare for communities to force a chief out of office prematurely in Liberia. For example, when one elderly man was asked what he could do about a chief who had been forced upon his community, he said “Nothing. The only thing we are doing is to just pray that he dies so that we can put someone else there.”³⁸ The timing of the third type of turnover caused by chiefs moving away for economic or security reasons could plausibly be related to either particularly poor leadership by the chief or particularly poor local conditions. However, the long tenure of the chiefs who left for these reasons suggests they were probably not forced out by their community, and these communities’ levels of exposure to conflict during the civil war and their economic development levels are very close to the averages for the sample.³⁹

Second, we present evidence that the characteristics of the communities that experienced a change of leadership post-civil war and those that did not were otherwise very similar at the end of the war. As a first cut, figure 1 provides information on the approximate location of these four sets of communities. The open circles indicate places where the chief was elected during the civil war, and the crossed circles indicate places where the chief was not, with the lighter colored dots indicating communities with no change of leadership during the war and the darker colored dots indicating places that had experienced change. The map shows no clear geographic pattern in the distribution of the four types of communities.

[Figure 1 about here.]

Table 4 provides more information on the comparability of the four sets of communities at the end of the civil war. The top section of the table describes the characteristics of the clans included in the study during and before the war, compiled from a variety of sources, including a UN survey, geographic data, and peacekeeping records. The middle section describes the personal backgrounds of the community members living in the clan in late 2009, compiled from the household survey described in more detail in the next section. The bottom section provides information on the chief in power in each clan *at the end of the war*,

compiled from our survey of clan chiefs.⁴⁰ Columns 1 and 2 compare clans where the chief at the end of the war was appointed, and thus the change in chief resulted in a change in the method for selecting chiefs (cells B1 & B2 in table 3). Columns 4 and 5 compare clans where the chief at the end of the war was selected by elections, and thus the change in chief did not result in a change in the method for selecting chiefs (cells A1 & A2 in table 3). These columns indicate the mean of the variables with the standard deviations in parentheses below. Columns 3 and 6 display the p-value from an unequal t-test of the null hypothesis that the mean is not different across the pairs of communities.

Overall, the table suggests good balance between places where chiefs left power post-war and places where they did not. None of the differences between column 1 and column 2, or column 4 and column 5, are statistically significant at conventional levels. Still, there are a few differences that are moderately large from a substantive perspective, and where the failure to find statistically significant results could be due to low power. Below, we explain why we do not believe any of these differences pose a large problem to our inference strategy.

First, among communities where the chief was not elected during the war (columns 1 & 2), the communities that had turnover post-war were exposed to more violent events and were more likely to host peacekeepers, raising concern that any effects attributed to elections could be due to greater exposure to violence during the war, or to peacekeeping and international NGOs after the war. Yet, on other measures of wartime exposure and NGO exposure, such as the proportion of the current community who reported hiding from rebels during the war and the existence of human rights NGOs, communities where the chief left and was replaced by an elected chief do not have higher levels of exposure than places where the unelected chief did not leave. More importantly, among villages where the chief was elected during the war (columns 4 & 5), communities where the chief left office after the war also have higher rates of exposure to violence and peacekeeping. This is very important, as it means that even if real differences exist between communities where chiefs left office after the war and communities where they did not, these differences appear to be very similar across the communities in group A and group B in table 3. As a result, this difference should be captured by the trend term in the difference-in-difference analysis. Similarly, the bottom section of table 4 shows that chiefs who had been in power longer at the end of the war were more likely to be removed between 2003 and 2009 than chiefs who were more recently installed, although the results are not quite

statistically significant at conventional levels. If age and health are key factors driving turnover, it is not surprising that chiefs who had been installed longer were more likely to subsequently be removed from office. Reassuringly, this trend is also similar across both communities in group A and communities in group B, so it should be accounted for by the trend term in the empirical analysis.

[Table 4 about here.]

Finally, we consider threats to the validity of the parallel trends assumption. First, we consider whether the effect of getting a new leader in a non-democratic system is different from the effect of getting a new leader in a democratic system even in the absence of a change in the mode of selecting leaders. This could be the case if non-democratic systems benefit more from leadership changes than democratic systems, which have more subtle ways of introducing changes over time, or if unelected leaders are better able to maintain their legitimacy over time than elected leaders. In order to assess whether this is the case, we examined the effects of leader tenure on collective action under non-electoral and electoral rules, and we did not find significant differences.⁴¹

Second, we consider whether the effect of getting a new leader differs depending on the extent to which a community was affected by the war. This could create different leadership trends over time even in the absence of an institutional change if communities look for systematically different characteristics in leaders either during or after war exposure. In order to assess whether differential war experience could plausibly be generating different trends in the communities in group A and group B, we examined whether there are interaction effects between whether a clan was exposed to violence during the war and post-war turnover. Reassuringly, we do not find significant differences in the effects of getting a new leader post-war in communities with high and low exposure to violence during the war.⁴² Thus, we have found little evidence for the two most theoretically plausible explanations for why the parallel trends assumption may be violated.

Data and Measurement

The data for this article were collected as part of a broader project on peace-building in post-civil war Liberia.⁴³ As an important goal of the broader project was to make inferences about the effects of peace-

keeping, a sample of 70 clans was purposefully chosen to include the diverse types of communities that hosted peacekeeping bases, and just under half of the clans sampled actually hosted peacekeeping bases.⁴⁴ As a result, characteristics used to determine appropriate locations for these bases – minimum levels of road access, potential flash points for violence – are more prevalent in the sample than for rural Liberia as a whole. However, the sample is similar to the country as a whole on other characteristics, and it is dispersed across 13 of Liberia’s 15 counties.⁴⁵

This article draws on surveys with clan chiefs and household members in 60 clans in which we were able to collect data on both the current method of selecting the clan chief and the method of selecting the clan chief prior to the end of the civil war.⁴⁶ In each of these clans, we interviewed the clan chief. Then we randomly selected one enumeration area, and then two villages with the enumeration area for sampling. On average, we interviewed 15 civilians in each clan, with respondents selected at random within households from a roster of all household members aged 18 to 65 years old who were never combatants during the civil war. In addition, in each clan, we conducted a public goods game with 25 additional household members in the clan chief’s village.

The survey was conducted between December 2009 and January 2010. The enumeration team was managed by a Liberian research firm and trained extensively by one of the authors on the questionnaires, interview techniques, experimental protocols, and human subjects protection principles. Quality control was conducted through unannounced visits to the teams. In addition, enumeration teams regularly reported global positioning satellite coordinates to ensure that enumeration was taking place in the correct localities.

