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The effect of political favoritism on conflict *

Andreas Kammerlander[1] and Kerstin Unfried[2]

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Abstract
Bringing the model by Choi (2014) to a spatial context, we investigate and assess the link between political favoritism and internal conflict. In particular, we compare the difference in the likelihood and intensity of conflict between regions in which citizens reside that belong to identity groups of political leaders and others over time in a global sample.

Combining geo-coded conflict data with self-gathered information on the birthplaces and ethnic affiliation of 836 political national leaders and using a two-way fixed effects model with region and country-year fixed effects, we find that regions experience 10% fewer casualties while they constitute the birth region of the national leader in autocracies. We also find evidence for ethnic favoritism. Our analysis indicates that autocratic leaders use political favoritism (in armed forces) and other coup-proofing strategies to remain in power that reduce the intensity of conflict in their homelands.

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[1]University of Freiburg, andreas.kammerlander@vwl.uni-freiburg.de
[2]Bernhard-Nocht-Institute for Tropical Medicine, kerstin.unfried@bnitm.de

1 Introduction

Mobutu Sese Seko, ex-president of Zaire, is an ideal example of a national leader engaging in political favoritism and remaining in office for a long time (1965-1997). During his time in office he embezzled more than US$ 5 billion (Guardian, 2004). A considerable amount of that money went directly to his hometown Glabolite that prospered extraordinarily during that time (Hodler and Raschky, 2014b). People from his ethnic tribe benefited by receiving powerful positions and public goods. Especially when granting higher positions in the armed forces, Mobutu relied on people from his home region Equateur and from his ethnic tribe, the Ngbandi, in order to secure loyalty (CIA, 2016). The newly created Special Presidential Division, for instance, consisted only of his own tribesmen and was led by his cousin (Wrong, 2000). To address internal threats, Mobutu centralized power and demonstrated the dependence of everyone on his favor by frequently reshuffling senior commanders and purging officers whom he regarded as politically unreliable (CIA, 2016; Acemoglu et al., 2004). "Personal loyalty to the president [was] the prime criterion for top military office" (Young and Turner, 1985, p. 274).

A similar story of political favoritism and long-term survival in office can be told about Saddam Hussein, the president of Iraq from 1979 to 2003. Under his rule, powerful positions were mainly given to members of his own Al-Bu-Nasir tribe and to people from the Tikrit area. More precisely, the residents of Saddam Hussein's birthplace, Al-Ujah (south of Tikrit), held power (BBC, 2015). He created the Special Republican Guard that consisted of members of his own tribe and family. It was installed in Bagdad and in Tikrit to ensure the protection of himself and his family and act against enemies of his regime (Malovany, 2017). Resources, such as funds but also skilled soldiers, were redirected from the regular armed forces to the Republican Guard (Powell, 2019). Promotions within the armed forces were largely based on favoritism rather than on competency or merit (Powell, 2019). "Corruption, favoritism, and nepotism were endemic" (Wright, 2008). These two examples of long-term autocratic leaders engaging in political favoritism in armed forces are no exceptions. Further anecdotal evidence is available about Bashar al-Assad, Muammar Gaddhafi, Eyadema Gnassingbe and others.

The anecdotal evidence has given rise to a field of literature on political favoritism highlighting that political leaders favor their in-group with respect to the allocation of goods, jobs, and transfers. It assesses political favoritism and its effects by the difference in outcomes mainly indicators of social and economic well-being of political leaders' identity groups and others over time. The literature focuses on three identity characteristics: the location of origin, ethnicity, and family ties.[1] Using a regional approach, Hodler

and Raschky (2014b) show that economic development in the birth regions of political leaders increases disproportionally during their time in office compared to other times. Dickens (2018) and De Luca et al. (2018) find the same effect for the ethnic and co- ethnic homelands of the political leaders. This increase likely stems from a privilege in the allocation of public transfers (Carozzi and Repetto, 2016), employment and income (Fafchamps and Labonne, 2017; Colonnelli et al., 2020), public goods like infrastructure (Do et al., 2017; Burgess et al., 2015), education and health care (Franck and Rainer, 2012; Kramon and Posner, 2016), or aid programs (Dreher et al., 2019). However, Kra- mon and Posner (2013) note that in-groups are favored with respect to certain goods, but not (or even disfavored) regarding others. This indicates substitution between goodsthat all contribute to economic and social well-being.

A dimension that has received limited attention by the literature is the link between identity politics by political leaders (political favoritism) and internal conflict. Acknowl- edging the role of the state in conflicts, Roessler (2011) investigates ethnic politics and its effects on the likelihood of internal violence. He concludes that ethnic exclusion ef- fectively reduces the risk of coup though at the cost of increasing the risk of civil war. In his theory, political leaders strategically exclude powerful groups to protect themselves from coups. Combining the selectorate model (De Mesquita et al., 2003) with the model of civil violence by Epstein (2002), Choi (2014) provides a complete theoretical frame- work to study the logic of identity politics by political leaders and its effects on domestic conflict.

With this paper, we contribute to fill the gap of empirical work on this topic by providing quantitative evidence on the link between political favoritism and the distribution of internal conflict in a global sample. We build on the theory of Choi (2014), interpret itin a spatial context, and test its main hypotheses. Specifically, our research objectiveis to investigate and assess the link between political favoritism and internal conflict by comparing the conflict exposure of identity groups of political leaders during the leaders' time in office with other times in different political regimes and ascribing the differences to the strategic actions of political leaders.

This is an important research objective out of several reasons. First, it is relevant to understand whether and to what extent systematic, strategic behavior of political leaders that want to retain power affect conflict. Understanding the scope, the underlying mechanisms and political incentives of political favoritism with respect to conflict can help to prevent such processes, and to corroborate the importance of the division of power. This is crucial, as the costs of conflict are devastating and long-lasting for the

local population (Verwimp et al., 2019), and also affect human development of the nation (Gates et al., 2012). Second, we link several isolated, yet connected, streams of literature together: the literature of political favoritism with those of identity conflict and coup- proofing strategies. Third, by expanding the effects of political favoritism, we show thatthe effect of political favoritism is diverse and - taking the legacy of conflict into account - even greater than expected by previous studies. Hence, we contribute to a more precise measure of the effect of political favoritism.

Following the literature on political favoritism, our analysis employs a spatial approach and focuses on two identity characteristics: the location of birth and ethnicity. We combine self-gathered data of the birthplaces and ethnic affiliations of 836 political leaders (Dreher et al., 2020) with geo-coded conflict data provided by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) (Sundberg and Melander, 2013; Stina, 2019) around the globe. We determine birth regions on the second administrative level of a country based on the GADM database (GADM, 2019) and ethnic homelands based on the spatial settlement patterns of ethnicities from the GeoEPR2019 dataset (Vogt et al., 2015). Our outcome of interest is conflict, which we measure by the occurrence of at least one conflict event during a certain year in the respective region and by conflict intensity with the inverse hyperbolic sine of the number of battle-related deaths. Countries are classified into autocratic and non-autocratic regimes based on the World Bank Database of Political Institutions (Scartascini et al., 2018).

Our data set is a region-year panel consisting of 44,025 regions and 27 years. To address a potential endogeneity bias, we control for time-invariant regional effects and time-varying factors on the country level with two-way fixed effects. Region fixed effects absorb the geographic and socioeconomic variation in the average propensity to experience conflict and to become the birth region of the national leader, leader region.[2] We use country-specific time fixed effects (and provincial time trends) to capture yearly changes in the political and economic environment of the respective country (and to control for provincial changes in the economy and politics). Moreover, we account for time-variant regional factors like economic shocks and population growth by controlling for extreme weather events, natural-resource shocks and the logarithm of population density.

Our results provide empirical support of the model by Choi (2014). Adopting the empirical approach by Hodler and Raschky (2014b) and De Luca et al. (2018), we identify the effect of political favoritism on conflict with the difference in conflict exposure between the regions of identity groups that belong to the national political leader and others over time. We find significant and robust differences in conflict exposure between those

regions in autocratic but not in non-autocratic systems. Autocratic regions are 1.9 percentage points less likely to experience years with 25 and more conflict-related deaths while being the birth region of the current political leader as compared to other times. These regions also experience on average around 10% fewer casualties during that time. Non-governmental groups with the same ethnicity as the current political leader are less involved in domestic conflicts.

Based on the theory by Choi (2014) we argue that strategic actions of political leaders to remain in power are the reasons for these differences in conflict exposure and provide empirical evidence for that. First, in order to secure the support of followers, political leaders over-proportionally distribute public goods and transfers to their homelands, rising economic and social development and in turn reducing rebellious activities of homeland citizens (Hodler and Raschky, 2014a,b; Burgess et al., 2012). At the same time this might increase the risk of rebellion in other regions due to relative deprivation (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Esteban and Ray, 2011). Second, the over-proportional distribution of (security) goods to in-group members improves security precautions and military presence in the homelands of the political leader, reducing the likelihood of conflict. Third, autocratic leaders utilize coup-proofing strategies to prevent overthrows by the military. Among these strategies are the recruitment of in-group members for crucial military positions and public sector corruption in order to secure the loyalty of military, reducing the risk of coups especially in the homelands of political leaders (Quinlivan, 1999).

We complement the political-favoritism literature by adding the dimension of conflict and elaborating on the reasons why political leaders use identity policies. Furthermore, we contribute to the literature on the determinants of conflict. Do and Iyer (2010) show that more conflict-related deaths occur in poorer districts and in geographical locations that favor insurgents, such as mountains and forests. Additionally, the intensity of conflict has been linked to natural resources (Dube and Vargas, 2013; Berman et al., 2017), ethnic diversity (Esteban et al., 2012; Corvalan and Vargas, 2015), and income shocks (Harari and Ferrara, 2018; Hodler and Raschky, 2014a), among others. An emerging stream of this literature focuses on the political determinants of the location of conflict: Choi and Raleigh (2021) link the geography of regime support to conflict and show that the probability of political violence is highest in swing states, whereas Asal et al. (2016) estimates a higher likelihood of conflict in areas of ethnic groups that are politically excluded, in line with the prediction of classical theories of identity conflict (Caselli and Coleman, 2013; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Esteban and Ray, 2011) and the model by Choi (2014).