We rely on the clan chiefs themselves to report the method by which they were selected. Selection methods in which large percentages of the community were able to vote were considered elections, even if there were restrictions on who could run for office. Methods in which the final decision was made by a small group of elite were considered appointments. In relying on self-reported responses, there are always concerns about confirmation bias and measurement error. However, as discussed in more detail in the next section, we find no evidence that chiefs are more likely to report being elected in communities with greater exposure to NGOs, alleviating the concern that we are measuring exposure to Western ideas rather than actual practices.

As our outcomes of interest, we consider community members’ participation in a variety of different

collective endeavors, both through self-reported measures and through a public goods game described in more detail below. Specifically, we consider three different types of self-reported political participation – community-level participation, national-level participation and “contentious” participation. We consider community-level participation to be engagement with clan-level governance institutions, national-level participation to be engagement with national political institutions, and contentious participation to be extra-institutional forms of political participation, such as protests and riots.⁴⁷ We consider this form of political participation separately from other forms because these types of collective endeavor may harm public order and occur in contexts in which formal institutional channels have proven ineffective; as a result, for the community as a whole, these activities could be a “public bad” that a strong leader would try to prevent rather than facilitate.

Each of the three types of participation can manifest itself in different ways, and so we asked multiple questions designed to capture each type of participation. Table 5 includes the exact wording of the questions used to measure each type of participation. All of the questions asked respondents about whether they had engaged in a particular form of participation during the previous 12 months. Specifically, we measured community-level participation via attendance at community meetings, speaking at community meetings, and contacting the clan chief. We measured national-level participation through questions on whether the respondent had contacted their MP or senator, attended a political rally, or called a radio program to discuss the performance of a national-level politician. Because a national-level election had not been held during the previous five years in Liberia, we did not include voting in a national election in our measure of national participation.⁴⁸ We measured contentious participation as participation in protests, riots and “vigilantism”. We combined the different measures of each form of participation into indices of community, national and contentious participation in order to provide a clear interpretation of the effects, following the method first suggested by Kling, Liebman and Katz.⁴⁹

[Table 5 about here.]

Our measure of public goods provision comes from a real-life public goods game. In each clan, the survey team conducted a behavioral activity with 25 individuals selected from the clan chief’s village. This game assessed the willingness of community members to contribute to public goods and their ability to work

together to achieve common goals. It is a crucial part of the data collection in so far as it results in a measure of collective action that matches the outcome variable used in much of the experimental literature.

The public goods game worked as follows. Twenty-five randomly selected community members were invited to a central location in the clan chief's village and given \$100 Liberian dollars (about \$1.50 in U.S. dollars) for their participation. Then the participants were asked to vote on which of five community-level projects their community needed. (The chief was asked separately about his or her preferred project, and so we are also able to measure whether the chief shared the opinion of the plurality of community members.)⁵⁰

Once the community had voted to decide on a project, the participants were told that they could anonymously contribute some share of their payment to a communal fund. If the total contribution was at least half of the project cost, they were told that the project team would add the other half and help the community get the project. If the total amount contributed was less than half of the project cost, the respondents were told that the contributed funds would be redistributed equally among the participants, regardless of whether they contributed to the fund or not. Each participant was given an envelope, and decided how much (if any) of their payment to privately put in the envelope, which was then placed in a ballot box. Our outcome of interest is the average community-level contributions in this game.⁵¹

Conceptualizing Clan Chief Elections

In this section, we briefly discuss the causes of clan chief elections and their effect on the types of leaders selected, before moving to our analysis of their consequences for local collective action. We have argued the use of elections to select clan chiefs after the war could either reflect deference to the officially prescribed method of selecting chiefs according to Liberian law, or widespread exposure to democratic norms through NGOs and peacekeepers after the war. If the spread of democratic ideals was pervasive across the entire country, it could conceivably have caused convergence on the use of elections for clan chiefs, which would not be a concern for our analysis. However, it would be problematic if communities with greater exposure to NGOs were more likely to adopt elections, as this could confound our results.⁵²

Table 6 examines whether chiefs who report greater exposure to NGOs and human rights programming are more likely to be elected. In particular, we use equation (1) to estimate the effect of elections on

whether chiefs report (a) the operation of a human rights NGO in their community, (b) the organization of human rights workshops in their community, (c) personally attending a human rights workshop, and (d) discussing human rights with family and friends. The results provide little evidence that elected chiefs have more exposure to human rights campaigns; in fact, on some dimensions – such as previous attendance at workshops on human rights – they have less exposure, though none of the results are statistically significant at conventional levels.⁵³

[Table 6 about here.]

Next we consider the “quality” of candidates selected via clan chief elections. As discussed earlier, elections in Liberia allow citizens to play a role in selecting leaders, but do not create clear incentives with regards to re-election. In addition, they often involve aberrations from standard democratic procedures, including public voting. As a result, it is important to empirically consider whether elections result in the selection of different types of leaders, or whether they are just window-dressing.

First, we consider whether elected chiefs differ from unelected chiefs in their personal characteristics. These results are reported in the top four rows of table 7. We find that compared to appointed chiefs, elected chiefs appear less likely to be members of local secret societies (poros), although the results are not statistically significant in part due to the fact that we have missing responses for a number of leaders. Interestingly, and more surprisingly, they are significantly less likely to have held a white collar job than appointed chiefs, and they are less likely to be able to name their MP correctly. They may also be more likely to be related to the previous chief, although this result is not statistically significant at conventional levels. This suggests small groups of elites may be more likely to appoint well-qualified community members outside a clan’s ruling family than the electorate more generally.⁵⁴

Next, we consider whether elected chiefs are more consultative than unelected chiefs. These results are reported in the bottom two rows of table 7. We find that elected chiefs are more likely to report organizing the last community meeting. In addition, they are more likely to prioritize the same local development projects as a majority of their community, as measured in our behavioral activity, although the second effect is not statistically significant. These results suggest that elections are not simply “window dressing”; they make a difference to governance, though in complex ways.

[Table 7 about here.]

Empirical Results

This section reports our main empirical results regarding the effects of clan chief elections on collective action. We report the effects of elections for clan chiefs on community-level participation, national-level participation, “contentious” participation, and public goods provision. We employ the difference-in-difference strategy outlined earlier to identify the effect of clan chief elections independent of other temporal leadership trends. In the tables that follow, we estimate the effect of clan chief elections – δ_1 – via OLS using the regression equation:

$$y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 N + \delta_0 C + \delta_1 N \times C + \epsilon_i \quad (2)$$

where N is a dummy variable indicating whether the chief in power at the end of the civil war was appointed (not elected) and C is a dummy variable indicating whether there was a change in leadership post-war.⁵⁵ The difference-in-difference estimate is the coefficient δ_1 , which captures whether the effect of a change of chief is larger in places that did not use elections to select their chief at the end of the war (and therefore, the change of chief resulted in a change in the method for selecting chiefs). The participation outcomes are measured at the individual-level, and the standard errors are clustered at the clan level in these models. The outcome from the public goods game is measured at the clan level, in which case we substitute y_c for y_i in the equation above and calculate robust standard errors.⁵⁶

We begin by examining the effects of elections for clan chiefs on community-level participation. These results are reported in the top section of table 8, with the different outcome variables listed in the lefthand columns and the effects of elections on each outcome (δ_1) displayed in the righthand column. We find weak evidence that elections increased citizens’ reported levels of participation in community-level governance. In our study, elections did not have a substantively or statistically significant effect on whether respondents attended or spoke at a community meeting at the past year. Elections did increase the probability of respondents having met their clan chief in the previous 12 months, an effect that is statistically significant at the 99 percent confidence level. However, they did not have a significant positive effect on our index of community

participation.

Next we consider the effects of elections for clan chiefs on national-level participation, with these results reported in the second section of table 8. We also find little evidence that elections for clan chiefs spurred greater levels of participation in national-level politics. Elections had a positive effect on whether individuals had met with their MP or senator, called a radio program to discuss the performance of their MP or senator, and attended a political rally in the previous 12 months, but the effect is not statistically significant in any instance. Likewise, we do not find a significant effect of elections on our index of national-level participation, although this may partly be due to the weak power of the study to detect moderate-sized effects.

[Table 8 about here.]

In the bottom section of table 8, we consider the effects of elections on contentious political participation. Interestingly, we find elections had relatively large, consistently positive, statistically significant effects on participation in contentious politics. Elections increased the probability of respondents participating in both peaceful protests and violent protests, and both of these effects are statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level. The effect of elections on the likelihood of the respondent participating in vigilantism against thieves and reckless drivers is also positive, but not statistically significant. We find elections resulted in large positive increases in our index of contentious participation, and this effect is statistically significant at the 99 percent confidence level.

Finally, in table 9, we consider the effects of elections on public goods provision as measured in the behavioral game conducted in each clan. Specifically, the outcome of interest is the average amount contributed by all participants in the public goods game. In a reversal of the findings from the experimental literature, we find elections for clan chiefs are associated with *lower* contributions to public goods. On average, clan chief elections reduced contributions in the anonymous public goods game by \$14 Liberian dollars. This effect is statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level.

[Table 9 about here.]

The results in table 8 and table 9 are very similar if additional covariates are included in equation (2), as demonstrated in the on-line appendix. Neither the inclusion of clan-level indicators – such as the level

of exposure to violence, peacekeeping or NGOs – nor individual-level indicators substantially affects the results in table 8, and the inclusion of clan-level indicators does not change the size of the coefficient in table 9. In addition, the results are generally robust to dropping potentially influential observations. The on-line appendix reports the effects of elections on collective action and public goods provision dropping each of the 13 clans that experienced a post-war change in leadership one-by-one. The effects of elections on community-level always remain statistically insignificant, and the effects of elections on national-level participation remain statistically insignificant at the 90 percent confidence level in all but two cases. The effects of elections on contentious participation remain statistically significant at the 99 percent confidence level in all instances, and the effects of elections on public goods provision remains statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level in all but three instances.⁵⁷

Collectively, these findings indicate that clan chief elections do not significantly improve and may actually harm some collective action within clans. On the one hand, elections do not significantly increase citizen engagement with community-level and national-level political institutions. On the other hand, they significantly increase non-institutionalized forms of participation (protests, riots and vigilantism), which may result in (or, at least, reflect) disorder and weak governance. Furthermore, they may be associated with lower levels of contributions to public goods. In contrast, appointed chiefs appear particularly effective at keeping public order and organizing contributions to public goods. These findings are an important complement to existing lab and field experiments in that they suggest elections have less salutary effects when they supplant, rather than parallel, customary methods of appointing leaders.

Alternative Explanations and Interpretation

Our analysis of clan chief elections in Liberia is important in that it provides empirical evidence on the effects of introducing elections into traditional institutions. The Liberian case is useful because there was a clear break in the process of selecting clan chiefs, allowing us to identify the effects of introducing elections in this setting. However, it is important to consider whether there are peculiar features of the Liberian case that could either confound the introduction of elections in this context or limit the applicability of the findings. In the following section, we conduct auxiliary tests on our data from Liberia in order to evaluate

the extent to which alternative explanations may be driving our findings. In the conclusion, we discuss the generalizability of our results beyond Liberia.

One concern is that many of the appointed chiefs in our data set were selected in communities that were experiencing large amounts of displacement during the civil war. As a result, we may be capturing the effects of chiefs installed in wartorn communities, rather than the effects of appointed chiefs more broadly. In order to assess the extent to which chiefs appointed in clans with high exposure to the conflict could be driving our results, we created two dummy variables, one for chiefs installed during the civil conflict (1990-2002) in clans with particularly high displacement rates (18 clan chiefs fall in this category), and one for chiefs installed during the civil conflict in clans in which violent battles occurred (13 clan chiefs fall into this category). In fact, our main results are very similar if we drop these chiefs from the analysis, indicating it is not “war chiefs” who are particularly effective at preventing riotous actions and organizing public goods; we still find customarily appointed chiefs to be better than elected chiefs.

[Table 10 about here.]

A second contextual factor that might explain why we find less salutary effects of elections on collective action is the mechanics of elections for Liberian clan chiefs. Liberian communities typically vote in public for clan chiefs, and it is possible that this might lead to divisions within communities, low social trust, and low levels of subsequent collective action. In fact, we believe departures from “standard” electoral procedures are likely to be common when elections are introduced in traditional institutions.⁵⁸ However, we do not think this is the cause of the different electoral effects we observe in our study.

If the public vote causes voters to become aware of divisions within their communities, we would expect it to be associated with lower “social capital” and interpersonal trust.⁵⁹ As a result, we can test whether this mechanism is at work by examining the effect of elections on trust in neighbors. Our measure of trust in neighbors is from a behavioral measure embedded in the survey. In all cases, respondents were paid for participating in the survey. At the end of the survey, we asked respondents whether they would be willing to leave their payment for participation with a neighbor because we could not “make change”. The enumerator then “found” small change, so it was not necessary to carry through with this arrangement, but if individuals indicated they would be willing to have their payment left with the neighbor before the

change was “found,” we coded them as trusting their neighbors. In results shown in the on-line appendix, we show that elections have a positive, not negative, effect on trust in neighbors, although the effect is not quite statistically significant. As a result, we do not believe divisions caused by the public vote are driving our result.