Our study is also linked to the literature on coup-proofing strategies. Quinlivan (1999) defines coup-proofing as a set of actions a political leader takes to prevent a military coup, including identity-based recruitment for pivotal military positions, the creationof an armed force and internal security agencies parallel to the regular military, andthe provision of individual benefits to military personnel, among others. Pilster and Böhmelt (2011) and (Powell, 2019) conclude that coup-proofing strategies decrease the effectiveness of the military, which in turn increases the likelihood of civil war onset.

2 Theory

We build on the model by Choi (2014) that combines the selectorate model (De Mesquita et al., 2003) with the model of civil violence (Epstein, 2002). It links decision making of political leaders, especially regarding the decision to engage in political favoritism, with internal conflict outcomes in different political regimes. In the following, we will briefly sketch the game theoretical, agent-based model. Afterwards, we derive our hypotheses by interpreting the model in a spatial context.

2.1 Description of the model by Choi (2014)

Set-up

The model is an infinitely repeated game. It includes four different actors: a political leader (the incumbent), a challenger, citizens, and soldiers.

Political leader: The primary goal of the political leader is to stay in power. In order to maintain power, the leader has to secure the support of the winning coalition by providing public and private goods to its members. The winning coalition is a subset of citizens that endows the leader with political power in exchange of benefits. Leader's spending is constrained by the governmental budget, which is based on tax revenues. The leader's strategy is to provide the best possible combination of tax rate and public as well as private goods to maximize the welfare of his/her winning coalition. Private goods are only offered to winning coalition members, whereas public goods are by defi- nition accessible for all citizens. To start with, the political leader chooses citizens that form the winning coalition based on his/her expectation of citizens' loyalty (continuing support). The model assumes that the leader might use descent-based identity char- acteristics such as ethnicity, birth region, or religion to anticipate loyalty. Therefore, the model attributes to any leader an exogenous variable, called coalition identity, that

denotes specific identity characteristics a leader utilizes to determine who is in the winning coalition. The leader chooses the identity characteristic that best ensures his/her maintenance in power. The chosen identity characteristic determines the size of the winning coalition. A higher value of coalition identity means that only persons with very similar identity characteristics are chosen, and more citizens are excluded from the winning coalition.

Challenger: The goal of the challenger is to take office by gaining enough support of citizens. Similar to the incumbent, the challenger chooses members for his/her winning coalition, offers a bundle of tax rate, public and private goods to citizens, and maximizes the welfare of winning coalition members. The challenger is also characterized by his/her coalition identity and a prospective budget.

Citizen: Any citizen is characterized by his/her identity differences towards the incumbent and challenger, hardship, risk aversion, and political ideology. The parameters are assumed to be fix over time. Based on their characteristics, citizens chose to support either the incumbent, the challenger, or to remain independent, by maximizing their utility that is based on the future benefits from the bundles of goods and tax rate the challenger and incumbent offer. Given that the challenger's winning coalition is not yet set, they also must consider the probability of being excluded from the challenger's future coalition. Moreover, the more the coalition is based on identity, the costlierit is for citizens with different identities to join the coalition. Based on these assumptions, a citizen will support the challenger (incumbent) if the utility he/she gains fromthe challenger (incumbent) is higher than the one of the incumbent (challenger), and else remain independent. Additionally, citizens that are excluded from the incumbent's winning coalition decide whether to rebel or not to remove the incumbent. The model assumes that only excluded citizens that receive no private goods have incentives to rebel because of the relative deprivation. An excluded citizen will rebel if the subjective grievance is considerably higher than the subjective risk of joining a rebellion. Whereby the level of grievance is defined as the product of relative deprivation and individual perceived hardship. The subjective risk of joining a rebellion is based on the risk aversion of the citizen and the arrest probability, which is determined by the ratio of soldiers to already rebellious citizens within a neighborhood.

Soldier: Soldiers are characterized by an arrest capacity that denotes the ability of successfully detecting and arresting rebellious citizens. They randomly patrol. If a solider detects a rebellious citizen, the soldier will arrest the citizen and send him/her to jail. Soldiers are assumed to be part of the incumbent's winning coalition. In addition to

a fix value of ”loyalty” any soldier has towards the leader, a soldier is motivated to fight based on the amount of received private goods. Hence, the more soldiers profit from the current political leader, the harder they will fight in order to secure future private benefits.

Further assumptions: Every leader needs the support of a certain number of persons to retain power defined by the minimum size of winning coalition, which is in turn determined by the political system. For instance, in a democracy with majority rule, the minimum size of the winning coalition equals the amount of the majority. In autocracies the winning coalition is often smaller, only incorporating elite members.[3] Leaders in large-winning-coalition-systems provide more public goods than private goods to retain the support of their coalition. In contrast, leaders in small-winning-coalition-systems shift the mix toward more private goods because they can reward a small group of supporters through private benefits more cost-effective (De Mesquita et al., 2003).

Sequence of play

1 The political leader and the challenger announce their identity coalition. They also propose their tax rate and plan of private and public goods provision.

2 Citizens chose to support either the political leader, the challenger, or to remain independent based on their characteristics and the offers of the challenger and incumbent. Additionally, they decide whether or not to join a rebellion.

3 Some of the rebellious citizens are arrested by soldiers and sent to jail.

4 If the leader retains not enough support to build a winning coalition and the challenger has more supporters than the leader, the political leader is removed from office by a lack of coalition support and the challenger becomes the new leader. In that case nature picks a new challenger and the game starts again. The leader is successfully removed by a rebellion if more citizens decide to rebel then a given turnover threshold. Otherwise, the incumbent remains in power and the game restarts from step 2.

Implications from the model simulation

The optimal strategy of the political leader depends on the size of the minimum winning coalition, i.e. the political system. In systems with large winning coalitions (typical for democracies) a non-identity-based policy is optimal for the political leader to remain in power because a higher value of coalition identity, meaning a more exclusive policy,

increases the risk of rebellion and the likelihood to be removed by regular manner. Contrary, in small-winning-coalition-systems (typical for autocracies) the optimal strategy of the political leader is to play an identity-based policy. The opposing strategies result out of the difference in the size of the winning coalition that defines the number of supporters needed and the optimal ratio of public and private goods offered. First, with increasing coalition identity more citizens will support the challenger, knowing that they are excluded from the incumbent's winning coalition. This reduces the likelihoodof the incumbent to gain enough support especially in large-winning-coalition systems. Second, the number of citizens that rebel increases when more citizens are excluded from the winning coalition and are relatively more deprived. Third, the capacity to sup- press rebellion increases with the amount of private goods offered to winning coalition members. In small-winning-coalition-systems where winning coalition members receive mainly private goods the latter factor offsets the increase in the risk of rebellion. Hence, the more the leader bases his/her winning coalition on identity, the higher is the support for the challenger and the number of rebellious citizens, increasing the likelihood of regular and irregular removal in large-winning-coalition systems. In small winning coalition systems, the likelihood of regular removal only marginally increases as the number of supporters needed is relatively small and winning coalition members face higher switching costs. The risk of rebellion shows an inverted-U shaped relationship with the level of identity politics, with the greatest risk of rebellion among semi-exclusive regimes that combine insufficient capacity to suppress rebellion and insufficient political inclusiveness to mitigate excluded citizens' grievances.

2.2 Derivation of hypothesis

We refer to identity-based policies with political favoritism as both describes the beneficial treatment of certain groups of citizens based on descent attributes by politicians.

The model simulation implies that political leaders use identity-based policies in small but not in large winning-coalition-systems in order to maintain power, whereby the size depends on the political system of the country. Generally speaking, democracies have rather large winning coalitions and autocracies have small winning coalitions (Morrow et al., 2008). (Gallagher and Hanson, 2015) interprets the minimum winning coalition as the extent to which regular and open political contestation is institutionalized in the form of elections. Based on these arguments and on findings of previous literature (Burgess et al., 2015; Hodler and Raschky, 2014b; De Luca et al., 2018), we expect that political favoritism only occurs in autocratic systems.

H_1: The effect of political favoritism on conflict only occurs in autocratic systems.

To discuss how political favoritism shapes the spatial distribution of conflict in the country, we transfer the model by Choi (2014) to a spatial context. First, we argue that many descent-based identity characteristics have a spatial dimension based on the fact that people living in close physical environments are more likely to form relationships,be alike, and be recognized as a group (Proshansky and Fabian, 1987; Schneider et al., 2005; Wagemans et al., 2012). Although these are just some of many social identity characteristics, geographical affiliation can be among the most salient (Kaplan et al., 1999). Second, we claim that political leaders will chose members of the winning coalition based on spatial identities as it is more cost-effective to provide goods to persons that are geographically clustered than spread throughout the country. This results from a cheaper provision of regional public goods, such as infrastructure, to the location of the identity group than the provision of private goods to all members spread throughout thecountry and from fewer costs to identify and target winning coalition members.

One implication of the model is that winning coalition members are economically better-off, receiving both public and private goods, and do not rebel. Previous empirical studies support this fact, showing that homelands of the political leaders have higher economic and social development (Hodler and Raschky, 2014b; De Luca et al., 2018; Kramon and Posner, 2016), and that welfare gains raise the opportunity costs of fighting and alleviates grievances (Hodler and Raschky, 2014a; Miguel et al., 2004; Dube and Vargas, 2013). Together with our assumption that the winning coalition is geographically clustered, we expect that the beneficial treatment of the members in the winning coalition will reduce the likelihood of rebellious activities in their regions.

H_2: *We expect fewer rebellious actions in the homelands of the political leader.*

More goods are distributed to the homelands of the political leader, where winning coalition members reside. In a conflict and security context, this could be goods of security precaution, military personnel and equipment. Note that the model assumes that all soldiers are part of the winning coalition and randomly patrol on the landscape. We deviate from the second assumption based on two reasons. First, soldiers are strategically send to locations where they are needed. Apart from the battlefield, soldiers are often installed in the place of residence of the political leader and his/her family in order to secure personal protection. Second, soldiers will - at least sometimes - return to their place of residence.

H_3: *We expect more soldiers and security precautions in the homelands of the political leader, reducing the likelihood of conflict in those regions.*

One coup-proofing strategy is to provide personal benefits to officers and align their interests with those of the leader to reduce the risk of coups, minimize defection andsecure loyalty (Sudduth, 2017; Harm and Charap, 1999). Pivotal groups, such as senior officers, may be bribed by the leader to maintain power (Acemoglu et al., 2004). Thisstrategy is reflected in the model in which soldiers effort to fight against rebellions depend on the amount of private goods received. The provision of private goods securesor enhances the loyalty of soldiers to the leader. This reduces the likelihood of defection from winning coalition members and increases the fight against rebellion.

H_4: We expect political and military corruption by political leaders, reducing coup attempts especially in their homelands and escalating civil conflict in other regions.

On the basis of H_1 - H_4, we derive our main hypothesis:
H_{main}: Political favoritism reduces the likelihood and intensity of conflict in the home- lands of the political leaders in autocracies.

Additionally, we formulate hypotheses investigating heterogeneous effects.

First, a necessity for the use of identity-based policies is the existence of various identity groups. Thus, political favoritism is more likely to occur in more heterogeneous countries.

H_5: The effects of political favoritism on conflict are more pronounced in countries with more identity groups.

Second, in the model political leaders are constrained by the governmental budget, which is based on tax revenues. However, there are also other forms of governmental income such as natural resources. If political leaders have access to such sources that are easily exploitable, they are able to provide more private goods to members of the winning coalition and gain their support, facilitating political favoritism and securing leader survival (Andersen and Aslaksen, 2013).

H_6: The effects of political favoritism on conflict are more pronounced in natural-resource-rich countries.

Third, in the model soldiers are part of the winning coalition and motivated to fight by the amount of private goods received, indicating corruption in armed forces by the political leader to secure the loyalty of the military and prevent coups as outlined in coup-proofing theories (Quinlivan, 1999; Pilster and Böhmelt, 2011). The use of coup-proofing strategy depends on the perceived risk of coups (Quinlivan, 1999). Assuming rational expectations of political leaders, we proxy for that with a country's' history of coup experiences.

H_7: The effects of political favoritism on conflict are more pronounced in countries with

past coup experiences.

3 Data and measurement

We focus on two identity characteristics: the location of origin and ethnicity. These attributes are non-chosen and hard to change by the individual, therefore they are ideal candidates to limit the size of a winning coalition (Fearon, 1999).

In the main empirical analysis, we combine geo-coded conflict-event data from the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) global version 19.1 (Sundberg and Melander, 2013) with information on the birth places of political leaders from the Political Leaders' Affiliation Database (PLAD) (Dreher et al., 2020). Our dataset is based on several further sources that, together with detailed variable definitions and measurements, are listed in the Appendix B. The unit of observation is region-year, whereby 'region' refers to the second administrative level of a country provided by the GADM dataset v3.6 (GADM, 2019). Our final sample consists of a panel dataset with 44,025 regions in 2,963 provinces and 172 countries over the years 1989 – 2015 resulting in a total of 1,177,805 observations.

The main explanatory variables are *Leader autoc* and *Leader non-autoc*, which are defined as dummy variables that take the value of 1 if a region is the homeland of the current national leader in an autocratic and non-autocratic political regime. In years with a change in office, two regions can be defined as the leader region. We identify the birth regions and ethnic homelands of national leaders with the PLAD database.

Our dependent variables are three different indicators of conflict. Conflict is measured a) as a dummy variable, indicating if there is any conflict event in a given region and year, b) as a dummy variable for conflict events resulting in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a given region and year or c) by the inverse hyperbolic sine function of the number of casualties.[4] The variables are based on the UCDP GED dataset, which offers information on the exact geographical location of conflict events, the involved actors and the corresponding reported number of casualties from 1989 until 2015. In one part of the analysis, we subdivide the conflict events based on the UCDP definition into state-based and non-state-based conflicts as well as one-sided violence.

The frequency and spatial distribution of conflict, measured by the number of years in which at least one conflict event occurred, is shown in figure 1. The average probability of a region to experience a conflict event in any given year is 2.2% in our sample. On average, 1.45 conflict-related casualties per region and year occur.

Apart from the location of birth we also investigate favoritism along ethnic lines following previous literature such as De Luca et al. (2018). We use the information on the ethnic affiliation of national leaders provided by the PLAD dataset in order to link the leaders' ethnicity to conflict in two different ways. First, we stick to the regional approach and observe the conflict exposure of ethnic homelands based on the GeoEPR2019 dataset (Vogt et al., 2015). Second, we link ethnicity to conflict via (ethnic non-governmental) con- flict actors provided by the Geographical Research On War Unified Platform (Growup) database (Girardin et al., 2015). This allows us to observe whether ethnic groups of national leaders are less involved in conflict events while the leaders are in office. We create dummy variables that indicate the ethnic homelands of the current political leader and identify conflict actors belonging to the same ethnicity as political leaders. Analogous to the birth regions, we separate by political regime type.

For the channel analysis, we use geo-localized data from the Afrobarometer rounds 1 to 6. We aggregate the individual survey data at the second administrative level. This provides us with regional measures for the presence of state forces (military or police) and public sector corruption. Since the Afrobarometer data is only available for 35 countries and at most 6 years, the sample is reduced to around 7000 observations.

A detailed description of all variables used can be found in the data appendix, and table A1 provides the descriptive statistics of the main variables.

4 Econometric model and issues of identification

To study whether regions are less prone to conflict when they are the birth regions of current autocratic political leaders than otherwise, we exploit the spatial and temporal variation of leader regions in 172 countries over the years 1989 – 2015. We run the following OLS regression:

$$Conflict_{rct} = \beta_1 Leader\ autoc_{rct-1} + \beta_2 Leader\ non-autoc_{rct-1} + X_{rct-1}\vartheta + \alpha_r + \mu_{ct} + \varepsilon_{rct}, \quad (1)$$

where $Conflict_{rct}$ represents one of our three conflict outcomes. The main explanatory variables are *Leader autoc*$_{rct-1}$ and *Leader non-autoc*$_{rct-1}$. These are two indicator variables identifying the region *r* that is in year *t*, the birth region of the cur- rent leader of country *c* in either an autocratic or non-autocratic regime. Note that

Leader non-autoc$_{rct-1}$ equals one if in year t the national leader originates from region r in a non-autocratic country and zero otherwise. Correspondingly, *Leader autoc*$_{rct-1}$ only identifies leader regions in autocratic countries.[5] We use the lagged form of the main explanatory variables for two reasons. First, the leader region is determined ona yearly basis. Thus, measurement error occurs due to the fact that leaders may take office at the middle or end of a year. Second, it is likely that the allocation of public goods and transfers takes some time to be carried out in a bureaucratic system (Hodler and Raschky, 2014b). In all regression models, β_1 and β_2 are the coefficients of inter-est that capture the average effect of political favoritism on conflict in autocratic and non-autocratic countries. $\mathbf{X}_{rct-1}$ is a vector of control variables including weather and natural-resource price shocks as well as population growth. All control variables enter the regression in a lagged form. α_r and μ_{ct} describe region and country-year fixed effects, whereas ϵ is the error term. We cluster the standard errors at the country level.

The determination of a political leader is not random but follows political, social and economic causes. Dal Bó et al. (2017) show that politicians are well educated and often stem from richer households. Hence, regions that are better developed and have a higher human capital share are more likely to be the birth region of the national leader. Yet, these regions are less likely to be exposed to conflict due to higher opportunity costsof fighting (Do and Iyer, 2010; Østby and Urdal, 2011). To account for the heteroge- neous initial conditions of regions that determine the likelihood of the national leader to originate from this region and experience conflict, our regression model includes region fixed effects (α_r) absorbing all kinds of time-invariant factors influencing the likelihood to be the birth region of a national leader and to experience conflict. Country-year fixed effects μ_{ct} of 172 countries and 27 years absorb nationwide shocks in a flexible manner. They account for changes in leadership, the political system such as election reforms, global economic crises or changes in the relevance of political topics. The two-way fixed effects model identifies the effect of political favoritism on conflict by the difference in the probability and intensity of conflict in birth-regions of political leaders when the leaders are in and out of office after cancelling out the average country-wide yearly change in conflict patterns.

Time-varying factors can still confound the estimates. For instance recent regional economic conditions can influence political preferences and behavior (Bagues and Esteve-Volart, 2016; Brunner et al., 2011; Chen et al., 2005) as well as the likelihood of conflict (Miguel et al., 2004; Hodler and Raschky, 2014a). Also political trends such as provincial independence efforts can shape election outcomes and result in political violence. To address this endogeneity threat, our regressions control for major regional economic shocks

with the inclusion of weather, population growth, and natural-resource price shocks. Moreover, we run regressions that (1) include provincial time trends, accounting for the average political, social and economic development in 2,963 provinces, (2) control for past conflict experiences in the country and (3) investigate pre-trends. The robustness checks validate our main results.