A final question is whether our study is measuring the effects of a change toward elections, or simply a change in the method of selecting leaders. We cannot parse these mechanisms with our data, and it is possible that changing from elections to appointments would have similar negative effects on public goods provision. This is an important scope condition on our empirical claims – our findings do not suggest that appointments that replace elections in traditional institutions will harm collective action when elections are the status quo, only that changes toward elections from traditional appointments are associated with costs in terms of the ability of the community to act collectively. In this sense, our argument and analysis speak to only one half of the theory that “institutional clashes” cause poor governance.⁶⁰ However, given the prominence of non-electoral methods of selecting customary leaders around the world, this is a very important set of cases to understand.

Conclusion

Our study shows that when elections are introduced in traditional institutions, they may actually decrease collective action and public goods provision. Specifically, chiefs appointed through customary methods appear more effective than their elected counterparts in maintaining public order and organizing contributions to public goods.

These results provide an important counterpoint to the recent experimental literature on the impact of elections in new institutions, which has found positive effects of elections on collective action. In particular, lab experiments have consistently found elections over a component of the rules of the game increase subsequent contributions in public goods games. However, in lab experiments, the non-electoral comparison is a method of selecting rules that has little pre-existing legitimacy to participants. This may explain the more positive effects of elections in these contexts. Field experiments have also frequently found positive effects of electoral institutions on subsequent participation and contributions to public goods. Yet, in the field ex-

periments conducted to date, elections have been introduced in institutions that parallel, rather than replace, customary institutions, and as a result, elected leaders have maintained the option of collaborating with appointed customary leaders to organize local contributions to collective action.⁶¹ In contrast, when appointed traditional leaders are replaced with elected traditional leaders, this option is no longer available. In this context, elected leaders appear to have difficulty keeping order and organizing community contributions to collective goods.

Although our empirical analysis focuses exclusively on Liberia, research by other scholars in other settings is consistent with our finding. For example, in Sierra Leone, citizens show lower levels of trust in chiefs and lower rates of participation in collective action in chiefdoms with higher levels of competition for the office of paramount chief.⁶² In the U.S., American Indian reservations run by “general councils” consisting of all voting-age tribal members have worse economic development outcomes than those without this form of broad-based participation.⁶³ In Zambia, chiefs selected through more participatory processes are less likely to prioritize the provision of local public goods in their communities.⁶⁴

Of course, even if open and participatory methods for selecting community leaders hinder subsequent collective action within communities, this does not mean these methods do not have other benefits. Certainly, many customary appointment procedures have fairly been criticized for failing to consider the interests of women, minorities and youth.⁶⁵ But, as is often the case, there are trade-offs involved in institutional design. A better understanding of the costs of introducing elections in customary settings is important both to inform decisions about institutional reforms, and to ensure reforms are designed to mitigate or compensate for potential negative side effects.

Notes

¹Levi, Sachs and Tyler 2009; Lindberg 2006; Thompson 1970.

²Dal Bo, Forster and Putterman 2010; Fearon, Humphreys and Weinstein 2009; Grossman and Baldassarri 2012; Olken 2010.

³Englebert 2000; Koter 2013; Ostrom 1990; Swidler 2013.

⁴For the classic statements, see Downs 1957; Olson 1965.

⁵Blair 2013; Grossman and Baldassarri 2012; Grossman 2014.

⁶Our list excludes studies that examine the effects of binding or non-binding elections over contribution levels in public goods games, because in the first case (where the decision is binding), the amount contributed is no longer subject to a collective action dilemma, and in the second case (where the decision is not binding), elections are not effectively decision-making mechanisms. For an example, see Kroll, Cherry and Shogren 2007. We also exclude papers that consider the effects of elections exclusively on outcomes other than citizen participation and collective action, such as Beath, Christia and Enikolopov 2013a.

⁷The last studies are careful not to interpret their results as the effects of elections per se, because CDR interventions bundle the establishment of local committees with control over development funds with the introduction of electoral processes, but we include them on our list because elections are an important component of the treatments.

⁸Dal Bo, Foster and Putterman 2010; Grossman and Baldassarri 2012.

⁹Olken 2010; Fearon, Humphreys and Weinstein 2009.

¹⁰See Beath, Christia and Enikolopov 2013b, Casey, Glennerster and Miguel 2012 and Fearon, Humphreys and Weinstein 2011, respectively. We also view Olken's measure of participation in electoral campaigns as a measure of civic participation.

¹¹Dionne 2011; Huntington 1968.

¹²Horowitz 1985; Snyder 2000.

¹³For example, according to George Murdock's ethnographic atlas, just 12 percent of headmen in Africa were historically selected through a formal consensus process. See Murdock 1967. Giuliano and Nunn take a more generous view of what constitutes a "democratic tradition", considering any group that uses either a *formal* or *informal* consensus process to select leaders to have a "democratic tradition", but still report that pre-colonial societies outside Europe rarely used methods of consensus to appoint headmen, ranging from a low of 18 percent in Africa to a high of 33 percent in Asia. See Giuliano and Nunn 2013.

¹⁴For example, Logan reports that traditional leaders are reported to be more trustworthy than any set of elected leaders (whether this is the president, members of parliament, or local councilors) in more than half of the 15 African countries in her study, and they are viewed as more trustworthy than all but the president in two thirds. See Logan 2009.

¹⁵Ranger's revised views regarding the "invention of tradition" are insightful here. In many cases, methods of appointing customary leaders have changed during the colonial and post-colonial periods, but this does not necessarily prevent communities from sharing ideas about the proper "custom" for selecting these leaders. See Ranger 1993.

¹⁶Cornell and Kalt 2000.

¹⁷Swidler 2013.

¹⁸Busia 1951.

¹⁹On the importance of collaboration between elected leaders and traditional authorities for the mobilization of collective action, see <citation redacted>. However, it is also possible that the creation of dual authority structures could result in poor coordination and high levels of rent-seeking, in which case these field experiments may not capture the full *benefits* of replacing customary decision-making processes with electoral decision-making processes. See Beath, Christia and Enikolopov 2013b.

²⁰Of course, the legitimacy of traditional leaders varies greatly from place to place. Our claim is merely that – on average – these leaders will have more legitimacy than the novel institutions without any historical root in communities introduced in many experiments.

²¹The Liberian government has created paramount chieftaincies, but they have little historic relevance. See Liebenow 1987, 41.

²²Liebenow 1987, 42.

²³Ellis 1999, 198-206.

²⁴Blair 2003. See also Sawyer 2005.

²⁵Author’s interview, Monrovia, January 2011.

²⁶The fact that many of the new chiefs chosen during the war were excombatants or had close connections to armed groups raises the question of whether their appointment can be considered “customary”. However, Sawyer argues that community institutions usually played an important role both in selecting and co-opting these new leaders. For example, elders and secret society leaders were often strategic in choosing “local boys” with a “similar temperament” to themselves in order to provide protection for themselves and their community more generally. See Sawyer 2005, 49 and 60.