5 Results

5.1 Descriptive results

Figure 3 shows the average number of casualties per region before and after the accession of office by national leaders for their birth regions and other regions. In the left graph, we report the conflict trend for autocracies and in the right for non-autocratic regimes. To avoid large changes in the sample composition, we omit countries that have recently switched political regimes in the observed time period (last 5 years).

Conflict intensity is higher in autocracies compared to non-autocratic regimes at any time, consistent with the theory. The difference is largest in t=-1 and 0, where the average number of casualties augments to around 300 in autocracies and remains stablein non-autocracies. This strong rise hints toward the prevalence of coups or election violence in autocracies. Later-on, we will analyze differences in our main effect by mode of entry and transition phase.

The sharp increase in violence in autocracies can be observed in leader and non-leader regions. In the years before the immediate takeover period ($t < -1$), the difference in conflict intensity between the (soon-to-be) leader regions and other regions is very small. After taking office, conflict intensity is lower in leader regions or equal to the level in non-leader regions. Only small disparities between leader and non-leader regions are visible in non-autocratic regimes.

While the aforementioned correlations are informative, we cannot interpret them ina causal way, since these are unconditional relations. We thus proceed with a more thorough and robust regression analysis.

5.2 Regional favoritism and conflict

To establish a baseline result and test our main hypothesis H_{main}, we regress our conflict outcomes on the autocratic and non-autocratic leader-region indicators. The results are

presented in table 1. In column 1, we use our broad conflict measure, whereas column 2 focuses on conflict years with moderate to high intensity. In this specification, a conflict year refers to a year with at least 25 battle-related deaths. Column 3 reports the results on the outcome variable of the inverse hyperbolic sine of the number of casualties. All regressions include region and country-year fixed effects as well as standard controls.

As shown in column 1 of table 1, there is no significant difference in the likelihood of conflict in leaders' birth regions during their time in office compared with other times. The estimate in column 2 shows a statistically significant and negative coefficient ofthe autocratic leader region dummy on medium to high intensity conflict years. More specifically, a region is 1.9 percentage points less likely to experience a conflict year with at least 25 casualties while being the leader region as compared to other times. Relative to the average likelihood of such a conflict year in autocratic leader regions (3%), the magnitude of the effect is huge. We find no significant difference in the likelihood of conflict among regions in non-autocratic regimes.

However, the threshold of 25 battle-related deaths is arbitrary. A more flexible way to account for conflict intensity is by recording the number of casualties directly. The estimates in column 3 show that autocratic regions on average experience around 10% fewer casualties per year while being the birth region of the current leader than at other times. Again, we find no indication of political favoritism with respect to conflict in non-autocratic systems confirming our hypothesis H_1 and H_{main}. Given that over 80%of our country-year observations are non-autocratic, we also find no significant coefficienton a joint indicator of being the leader region. The results are shown in table A2 in the appendix.

5.3 Ethnic favoritism and conflict

Political leaders may not only change the allocation of public goods, job positions, and transfers to the benefit of the leaders' birth regions but also toward the leaders' ethnic tribes. To check whether members of the leaders' ethnicity are affected differently by conflict, we conduct two further pieces of analysis. First of all, we follow the approach of De Luca et al. (2018) and test whether ethnic homelands of political leaders are less affected by conflict during their time in office. The results are reported in column 1 and 2 of table 2. The coefficients on *Ethnic leader autoc*$_{t-1}$ and *Ethnic leader non-autoc*$_{t-1}$ are statistically insignificant in both model specifications. Hence, we find no indicationof a change in the risk and intensity of conflict in ethnic homelands with the leader's ethnic affiliation.[6]

Given that in some countries, there is no geographical segregation of ethnic groups and people move substantially within countries, maps of ethnic homelands are prone to measurement errors. Therefore, as a second approach, we depart from the regional strategy and analyze whether persons belonging to the leader's ethnicity engage less in conflict during the leader's time in office. This changes our unit of observation to an ethnicity-year panel. Based on the ACD2EPR dataset provided by the Growup dataproject, we identify the ethnic affiliation of non-governmental conflict actors and count the number of battle-related casualties per ethnicity in a country. A non-governmental conflict actor is defined as belonging to an ethnicity if the group recruits from the respective ethnic group and has announced that it is operating on behalf of this group (Wucherpfennig et al., 2012). The results are presented in column 3 and 4 of table 2. The estimates in column 3 show that an ethnicity is less likely to be involved in any conflict event in the country while one of its members is the national leader as comparedto other times. The ethnicity also experiences fewer battle-related deaths during that time (column 4). Thus, we conclude that organized ethnic groups belonging to the same ethnicity as the current leader are less likely to be involved in conflict during the leader's time in office.

5.4 Channels

Identity politics of political leaders may shape the intensity of conflict within a country in various ways as outlined in section 2. We consider three possibilities: less rebellious activities of citizens in the home regions due to welfare gains (*welfare channel*), over-proportional distribution of private and public goods with respect to security to leader regions (*beneficial distribution of security goods*), and political favoritism and corruption in the armed forces (*coup-proofing channel*).

The welfare channel

We investigate the welfare channel in two ways. First, we test and measure the welfare channel by comparing the effects of being the leader region on the intensity of conflict with and without controlling for economic development. If the reduction in conflict intensity is caused by an increase in welfare in the home regions, the effect should be absorbed by the inclusion of nighttime light as a proxy of economic development into the regression equation. The results are shown in table 3. The comparison of the magnitudesof the estimates of autocratic leader regions reveals a marginal smaller coefficient in the model controlling for nightlight. Hence, we find some evidence for the welfare channel.

Second, in order to identify changes in rebellious activities, we differentiate conflict

events by type as defined in the UCDP data. We divide the number of casualties into three categories: deaths related to state-based conflicts, deaths related to non-state- based conflicts and deaths resulting out of state attacks against civilians. State-based conflict events refer to conflicts between a government and another organized actor including fights between rebels and the government, whereas non-state-based conflicts refer to clashes between two non-governmental actors. We run separate regressions for each conflict type. The results are presented in table 4 and reveal that the reduction in conflict intensity is driven by fewer casualties in state-based conflict events that include fights between governmental actors and rebels, supporting hypothesis H_2.

Beneficial distribution of security goods

This channel captures the over-proportional distribution of security goods and personnel to the homelands of the political leaders and tests hypothesis H_3.

We analyze whether leaders mandate to install more security precautions in their home regions using Afrobarometer data. The use of Afrobarometer reduces our sample substantially. It covers 33–35 African countries.[7] The baseline effect cannot be replicated in this very restricted sample. Nevertheless, we believe that the additional analysis is helpful in understanding the channels of action. In the Afrobarometer surveys, enumerators are asked if they have seen any solider, policemen, their vehicles or a police station on their way to the specific survey location. We use this information as an indicator of military and police presence in the respective region and compare whether significantly more or less presence is reported in the home region of the leader compared to other regions in the country over time. Columns 1 and 2 of table 5 report the single items of army and police presence, whereas column 3 is a joint indicator of the presence of armed forces. The results in column 1 document that there is a higher likelihood of encountering a soldier or army vehicle in the birth region of an autocratic leader while the leader is in office than at other times. No significant difference is apparent for non-autocratic countries. In column 2, the results show less police presence in the birth regions of non-autocratic leaders and no significant difference in police presence in autocratic leaders' birth regions during the leader's time in office compared to other times. Hence, we conclude that there is some evidence supporting our hypothesis (H_3). Our results suggest that autocratic leaders mandate the installment of more military in their home regions.

The coup-proofing channel

Leaders might employ coup-proofing strategies to address internal threats, reducing violence in leader regions. For instance, leaders may engage in political favoritism and corruption in armed forces to secure loyalty and minimize defection (Harm and Charap,

1999). Anecdotal evidence indicates that autocratic leaders assign officers' positions to people from the own ethnic tribes and home regions, who are often less experienced and less interested in fighting (Lezhnev, 2016; Hashim, 2003). We compare citizens' perceived extent of political and police corruption over time using the Afrobarometer data to investigate this pattern. We would expect to see a higher degree of corruptionin the birth regions of leaders during their time in office than at other time, if our hypothesis is valid. The results are reported in table 6. Column 1 shows the differencein the perception of political corruption between respondents in the birth region of the leader during office compared to prior and subsequent times, whereas column 2 reportsthe difference in the perception of police corruption. Column 3 combines the two forms of corruption and provides a general measure of the perceived extent of public-sector corruption. The results show that citizens of autocratic leaders' birth regions perceivea higher level of political, police and public-sector corruption while leaders are in office. The effects are highly statistically significant.

5.5 Heterogeneity

We elaborate on the heterogeneity of the relation between political favoritism and conflict along three dimensions (ethnic diversity, natural resources and past coups) by including interaction terms of the specific factor with our leader region dummies in the main regression equation.

Addressing our first hypothesis, that identity-based politics are more pronounced in countries with many identity groups, we divide countries along their ethnic fractionalization (measured with the HIEF index) into less and more ethnically fractionalized countries at the median. As shown in column 1 of table 7, we find a significant negative effect of the autocratic leader region dummy in ethnically fractionalized societies but no significant effect in less-fractionalized societies, supporting hypothesis H_5. Specifically, the home region of an autocratic leader in an ethnically fractionalized country experiences 18.9% fewer casualties during the leader's time in office compared to other times.

Second, to test whether the link between political favoritism and conflict is more pronounced in natural-resource rich countries, we define a country to be rich in natural resources if any mine of the 14 major minerals exists in the country and classify coun- tries into non-resource and resource-rich countries. Column 2 shows the heterogeneous effects of political favoritism on conflict along this dimension. The results support the hypothesis H_6, showing that only leader regions in autocratic regimes with natural re-

sources experience fewer conflicts.

Third, we argue that the use of coup-proofing strategies depends on the perceived likeli- hood of an internal threat that is based on past coup experiences. To test this hypothesis,we divide countries into those that have ever and never experienced a coup during the past 30 years. The results in column 3 confirm our hypothesis (H_7). We find a negativeand statistically significant effect on conflict of autocratic leader regions in countries with past coup experience.

6 Robustness checks

In figure A1 we explore the time dynamic of the effect. It depicts differences in conflict intensity for autocratic and non-autocratic leader regions conditional on country-year and region fixed effects as well as our standard controls. The graph shows on average more battle-related deaths in the year of taking office in autocratic leader regions, hinting election violence. Afterwards, the intensity of conflict gradually decreases. It reachesa statistically significant, negative difference four years after the entrance into office. The estimation coefficients remain negative in the following years except for the years 5 and 6.[8] We find no statistically significant difference in conflict intensity in years prior to taking office, reassuring us that our results are not driven by pre-trends.

Our estimation strategy already captures many potential confounding factors with the country-year and region fixed effects. Nevertheless, regional time-varying factors can potentially bias our results. In the main analysis, we control for two kinds of local economic shocks and for population growth. In table A3, we provide three additional robustness checks. First, conflict and political decisions likely depend on past conflict events. To check whether our result is driven by pre-trends, we control for the share of past conflict years within the last three years. The results in column 1 of table A3 show that conflict events are positively correlated over time but the inclusion of past conflicts in the regression only marginally changes the estimates of the leader region indicators. Second, we include additional natural-resource shocks other than oil and gas as controls. For this purpose, we use the natural-resource information provided by Berman et al. (2017). The inclusion of 10 major minerals changes our regional favoritism effects on conflict intensity only marginally. Third, political trends like provincial independence efforts can influence election outcomes and potentially result in political violence. If this is the case, our estimation results so far are biased. The inclusion of provincial time trends that control for average political developments and conflict dynamics in a

province changes our estimate only marginally.

Lastly, we check whether the effect is driven by regime changes or irregular entries into office. Political transitions like the concentration of power to the leader can be accompanied by or achieved with political violence. In order to test whether the effect is driven by countries that recently switched from an autocratic or to an autocratic regime, we classify countries as switchers that changed their political system in the last five years and estimate a differential effect for these countries. The results are presented in column 1 of table A4. We find no significant difference between well-established autocracies and countries that recently switched to an autocratic system in the political favoritism effect on conflict.

Leaders, in particular autocratic leaders, may take over a country through violent means, potentially leading to an increase in conflict in the capital region. This rise in violence at the end or beginning of the time in office, may provoke a difference in conflict intensity between the home region of a leader and other regions in the country (including the capital region) that we would falsely interpret as a reduction of conflict in the home region. To check whether the effect is driven by these kinds of irregular entries into offices, we estimate heterogeneous effects between leaders that regularly or irregularly entered office as defined in the Archigos database. The results presented in column 2 of table A4 show no differential effect of home regions of autocratic leaders that enteredoffice irregularly compared to home regions of autocratic leaders with regular entrance.

7 Conclusion

In this study, we have investigated the link between political favoritism and the likelihood and intensity of internal conflict by comparing the conflict exposure of homelands of political leaders and other regions during the leaders' time in office with other times, and ascribing the differences to the strategic actions of political leaders.

Using a region-year panel with information on 836 national leaders, we combine geo-coded conflict information from the UCDP with data on the birthplaces and ethnic affiliations of political national leaders over the years 1989 to 2015. We include fixed effects along two dimensions (region and country-year) and controls for regional economic shocks and population density to assess political favoritism by regional differences in conflict.

Our results show that birth regions of autocratic leaders experience less violence while their leaders are in office compared to other times. These regions experience around 10%

fewer casualties during that time. We find no evidence for a reduction in conflict intensity in leaders' ethnic homelands, but ethnic groups that belong to the same ethnicity as the current leader are less involved in conflict. We attribute these differences in conflict exposure to the strategic behavior of autocratic political leaders that prefer their identity groups in the allocation of public goods, transfers, and public sector jobs in order to maintain power as proposed by Choi (2014). Our channel analysis shows that birth regions of the current political leaders in autocracies have higher economic growth whilethe leaders are in office, reducing the intensity of state-based conflicts in these regions though only marginally. Moreover, we find some evidence for more public security goodsin these regions during that time. Lastly, our estimates indicate that political leadersuse corruption in armed forces to protect themselves from coups.

We document a change in the distribution of internal conflict with political favoritism. The theory by Choi (2014) argues that the use of identity policies of political leaders will spur civil wars. Note that our empirical strategy is not suitable to analyze changesin conflict intensity at the national level though we show descriptively that more violence occurs in autocracies compared to non-autocratic regimes. This pattern could be interesting to investigate further.

Our results imply that the effects of biased allocation of public goods, transfers, and public sector jobs by political leaders are greater than estimated by the previous litera- ture. In order to limit the possibilities to misuse public sources and the resulting welfare losses, the power of autocratic leaders has to be restricted, e.g. in the form of division ofpower and checks and balances, especially in natural-resource rich, ethnic-fractionalized and unstable political systems that are prone to identity policies.

Notes

[1] We refer to political favoritism as all kinds of actions by political leaders that favor their in-group, including rent-seeking activities, nepotism and corruption.

[2] We will refer to the birth region of the national political leader as “leader region” for the duration of the leader’s time in office.

[3]The minimum size of the winning coalition is described in detail in (De Mesquita et al., 2003, p.51ff).

[4]We use the hyperbolic sine function, a logarithmic form, because of the non-normal-distributed pattern of conflict events and the fact that it is defined for a value of zero.

[5]In case of a regime change the indicator variables change respectively in that year.

[6] We also estimate insignificant coefficients when using the GREG dataset in order to identify ethnic homelands.

[7]We list them with the time of observation in table A6 in the appendix.

[8] Potentially because re-elections of leaders are accompanied by violence.

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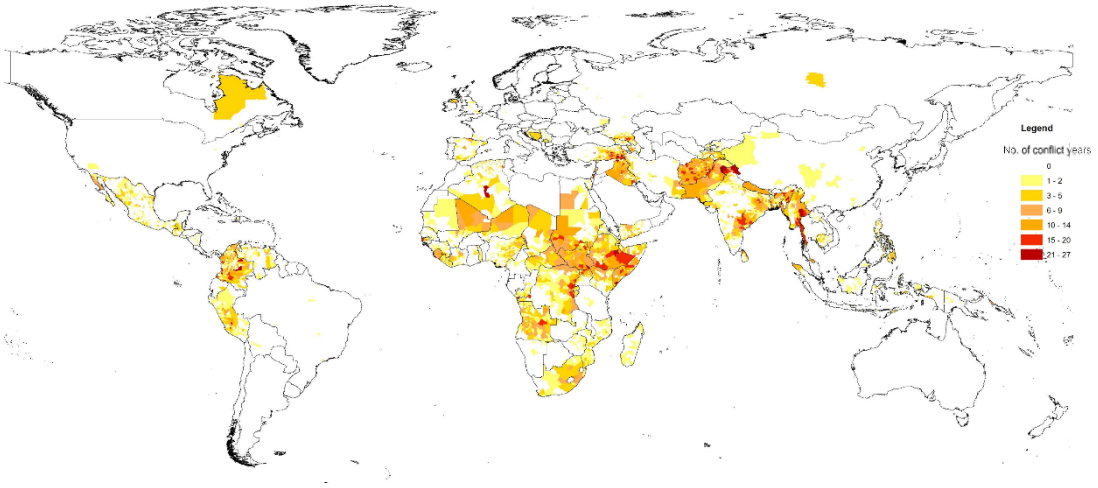
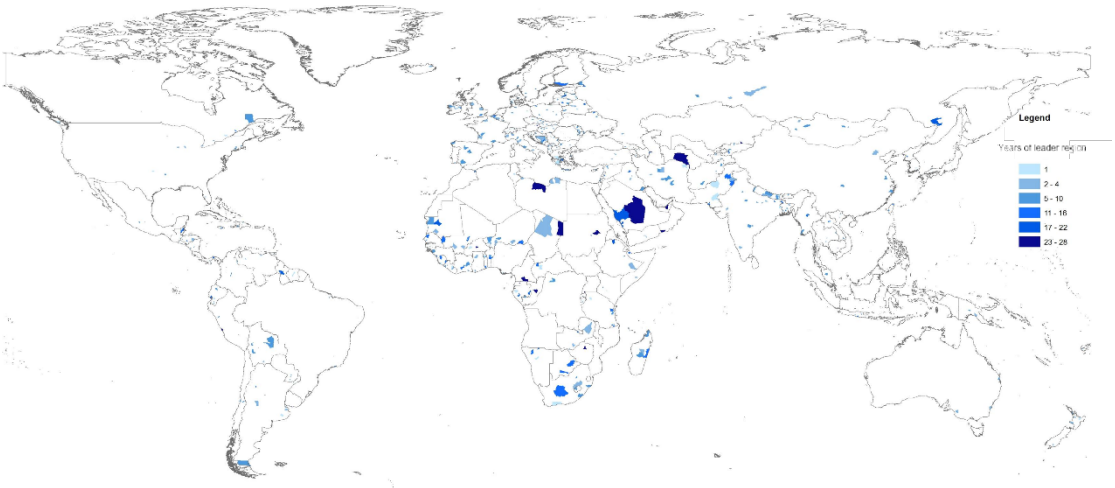
Figures