²⁷According to our survey, in communities where poro existed and the majority of the population was displaced, more than two thirds of clan chiefs were *appointed* during the war; in communities without poro institutions or massive displacement, two thirds of chiefs were *elected* during the war.

²⁸Bellows and Miguel 2006; Blattman 2009.

²⁹As mentioned earlier, some communities did not hold elections before the war, even though this was legally mandated, so the post-war convergence on elections cannot be explained by institutional reversion alone.

³⁰Boettke, Coyne and Leeson 2008.

³¹Although this is an important departure from current norms regarding national elections, the secret ballot has not historically been viewed as a defining characteristic of elections, as demonstrated by the fact

that the United States is usually classified as a democracy prior to the full adoption of the secret ballot in 1892. In fact, many historical proponents of democracy, such as John Stuart Mill, argued against the secret ballot due to concerns that it would promote selfish voting, rather than decisions people would be willing to publicly defend. See Mill 1991 and also Brennan and Pettit 1990.

³²Alexandre 1970; Williams 2010.

³³For the seminal work on elections as a mechanism for selecting “good types” rather than holding politicians accountable for their actions, see Fearon 1999.

³⁴There are also four clans in our sample where chiefs were removed for “endogenous” reasons or where chiefs only partly stepped aside due to illness. These clans are treated as being subject to a competing threat, and they are excluded from the analysis.

³⁵For examples, see Angrist and Pischke 2009, chapter 5.

³⁶In the on-line appendix, we demonstrate that we get very similar results if we consider only the differences between cells B2 and B1, so the results do not greatly depend on the difference between cells A2 and A1.

³⁷In places using appointments to select chiefs before the end of the war, one had their mandate end, five died of natural causes and two left for economic/security reasons. In places using elections to select chiefs before the end of the war, two had mandates end, two died of natural causes and one left for economic/security reasons.

³⁸RA’s Interview, December 2009-January 2010.

³⁹For example, one third of these clans had experienced a large violent event during the war, and on average, one third of the villages per clan were functioning at the end of the war. In the sample as a whole, 32 % of the clans had experienced a large violent event during the war, and on average, 29 percent of the villages per clan had a functioning school. Furthermore, outmigration of chiefs occurred at similar rates in communities where chiefs were elected at the end of the war (20 % of cases of turnover) and communities where chiefs were not elected at the end of the war (25 % of cases of turnover), so even if communities in which the chief outmigrates after the war are systematically different from those where this does not occur, this difference should be captured in the trend term measuring the difference between communities with and without changes in leadership. As a result, it should not bias our estimates of the effects of elections.

⁴⁰The characteristics of the chiefs in power *at the time of our survey in late 2009* are post-treatment; therefore, we discuss them in the next section. In cases where the chief changed post-war, we asked the current clan chief some basic questions about their predecessor.

⁴¹Results available in the on-line appendix.

⁴²Results available in the on-line appendix.

⁴³This broader project was developed for an evaluation commissioned by the Inspections and Evaluations Division of the United Nations Office for Internal Oversight (UN-OIOS).

⁴⁴A matching algorithm was used to find non-base communities that resembled each of the base communities on pre-deployment covariates. For full details on the sampling protocol, see <citation redacted.>

⁴⁵For a detailed comparison, see the on-line appendix.

⁴⁶We were able to collect this data for 64 of the 70 clans in the sample. An additional four clans were dropped from this study because the chief only partly stepped aside due to illness or was fired for endogenous reasons, as described in footnote 34.

⁴⁷We follow Tarrow's definition of contentious politics as "collective activity... relying at least in part on noninstitutional forms of interaction with elites, opponents, or the state." See Tarrow 1996, 874 and also Tarrow 1998, 3.

⁴⁸We cannot include questions about voting or campaigning in the 2005 election in our index of political participation because we are using the turnover of leaders between the end of the war and the time of our survey in 2010 as the source of variation on which we rely to identify the effects of elections; most of this turnover happened after 2005.

⁴⁹Kling, Liebman and Katz 2007.

⁵⁰In a randomly selected half of the clans, the clan chief was present during the exercise, while in the other half, he was not; we include a dummy variable indicating the design variant to which a clan was assigned because communities in which the chief was present contributed significantly more.

⁵¹The amount contributed to the public good will be both a function of the preferences of community members and the capacity of community institutions to organize collective action. We are not able to parse which of these mechanisms plays a larger role.

⁵²It would also be concerning if greater exposure to NGOs led to greater claims by chiefs to be elected by democratic methods, even if they are not actually employed in practice, which would undermine the validity of our measure.

⁵³In the on-line appendix, we show that we get similar results when using aggregate measures of community member's exposure to human rights and democracy promotion NGOs.

⁵⁴Another characteristic that the electorate could have prioritized in this context is the ability to provide security. Unfortunately, we do not have direct information on whether the clan chief was considered a particularly effective fighter during the civil conflict, but we do know whether the clan chief said security concerns and preventing violence was one of the major components of his job. As reported in the on-line

appendix, we do not find elections significantly changed the likelihood of the clan chief emphasizing this aspect of his job.

⁵⁵Specifically, N indicates whether the chief in power in 2002 (the year before the war ended) was selected by non-electoral methods and C indicates whether the chief in office in 2002 subsequently left office for exogenous reasons.

⁵⁶We do not include additional covariates in the models presented in the body of the article because of the strong balance across the comparison groups demonstrated in table 4. The results are similar if we include covariates in the models, as demonstrated in the on-line appendix.

⁵⁷The on-line appendix also reports the effects of elections on all outcomes in the participation module of the survey to show that the results do not hinge on the specific variables included in our indices, and provide p-values adjusted for multiple comparisons. Even using the most-conservative adjustments for multiple comparisons, we can have great confidence in our finding that clan chief elections increase contentious collective action. After adjusting for the fact of multiple comparisons, there is somewhere between a one in ten and one in four chance of finding that clan chief elections depresses contributions to public goods even if the null hypothesis of no effect is true, so we must be more cautious in interpreting this result.

⁵⁸Alexandre 1970; Williams 2010.

⁵⁹Putnam 1993.

⁶⁰Beath, Andrew, Fotini Christia, and Ruben Enikolopov 2013b; Cornell and Kalt 2000; Englebert 2000; Wade 1988.

⁶¹For an example of this type of collaboration, see the discussion in Swidler 2013, 323.

⁶²Acemoglu, Reed and Robinson 2014.

⁶³Cornell and Kalt 2000.

⁶⁴<citation redacted>.

⁶⁵Beath, Christia and Enkiolopov 2013c; Acemoglu, Reed and Robinson 2014.