Figure 1: Spatial distribution of conflict years



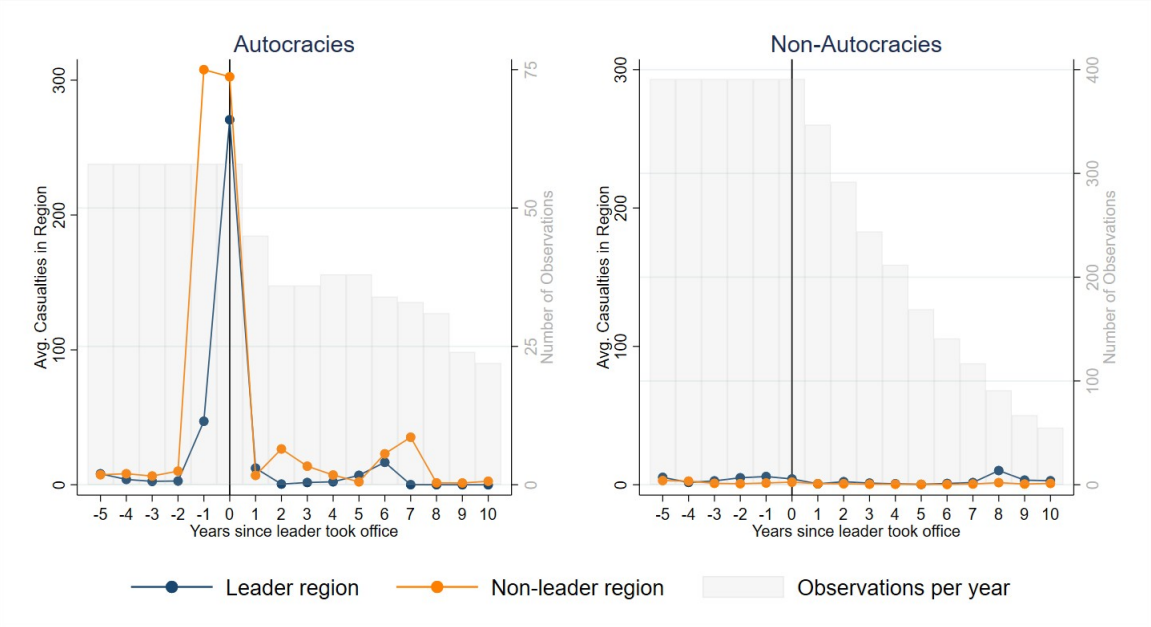
Note: The figure reports the number of conflict years for each second administrative region during the sample period 1989 – 2015. A conflict year is a year in which at least one conflictevent occurred in the region. Source: UCDP.

Figure 2: Spatial distribution of leader regions



Note: The figure reports the number of years of being the leader region for each second administrative region over the time period of 1989 – 2015. A leader region is the birth region of the effective leader during the time in office. Sources: Archigos, own data collection.

Figure 3: Evolution of conflicts before and after leader took office



Note: The figure reports the average number of casualties in leader regions and non-leader regions before and after a leader took office. 'Autocracies' and 'Non-Autocracies' refer to 'stable' regimes, where a political regime has already existed for at least 5 years. Countries that recently switched from a non-autocracy to an autocracy are dropped from the sample in this figure.

Tables

Table 1: Regional favoritism, autocracy and conflict

	Any conflict (1)	**Conflict (death $\geq$ 25)** (2)	**IHS(casualties)** (3)
Leader $autoc_{t-1}$	-0.004	-0.019**	-0.099**
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.043)
Leader $non\text{-}autoc_{t-1}$	-0.002	0.004	-0.004
	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.019)
Observations	1,177,805	1,177,805	1,177,805
R-squared	0.364	0.264	0.387

Note: The table reports OLS regression estimates of regressing our conflict outcomes on the lagged leader region dummies. Unit of observation is the yearly second administrative level. All regressions include region and country-year fixed effects as well as controls for weather and natural-resource shocks and population growth. Standard errors are clustered at the country level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 2: Ethnic favoritism, autocracy and conflict

	Any conflict (1)	**IHS(casualties)** (2)	**Any conflict** (3)	**IHS(casualties)** (4)
Unit of observation	Ethnic homeland		Ethnicity	
Ethnic leader $autoc_{t-1}$	-0.013	0.010	-0.114**	-0.845***
	(0.028)	(0.163)	(0.51)	(0.315)
Ethnic leader $non\text{-}autoc_{t-1}$	-0.011	-0.125	-0.012	-0.096
	(0.019)	(0.131)	(0.018)	(0.118)
Observations	14,921	14,921	15,094	15,094
R-squared	0.757	0.821	0.657	0.706

Note: The table reports OLS regression estimates of regressing (1-2) any conflict or the number of casualties in the ethnic homelands and (3-4) any conflict or the number of casu- alties per ethnicity (of non-state-based conflicts) on the indicator variables of ethnic leader affiliation. All regressions include country-year, standard controls and (1) ethnic home re- gion fixed effect or (2) ethnicity fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the country level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 3: Welfare channel

	IHS(casualties)	
	(1)	(2)
Leader autoc$_{t-1}$	-0.09969**	-0.09978**
	(0.04587)	(0.04586)
Leader non-autoc$_{t-1}$	0.00998	0.00973
	(0.01808)	(0.01804)
Ln(nightlight)	-0.00666**	
	(0.00305)	
Observations	957,939	957,939
R-squared	0.412	0.412

Note: The table reports OLS regression estimates of regressing the inverse hyperbolic sine function of the number of casualties on the lagged indicators of (non-)autocratic leader regions and the logarithm of nighttime light. Regression models as specified in table 1. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 4: Types of conflict

	IHS(state casualties)	IHS(non-state casualties)	IHS(civilian casualties)
Leader autoc$_{t-1}$	-0.100**	-0.012	-0.013
	(0.045)	(0.022)	(0.029)
Leader non-autoc$_{t-1}$	-0.001	0.010	0.004
	(0.014)	(0.010)	(0.012)
Observations	1,177,805	1,177,805	1,177,805
R-squared	0.390	0.188	0.305

Note: The table reports OLS regression estimates of regressing the inverse hyperbolic sine function of the number of casualties categorized by type of conflict on the lagged indicators of autocratic and non-autocratic leader regions. Regression models as specified in table 1. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 5: Allocation of security goods and personnel

	Army (1)	**Police** (2)	**State force** (3)
Leader $autoc_{t-1}$	0.057*	0.033	0.100**
	(0.033)	(0.067)	(0.042)
Leader $non\text{-}autoc_{t-1}$	-0.029	-0.099***	-0.097***
	(0.023)	(0.036)	(0.034)
Observations	6,682	6,686	7,278
R-squared	0.516	0.553	0.572

Note: The table reports OLS regression estimates of regressing index variables on the lagged leader region dummies. Outcome variables are based on the Afrobarometer rounds 1 to 6. Regression models as specified in table 1. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 6: Coup-proofing channel: corruption

	Political corruption (1)	**Police corruption** (2)	**Corruption index** (3)
Leader $autoc_{t-1}$	0.186**	0.277***	0.240***
	(0.072)	(0.063)	(0.077)
Leader $non\text{-}autoc_{t-1}$	-0.092*	-0.023	-0.055**
	(0.047)	(0.042)	(0.023)
Observations	7,106	6,717	7,270
R-squared	0.643	0.674	0.677

Note: The table reports OLS regression estimates of regressing index variables on the lagged leader region dummies. Outcome variables are based on the Afrobaromter rounds 1 to 6. Regression models as specified in table 1. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 7: Heterogenous effects

Dependent variable:	IHS(casualties)		
Interacted factor:	ethnicity	natural resources	coup
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Leader $autoc_{t-1}$	0.046	0.010	-0.041
	(0.056)	(0.037)	(0.070)
Leader non-$autoc_{t-1}$	-0.005	-0.009	-0.026
	(0.022)	(0.023)	(0.042)
Leader $autoc_{t-1}$ × interacted factor	-0.189**	-0.024***	-0.130***
	(0.078)	(0.008)	(0.048)
Leader non-$autoc_{t-1}$ × interacted factor	0.004	0.100	0.006
	(0.036)	(0.064)	(0.017)
Observations	1,089,755	1,177,805	1,177,805
R-squared	0.384	0.387	0.387

Note: The table reports OLS regression estimates of regressing the inverse hyperbolic sine of the number of casualties on the lagged indicators of (non-)autocratic leader regions. Countries are divided based on ethnic fractionalization, natural resources and past coups events. A country is classified as ethnic if the ethnic fractionalization index is above the median and as natural-resource rich if it has at least one major natural resource deposit. Regression model as specified in table 1. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