References

- Acemoglu, Daron, Tristan Reed and James Robinson. 2013. "Chiefs: Economic Development and Elite Control of Civil Society in Sierra Leone." *Journal of Political Economy* 122, no. 2: 319-368.
- Alexandre, Pierre. 1970 [1959]. "The Problems of Chieftaincies in French Speaking Africa." In Michael Crowder and Obaro Ikimie, eds, *West African Chiefs: Their Changing Status under Colonial Rule and*

- Independence*. New York: Africana Publishing Company: 24-78.
- Angrist, Joshua and Jorn-Steffen Pischke. 2009. *Mostly Harmless Econometrics: An Empiricist's Companion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Baldassarri, Delia and Guy Grossman. 2011. "Centralized-Sanctioning and Legitimate Authority Promote Cooperation in Humans." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 108, no. 27: 11023-11027.
- Bellows, John, and Edward Miguel. 2006. "War and Institutions: New Evidence from Sierra Leone." *American Economic Review* 96, no. 2: 394-399.
- Beath, Andrew, Fotini Christia and Ruben Enikolopov. 2013a. "Direct Democracy and Resource Allocation: Experimental Evidence from Afghanistan." CEFIR/NES Working Paper No. 192. Moscow: Center for Economic and Financial Research (CEFIR).
- . 2013b. "Democratization, Division of Responsibilities and Governance Quality: Experimental Evidence on Local Institutions in Afghanistan." Working Paper. Boston: MIT.
- . 2013c. "Empowering Women Through Development Aid." *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 3: 540-557.
- Blattman, Christopher. 2009. "From Violence to Voting: War and Political Participation in Uganda." *American Political Science Review* 103, no. 2: 231-247.
- Blair, Robert. 2013. "Peacebuilding and State Legitimacy: Evidence from Two Lab-in-the-Field Experiments in Liberia." Working Paper. New Haven: Yale University.
- Brennan, Geoffrey and Philip Pettit. 1990. "Unveiling the Vote." *British Journal of Political Science* 20, no. 3: 311-333.
- Busia, Kofi Abrefa. 1951. *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti: The Influence of Contemporary Social Changes on Ashanti Political Institutions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Boettke, Peter, Christopher Coyne and Peter Leeson. 2008. "Institutional Stickiness and the New Development Economics." *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 67, no. 2: 331-358.
- Casey, Katherine, Rachel Glennerster and Edward Miguel. 2012. "Reshaping Institutions: Evidence on Aid Impacts Using a Pre-Analysis Plan." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 127, no. 4: 1755-1812.
- Cornell, Stephen, and Joseph Kalt (2000). "Where's the Glue? Institutional and Cultural Foundations of American Indian Economic Development." *Journal of Socio-Economics* 29: 443-470.

- Dal Bo, Pedro, Andrew Foster and Louis Putterman. 2010. "Institutions and Behavior: Experimental Evidence on the Effects of Democracy." *American Economic Review* 100, no. 5: 2205-2229.
- Dionne, Kim. 2011. "The Role of Executive Time Horizons in State Responses to AIDS in Africa." *Comparative Political Studies* 44, no. 1: 55-77.
- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Ellis, Stephen. 1999. *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*. London: Hurst and Company.
- Englebert, Pierre. 2000. *State Legitimacy and Development in Africa*. Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner Press.
- Ertan, Arhan, Talbot Page and Louis Putterman. 2005. "Can Endogenously Chosen Institutions Mitigate the Free-Rider Problem and Reduce Perverse Punishment?" Brown University Department of Economics Working Paper 2005-13. Providence: Brown University.
- Fearon, James, Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy Weinstein. 2009. "Can Development Aid Contribute to Social Cohesion after Civil War? Evidence from a Field Experiment in Post-Conflict Liberia." *American Economic Review* 99, no. 2: 287-291.
- . 2011. "Democratic Institutions and Collective Action Capacity: Results from a Field Experiment in Post-Conflict Liberia." Working Paper. New York: Columbia University.
- Fearon, James. 1999. "Electoral Accountability and the Control of Politicians: Selecting Good Types versus Sanctioning Poor Performance." In Bernard Manin, Adam Przeworski and Susan Stokes, eds, *Democracy, Accountability and Representation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Grossman, Guy and Delia Baldassarri. 2012. "The Impact of Elections on Cooperation: Evidence from a Lab-in-the-Field Experiment in Uganda." *American Journal of Political Science* 56, no. 4: 964-985.
- Grossman, Guy. 2014. "Do Selection Rules Affect Leader Responsiveness? Evidence from Uganda." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*. 9, no. 1: 1-44.
- Giuliano, Paola and Nathan Nunn. 2013. "The Transmission of Democracy: From the Village to the Nation-State." *American Economic Review: Papers and Proceedings* 103, no. 3: 86-92.
- Horowitz, Donald. 1985. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Humphreys, Macartan, Raul Sanchez de la Sierra and Peter van der Windt. 2012. "Social and Economic Impacts of Tuungane." Final Policy Report. New York: Columbia University.

- Huntington, Samuel. 1968. *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Kling, Jeffrey, Jeffrey Liebman and Lawrence Katz. 2007. "Experimental Analysis of Neighborhood Effects." *Econometrica* 75, no. 1: 83-119.
- Koter, Dominika. 2013. "King Makers: Local Leaders and Ethnic Politics in Africa." *World Politics* 65, no. 2: 187-232.
- Kroll, Stephan, Todd Cherry and Jason Shogren. 2007. "Voting, Punishment and Public Goods." *Economic Inquiry* 45, no. 3: 557-570.
- Levi, Margaret, Audrey Sachs, and Tom Tyler. 2009. "Conceptualizing Legitimacy, Measuring Legitimizing Beliefs." *American Behavioral Scientist* 53, no. 3: 354-375.
- Liebenow, J. Gus. 1987. *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Lindberg, Staffan. 2006. *Elections in Africa*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Logan, Carolyn. 2009. "Selected Chiefs, Elected Councilors, and Hybrid Democrats: Popular Perspectives on the Co-Existence of Democracy and Traditional Authority." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 47, no. 1: 101-128.
- Mill, John Stuart. 1991 [1861]. *Considerations on Representative Government*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Press.
- Moran, Mary. 2006. *Liberia: The Voice of Democracy*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Murdock, George. 1967. *Ethnographic Atlas*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Olken, Benjamin. 2010. "Direct Democracy and Local Public Goods: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia." *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 2: 243-267.
- Olson, Mancur. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Putnam, Robert. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ostrom, Elinor. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ranger, Terence. 1993. "The Invention of Tradition Revisited." In Terence Ranger and Olufemi Vaughan,

- eds, *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth Century Africa: Essays in Honor of A.H.M. Kirk-Greene*. London: Macmillan.
- Sawyer, Amos. 2005. *Beyond Plunder: Toward Democratic Governance in Liberia*. Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Snyder, Jack. 2000. *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.
- Sutter, Matthias, Stefan Haigner and Martin Kocher. 2010. "Choosing the Carrot or the Stick? Endogenous Institutional Choice in Social Dilemma Situations." *Review of Economic Studies* 77, no. 4: 1540-66.
- Swidler, Ann. 2013. "Cultural Sources of Institutional Resilience: Lessons from Chieftaincy in Rural Malawi." In Peter A. Hall and Michele Lamon, eds, *Social Resilience in the Neoliberal Era*. New York: Cambridge University Press: 319-345.
- Tarrow, Sidney. 1996. "Social Movements in Contentious Politics: A Review Article." *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 4: 874-882.
- . 1998. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tyran, Jean-Robert and Lans P. Feld. 2006. "Achieving Compliance when Legal Sanctions are Non-deterrent." *Scandinavian Journal of Economics* 108, no. 1: 135-56.
- Thompson, Dennis. 1970. *The Democratic Citizen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wade, Robert. 1988. *Village Republics: Economic Conditions for Collective Action in South India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Williams, J. Michael. 2010. *Chieftaincy, the State and Democracy: Political Legitimacy in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Figure 1: Map of Clans in Study

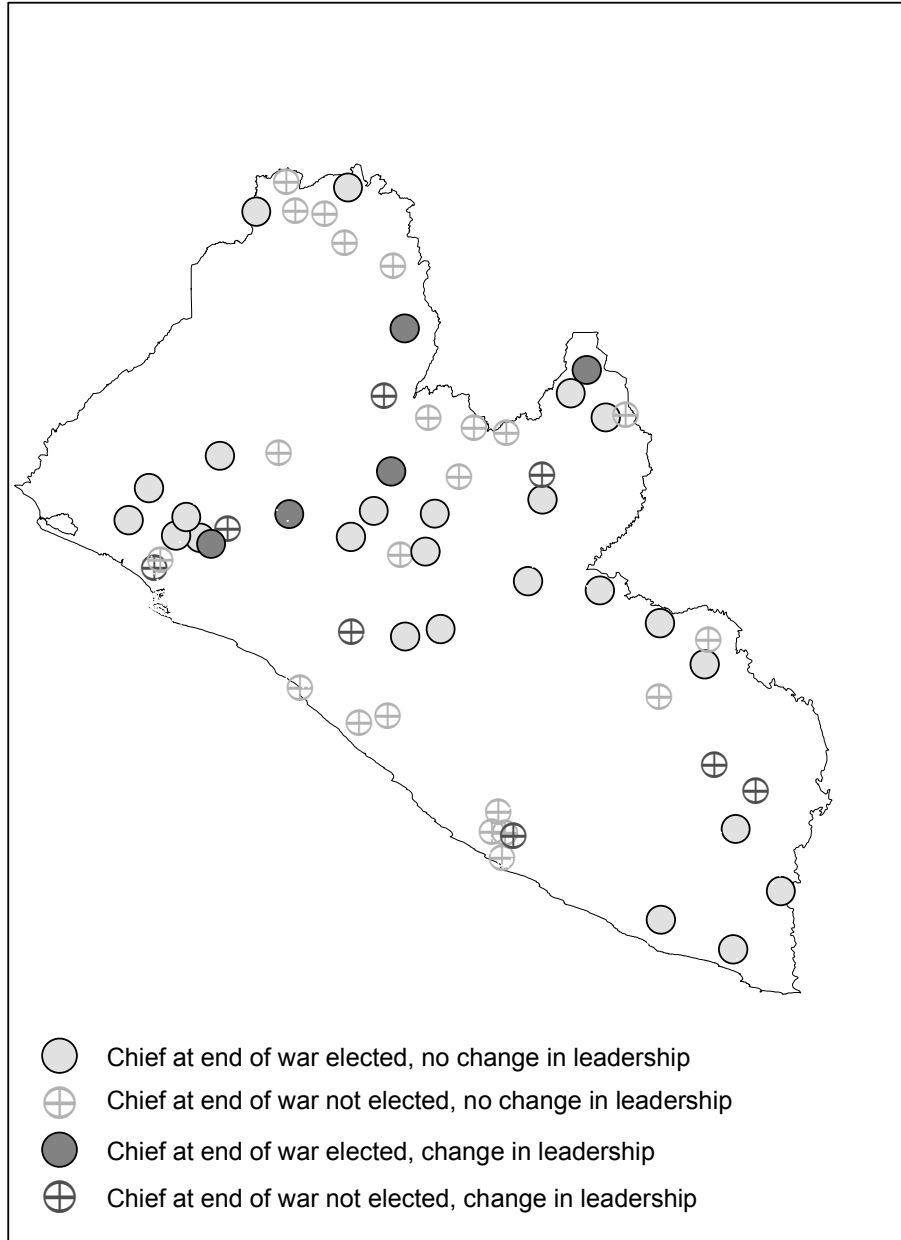


Table 1: Lab Experimental Results on Effects of Elections on Collective Action

Study	Treatment	Control	Effects on PG contributions
Baldassarri & Grossman (2011/2012)	Election for monitor	Random monitor	Positive
Dal Bo, Foster & Putterman (2010)	Election for punishment rule	Researcher determined rule	Positive
Ertan, Page & Putterman (2009)	Election for punishment rule	Researcher determined rule	Positive
Sutter, Haigner & Kocher (2010)	Election for reward/punishment rule	Researcher determined rule	Positive
Tyran & Feld (2006)	Election for punishment rule	Researcher determined rule	Positive

Table 2: Field Experimental Results on Effects of Elections on Collective Action

Study	Treatment	Control	Effects on PG contributions	Effects on civic participation
Casey, Glennerster & Miguel (2012)	Elected CDR committee (+ funds)	No CDR committee (or funds)	No	Positive
Fearon, Humphreys & Weinstein (2009/2011)	Elected CDR committee (+ funds)	No CDR committee (or funds)	Positive	Positive
Humphreys, de la Sierra & van der Windt (2012)	Elected CDR committee (+ funds)	No CDR committee (or funds)	No	No
Beath, Christia & Enikolopov (2013b, c)	Elected CDC committee (+ funds)	No CDC committee (or funds)		Mixed
Olken (2010)	Referendum on project	Community meeting to choose project	Positive	Mixed

Table 3: Study Communities By Exposure to Treatment

	COLUMN 1 No change in leadership post-war ($C = 0$)	COLUMN 2 Change in leadership post-war for exogenous reasons ($C = 1$)
ROW A Chief at end of war elected ($N = 0$)	$A1$ 25 clans with old elected chiefs	$A2$ 5 clans with new elected chiefs
ROW B Chief at end of war not elected ($N = 1$)	$B1$ 22 clans with old unelected chiefs	$B2$ 8 clans with new elected chiefs