A Descriptive statistics and robustness checks

Table A1: Summary statistics

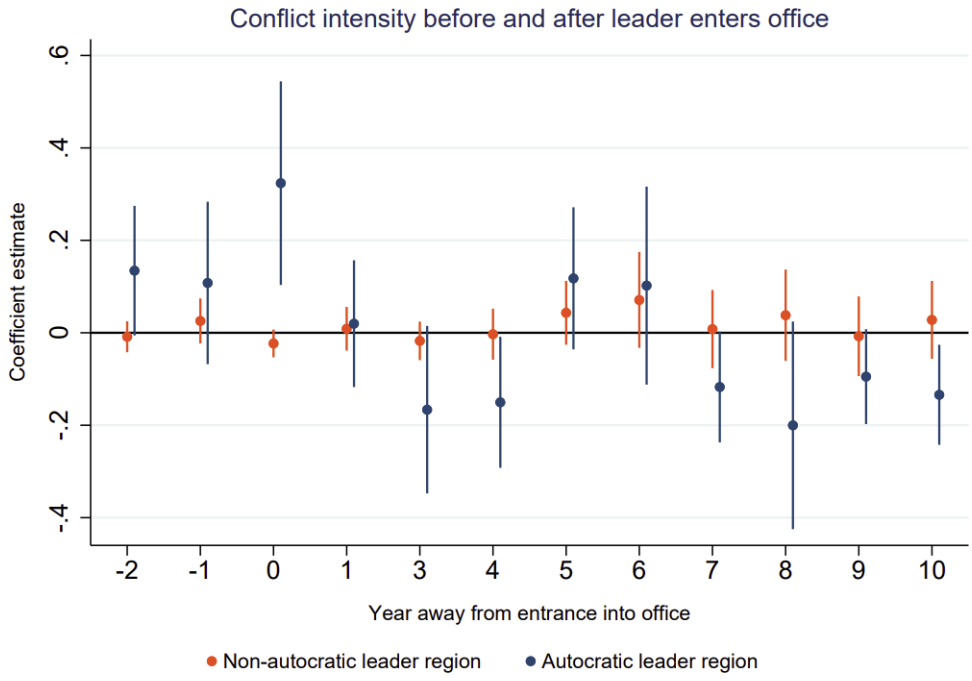
Variable	Obs (1)	Mean (2)	SD (3)	Min (4)	Max (5)
Regional favoritism					
Conflict	1,177,805	0.02	0.15	0	1
Number of casualties	1,177,805	1.47	311.39	0	321,999
Leader region	1,177,805	0.00	0.06	0	1
Autocratic regime	1,177,805	0.13	0.34	0	1
Flood (sum of months)	1,177,805	2.26	2.14	0	12
Drought (sum of months)	1,177,805	2.00	2.03	0	12
Ln(population)	1,177,805	11.83	1.70	0.99	16.76
Oil x ln(price)	1,177,805	0.70	1.45	0	4.65
Gas x ln(price)	1,177,805	0.80	1.67	0	5.19
Ethnic favoritism					
Ethnic leader homeland region	14,921	0.16	0.36	0	1
Any conflict per ethnic homeland	14,921	0.26	0.44	0	1
Number of casualties per ethnic homeland	14,921	189.45	6189.54	0	524,477
Ethnicity leader region	15,094	0.16	0.36	0	1
Any conflict per ethnicity	15,094	0.05	0.22	0	1
Number of casualties per ethnicity	15,094	39.16	493.23	0	30,628
Channel analysis					
Number of state casualties	1,177,805	0.52	32.53	0	16,060
Number of non-state casualties	1,177,805	0.08	5.77	0	2,494
Number of civilian casualties by gov	1,177,805	0.24	66.14	0	44,310
Nighttime lights	957,939	6.75	12.04	0	63
Army	7,757	0.10	0.26	0	1
Police	7,763	0.32	0.36	0	1
State force	7,763	0.25	0.28	0	1
Trust leader	8,131	1.82	0.67	0	3
Performance leader	8,137	2.82	0.61	1	4
Activism	8,236	0.98	0.59	0	5
Corruption index	8,336	2.42	0.43	1	4
Political corruption	8,190	2.21	0.49	1	4
Police corruption	7,791	2.63	0.47	1	4
Coup	1,177,805	0.14	0.35	0	1
Resource	1,177,805	0.13	0.33	0	1
Ethnic	1,177,805	0.51	0.50	0	1

Table A2: Political favoritism and conflict

	IHS(casualties)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Leader region$_{t-1}$	-0.003	-0.001	-0.023
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.017)
Observations	1,177,805	1,177,805	1,177,805
R-squared	0.364	0.264	0.387

Note: The table reports OLS regression estimates of regressing the conflict outcome variables on an indicator of the birth region of the effective leader. Regressions include country-year and region fixed effects as well as standard controls. Standard errors are clustered at the country level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Figure A1: Time dynamics



Note: The figure reports the development of conflict intensity in the leader regions over time. It gives the coefficient estimates of a full regression including dummy variables that indicate the years before and 10 years after a leader enters into office born in the region.

Table A3: Further controls

	IHS(casualties)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leader autoc$_{t-1}$	-0.086*	-0.096**	-0.101**	-0.101**
	(0.044)	(0.040)	(0.043)	(0.044)
Leader non-autoc$_{t-1}$	0.007	0.011	-0.002	-0.007
	(0.017)	(0.015)	(0.018)	(0.017)
Past conflict		0.323***		
		(0.056)		
Observations	1,053,512	1,053,512	1,089,755	1,177,805
R-squared	0.413	0.440	0.384	0.429
Country-year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Resource controls			Yes	
Provincial time trends				Yes

Note: The table reports OLS regression estimates of regressing the inverse hyperbolic sine of the number of casualties on dummies of (non-)autocratic leader regions. Regressions include fixed effects and control variables as indicated in the table. Standard errors are clustered at the country level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A4: Heterogeneous effects by irregular entry and political regime switcher

	IHS(casualties)	
	(1)	(2)
Leader $autoc_{t-1}$	-0.118**	-0.085*
	(0.054)	(0.050)
Leader $non\text{-}autoc_{t-1}$	-0.023	-0.009
	(0.019)	(0.019)
Leader $autoc_{t-1}$ x switcher	0.046	
	(0.045)	
Leader $non\text{-}autoc_{t-1}$ x switcher	0.073*	
	(0.040)	
Leader $autoc_{t-1}$ x irregular entry		-0.027
		(0.087)
Leader $non\text{-}autoc_{t-1}$ x irregular entry		0.050
		(0.072)
Observations	1,177,805	1,177,805
R-squared	0.387	0.387

Note: The table reports OLS regression estimates of regressing the inverse hyperbolic sine of the number of casualties on dummies of (non-)autocratic leader regions and their interaction terms with indicatorsof political regime switchers and leaders' irregular entries into office. Regression model as specified in table 1. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

B Data Appendix

Our analysis combines geo-coded conflict event data with information on the birth places of political leaders. The unit of observation is region-year, whereby region refers to the second administrative level of a country provided by the GADM dataset v3.6 (GADM, 2019). Using information of leaders' birth places we define a region as a leader region if the national leader was born in the respective region. Our final sample is an unbalanced panel dataset with 44,025 regions in 2,963 provinces and 172 countries over the years 1989 – 2015 resulting in a total of 1,177,805 observations. We define and describe all variables that are used in the empirical analysis in the following.

Conflict data

The dependent variables in our empirical analysis are different measures of conflict, which are taken from the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) global version 19.1 provided by the UCDP (Sundberg and Melander, 2013; Stina, 2019). It reports violent events for the years 1989 until 2018 and entails information on the exact locationand timing of the event as well as the estimated number of casualties. The UCDP GED conflict event dataset is one of the most accurate data sets on global conflicts available. We exclude all conflict events with imprecise geo-coded information, that is, conflicts for which the geo-precision is less accurate than at the second administrative level.

We measure conflict in three ways. First, we construct a dummy variable that equals one if there occurred at least one conflict in a given region and year. Second, we readjust the conflict dummy according to the number of battle-related deaths by setting the conflict variables only to one if the sum of all conflict-related fatalities in a region and year is larger than 500. Third, in order to see changes in the intensity of conflict, we use the inverse hyperbolic sine function of the number of battle-related deaths per region and year.

In an extension of our baseline regressions, we further divide our conflict variables by their actors, following the definition of the UCDP GED database, into state-based con- flict events, non-state-based conflicts and one-sided violence. According to the UCDP definition, a conflict is characterized as state-based if a government of a state is active in the conflict, whereas non-state-based conflict refers to violence between two non-governmental organized actors. One-sided violence includes attacks against civilians of any organized actor (Sundberg and Melander, 2013). We readjust the third category by eliminating the attacks against civilians from non-governmental actors. According to these definitions, we define a year to be a state-based conflict year if at least one

state-based conflict event in the respective region and year has occurred and use the inverse hyperbolic sine function of the number of fatalities in these events. The same procedure applies to the other two categories.

Data on political leaders

To identify political leaders around the globe, we rely on the Archigos database v. 4.1 (Goemans et al., 2009). Archigos lists the effective national political leaders in 188 countries during the years 1875 to 2015 and provides further information on their time in office, type of entry (if the leader came into office regularly or via a coup) and exit.

We complement the database with the leaders' geo-referenced birth places from the PLAD dataset from Dreher et al. (2020) and identify the corresponding regions on the second administrative level. Out of this, we construct *Leader region*, which is an indicator variable equal to one if a region is the birth region of the national leader and 0 otherwise. For a graphical representation of the leader regions, see figure 2.

Ethnicity

In order to investigate the effects of ethnic favoritism on conflict, we use the ethnic affiliation of national leaders provided by the PLAD dataset. We implement two approaches. The first approach is a straightforward replacement of the second administrative regions with ethnic homelands from the GeoEPR2019 dataset (Vogt et al., 2015). Using this dataset, we identify in which ethnic home region a politician was born and thus identify the leader region identically to the approach with the GADM regions. In the second approach, we change the level of observations from regions to actors (ethnicities). The Geographical Research On War, Unified Platform (Growup) database (Girardin et al., 2015) attributes ethnicities to conflict actors irrespective of where the conflict takes place. Combined with the ethnic affiliation of national leaders, we can identify which ethnic conflict groups belong to the same ethnicity than the leader in autocracies and non-autocratic regimes (*Ethnic leader autoc* and *Ethnic leader non-autoc*).

In the channel analysis, we use the Historical Index of Ethnic Fractionalization (HIEF) from Drazanova (2019) to divide countries by their ethnic fractionalization along the median. The measure is an index that classifies countries based on their ethnic fractionalization. It theoretically ranges from 0 (every individual belongs to the same ethnic group) to 1 (every individual represents an individual group).

Political regime

We classify countries into autocratic and non-autocratic based on the Database of Political Institutions (DPI2017) (Scartascini et al., 2018). A political regime is defined as autocratic if there are no consolidated democratic institutions and the leadership is personality-based. More specifically, the DPI defines a country as autocratic if it either has no legislature, an unelected legislature, an elected legislature but only one candidateor party, or if there are multiple parties but only one party won seats.

The main variables of interest are *Leader autoc* and *Leader non-autoc*. Both are dummy variables that are equal to one if a) the region is the home region of the national leader and b) the country is an autocracy in case of *Leader autoc* or not an autocracy respectively for *Leader non-autoc*. In our sample, 20 countries are classified as autocratic throughout the whole sample period, 69 as non-autocratic and 83 countries changed the political system during the period. Of the 44,025 regions in our sample, 632 regions are birth regions of any political leader, 204 regions are birth regions of an autocratic leader and 533 regions are birth regions of a non-autocratic leader.

Weather shocks

In order to account for local economic shocks, we include indicators for drought and abundant rain from the Global SPEI database (version 2.5). The database provides standardized precipitation-evapotranspiration indexes (SPEI) for the years 1901 – 2015 on a monthly basis and 0.5 degree spatial grid resolution (Vicente-Serrano et al., 2010).It measures precipitation anomalies by a standardized z-score that is constructed outof monthly precipitation data minus the potential estimated evapotranspiration. Thus,it extends the popular Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) by also taking surface evaporation and plant transpiration resulting from higher temperatures into account (Vicente-Serrano et al., 2010). Based on the SPEI index measured at 3-month scale, we define a month to be very dry if the SPEI index is equal or below –1 and very wet if the value is equal or above 1. As a measure for local economic shocks, *flood* reports the number of very wet months in a year (or very dry months for *drought*, respectively) that a region experienced.

Population density

Regions with a high number of citizens have mechanically a higher likelihood to provide the political leader. At the same time, population size has been shown to be a determinant of conflict incidence (Brückner, 2010). To take this potential confounding factor into account, we control for the logarithm of yearly population size in a region. Using data from GPWv4 (Gridded Population of the World) dataset (CIESIN, 2019), we cal-

culate the average population density for every region. Since the data is only available on a 5-year basis, we use a linear interpolation for the missing years.

Regional economic development

For a measure of regional economic development and to investigate the *'welfare channel'*, we make use of the nighttime-light data provided by the NOAA's national geographic data center of the earth observatory group. We use the Version 4 DMSP-OLS Nighttime Lights Time Series (NOAA, 2019) that provides average yearly visible stable lights atcloud free coverage on 30 arc second grids for the years 1992 to 2013.[9] We aggregate thedata on the second administrative level of a country by taking the area-sized weighted average.

Following Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2013), we use the logarithm of nighttime lights plus 0.01. Nighttime light data are a good proxy for regional economic development and especially helpful in developing countries, where precise information on a geographical fine scale are rare (Bruederle and Hodler, 2018). Using nighttime light data as a proxy for economic development mediating the relation between political favoritism and conflict, we can investigate whether the effect of political favoritism on economic development translates into changes in conflict.

Natural ressources

We use the PRIO-GRID database (version 2.0) (Tollefsen et al., 2012) to identify regions with oil or gas deposits and to account for population growth. World-market oil and gas prices stem from the World Bank.

Natural resources such as oil are another important economic factor on the local level that potentially confound the relation between leader region and conflict. We interact the world-market price of oil and gas with indicator variables that determine whether oilor gas deposits are present in a region to control for these kinds of economic shocks. As an robustness check we control for further natural resources in the same way. Therefore,we use the information from Berman et al. (2017). We also use this data in the channel analysis.

Afrobarometer

To investigate the *'Beneficial distribution of security goods channel'* and the *'coup-proofing channel'* we use information of citizens' perceptions and attitudes towards politi- cal institutions in African countries provided by Afrobarometer (2019). The Afrobarom- eter is a repeated survey on public and political attitudes that provides geo-localized

data in 37 African countries over the years 1999 to 2019. We use the survey rounds 1 to 6 and aggregate perceptions and attitudes on the second administrative level of the country by taking the average values. Our sample is thereby reduced to around 7,000 region-year observations from 35 African countries.[10]

Enumerators of the surveys are asked to state whether they have seen a soldier or army vehicle, policemen, police vehicle or station on the way to the survey location. We use these statements as indicators of the amount of security protection. All answers are aggregated on the region level, taking the weighted average. We investigate the statements separately as well as in a combined index, named *state force*.

Additionally, participants in the surveys were asked about their perception of the extent of corruption in the police and leader office on a 4 point Liker scale, which we take as an indicator of the level of corruption in the respective region.

A detailed description of the variables used can be found in the table A7 in the appendix, and table A1 provides the descriptive statistics of the main variables.

Table A5: List of countries in the main sample

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambo- dia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, North Korea, Northern Cyprus, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Congo, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, South Korea, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Table A6: List of countries and years of the Afrobarometer sample

Country	Years
Algeria	2013, 2015
Angloa	2006, 2008, 2012
Benin	2005, 2008, 2011, 2014
Botswana	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014
Burkina Faso	2008, 2012, 2015
Burundi	2012, 2014
Cameroon	2013, 2015
Cape Verde	2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014
Ivory Coast	2013, 2014
Egypt	2013, 2015
Ghana	2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014
Guinea	2013, 2015
Kenya	2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014
Lesotho	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014
Liberia	2008, 2012, 2015
Madagascar	2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2015
Malawi	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014
Mali	2001, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2014
Mauritius	2012, 2014
Morocco	2013, 2015
Mozambique	2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015
Namibia	2003, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2014
Niger	2013, 2015
Nigeria	2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015
Senegal	2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014
Sierra Leone	2012, 2015
South Africa	2000 2002 2006 2008 2011 2015
Sudan	2013, 2015
Tanzania	2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014
Togo	2012, 2014
Tunisia	2013, 2015
Uganda	2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2012, 2015
Zambia	1999, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2014
Zimbabwe	1999, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2012, 2014

Table A7: Definitions of variables

Variable name	Description	Source
	Regional favoritism	
Any conflict	Dummy variable for whether a region experienced at least one conflict event in a given year and region	UCDP GED
Conflict (death $\geq$ 25)	Dummy variable for whether a region experienced at leastone conflict event resulting in 25 deaths or multiple conflict events summing up to 25 deaths in a given year	UCDP GED
IHS(casualties)	Inverse hyperbolic sine function of the number of battle-related casualties a region experiences in a given year	UCDP GED
Leader region	Dummy variable indicating if the national leader was born in this region	PLAD
Autocratic regime	Indicator variable for whether a region is in an autocratic regime at time t. Autocratic regime is defined in the World Bank Database of political institutions as a system with no consolidated democratic institutions and a leadership that is personality-based.	WDPI
Leader (non-)autoc	Based on the autocratic regime definition, we differentiate between autocratic and non-autocratic countries. Leader autoc refers to leader regions in autocratic countries and leader non-autoc respectively to leader regions in non-autocratic countries.	Archigos, PLAD, GADM, WDPI
Flood	Number of wet months (defined as the z-score of SPEI being larger than 1) in a given year and region	SPEIbase
Drought	Number of dry months (defined as the z-score of SPEI being larger than 1) in a given year and region	SPEIbase
Ln(Population)	Logarithm of population density	NOAA
Oil x ln($price_{oil}$)	Interaction of dummy that a region has oil reserves and the world-market price of oil.	World Bank, Prio-Grid
Gas x ln($price_{gas}$)	Interaction of dummy that a region has gas reserves and the world-market price of gas.	World Bank, Prio-Grid
	Ethnic favoritism	
Ethnic homelands	Region that is classified as ethnic homeland by the EPR dataset	GeoEPR
Ethnicity	We use the ACD2EPR dataset to connect conflict actors to ethnic groups. A non-state-based conflict actor is connected to a certain ethnic group if the actor recruits persons from this ethnic group and states to act on behalf of the ethnicity.	ACD2EPR
Ethnic leader (non-) autoc	Dummy variable indicating the ethnic homeland or ethnicity that the current leader belongs to. Ethnic homeland and ethnicity as defined above.	PLAD

Variable name	Description	Source
	Channel analysis	
IHS(state casualties)	Inverse hyperbolic sine function of battle-related deaths of state-based conflicts in a year and region. A conflict is a state-based conflict according to UCDP GED classification.	UCDP GED
IHS(non-state casualties)	Inverse hyperbolic sine function of battle-related deaths of non-state-based conflicts in a year and region. A conflict is a non-state-based conflict according to UCDP GED classification.	UCDP GED
IHS(civilians casualties)	Inverse hyperbolic sine function of battle-related deaths of conflicts against civilians by governmental actors in a year and region. A conflict is classified as violence against civilians according to UCDP GED classification.	UCDP GED
Nighttime lights	Logarithm of nighttime lights + 0.01	NOAA
Army	Share of responses of enumerators that have seen any soldier or army vehicles on their way to interview per region and year	Afrobarometer
Police	Share of responses of enumerators that have seen any policemen, police station or police vehicles on their way to interview per region and year	Afrobarometer
State force	Share of responses of enumerators that have seen either army or police presence on way to interview per region and year	Afrobarometer
Corruption index	Index combining corruption leader and corruption police.	Afrobarometer
Political corruption	Average perceived level of corruption among president and officials in office per region and year; Likert scale from 0 (never would do) to 4 (yes, often)	Afrobarometer
Police corruption	Average perceived level of corruption among police per region and year; Likert scale from 0 (never would do) to 4 (yes, often)	Afrobarometer
Past conflict	Provides the number of conflict years within the last three years for a given region and year.	UCDP GED
Switcher	Indicator variable that classifies countries as switchers that changed their political regime within the last 5 years.	Archigos, WDPI
Irregular entry	Indicator variable which classifies leaders by their entry into office as defined in the Archigos database.	Archigos