Table 4: Balance between Communities where Chief Left Office Post-War and Communities where Chief Still in Power

	Clans where chiefs not elected at end of war			Clans where chiefs elected at end of war		
	(1) Still in office Not elected	(2) Left office Elected	(3) <i>p</i> value	(4) Still in office Elected	(5) Left office Elected	(6) <i>p</i> value
Clan-level characteristics						
Number of households (log) (2004)	6.63 (1.81)	6.87 (0.48)	0.57	7.11 (0.96)	7.27 (2.02)	0.87
Population density (1990)	33.2 (93.5)	36.2 (40.1)	0.90	27.6 (30.1)	26.1 (33.8)	0.93
Distance to Monrovia (log)	12.1 (0.55)	11.8 (0.97)	0.54	12.1 (0.68)	11.8 (0.68)	0.38
Prop. villages accessible by road in raining season (2004)	0.58 (0.29)	0.50 (0.31)	0.57	0.57 (0.25)	0.53 (0.26)	0.75
Prop. villages with functioning schools (2004)	0.30 (0.32)	0.29 (0.27)	0.89	0.28 (0.23)	0.23 (0.15)	0.56
Average rainfall (2004-07)	0.16 (0.02)	0.16 (0.01)	0.83	0.15 (0.02)	0.15 (0.01)	0.62
Whether clan was site of violent conflict during war	0.14 (0.35)	.38 (0.52)	0.26	0.40 (0.50)	0.60 (0.55)	0.48
Peacekeeping force present	0.23 (0.43)	0.38 (.52)	0.49	0.56 (0.51)	0.80 (0.45)	0.32
Poros exists	0.89 (0.32)	0.83 (0.41)	0.77	0.71 (0.46)	0.80 (0.45)	0.69
HR NGO presence (pre-2003)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	1.00	0.04 (0.20)	0.00 (0.00)	0.33
Prop. of respondents from clan who were displaced during war	0.55 (0.24)	0.54 (0.23)	0.89	0.37 (0.22)	0.51 (0.33)	0.42
Aggregate characteristics of survey respondents						
Prop. respondents working in agriculture (1999)	0.37 (0.14)	0.31 (0.10)	0.27	0.41 (0.15)	0.39 (0.13)	0.69
Prop. respondents belonged to at least one assoc. (1989)	0.54 (0.29)	0.53 (0.14)	0.97	0.62 (0.25)	0.47 (0.25)	0.26
Prop. respondents whose father attended school	0.42 (0.15)	0.40 (0.16)	0.79	0.38 (0.18)	0.43 (0.14)	0.46
Prop. respondents that “hid” from rebels during war	0.61 (0.16)	0.61 (0.10)	0.97	0.65 (0.18)	0.55 (0.15)	0.22
Prop. respondents with a family member injured by armed group	0.32 (0.13)	0.38 (0.10)	0.26	0.35 (0.13)	0.34 (0.09)	0.94
Characteristics of chiefs at end of war						
No. years installed	7.64 (6.02)	12.71 37(6.82)	0.11	9.12 (9.76)	16.00 (6.93)	0.14
Poros member	0.87 (0.35)	0.67 (0.52)	0.42	0.62 (0.50)	0.80 (0.45)	0.45

Columns 1, 2, 4 & 5 display the mean of the variable with the standard deviation listed in parentheses. Columns 3 & 6 display the p-value from an unequal t-test of the null hypothesis that the mean is not different.

Table 5: Question Wording

“Now I am going to read you a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things in the past 12 months. Did you do any of the following...?”

Community-level participation

“... Attend a community meeting?”
(If yes), “did you make a speech or an intervention?”
“... Meet or contact clan chief?”

National-level participation

“... Meet or contact your representative/senator?”
“... Call in a radio program to complain or praise your MP/senator?”
“...Attend a rally to listen to a politician, government official or local leader?”

Contentious participation

“...Attend a peaceful protest?”
“...Attend a violent protest/riot?”
Participate “in the beating of thieves or drivers who hit people with their cars?”

Table 6: Elections and Exposure to NGOs

HR NGO	0.15 (0.27) N=60
HR workshop in community	0.11 (0.32) N=58
Attended HR workshop	-0.48 (0.29) N=58
Talk about HRs	-0.07 (0.28) N=55

Table displays coefficients δ_1 with robust standard errors in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate significance at the 90, 95 and 99 percent confidence levels respectively.

Table 7: Elections and Chiefs' Characteristics

Poro Member	-0.51 (0.39) N=44
White-Collar Job	-0.40* (0.21) N=59
Know MP	-0.57** (0.22) N=56
Unrelated to predecessor	-0.49 (0.31) N=60
Whether chief organized last meeting	0.90*** (0.29) N=57
Same preferences as community for project	0.23 (0.17) N=58

Table displays coefficients δ_1 with robust standard errors in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate significance at the 90, 95 and 99 percent confidence levels respectively.

Table 8: Effects of Elections on Collective Action

Community-level participation	
Whether attended community meetings	-0.04 (0.07) N=886
Whether spoke at community meetings	0.04 (0.08) N=867
Whether met with clan chief	0.20*** (0.07) N=867
Index of community participation	0.16 (0.18) N= 889
National-level participation	
Whether met political representative	0.12 (0.09) N=872
Whether called radio program	0.03 (0.05) N=877
Whether attended political rally	0.07 (0.09) N=865
Index of national-level participation	0.27 (0.21) N= 892
Contentious participation	
Whether attended peaceful protest	0.14** (0.06) N=880
Whether participated in violent protest/riot	0.08** (0.03) N=875
Whether participated in “vigilantism”	0.06 (0.05) N= 875
Index of contentious participation	0.51*** (0.14) N= 895

Table displays coefficients δ_1 with standard errors clustered by clan in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate significance at the 90, 95 and 99 percent confidence levels respectively.

Table 9: Effects of Elections on Contributions

Average amount contributed in public goods game	-13.9* (7.3)
--	-----------------

N= 58

Table displays coefficients δ_1 with robust standard errors in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate significance at the 90, 95 and 99 percent confidence levels respectively.

Table 10: Effects of Elections, No War Chiefs

	Displacement	Violence
Index of community participation	0.15 (0.19) N=658	0.11 (0.19) N= 732
Index of national-level participation	0.24 (0.23) N=661	0.31 (0.22) N= 735
Index of contentious participation	0.45*** (0.16) N=663	0.44*** (0.15) N= 738
Average amount contributed in public goods game	-22.1** (9.55) N=42	-15.4* (8.18) N= 47

Table displays coefficients δ_1 with robust standard errors in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate significance at the 90, 95 and 99 percent confidence levels respectively.