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**THE ROOTS OF RESILIENCE:
EXPLORING POPULAR SUPPORT FOR
AFRICAN TRADITIONAL
AUTHORITIES**

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The Roots of Resilience:
Exploring Popular Support for African Traditional Authorities

Abstract

By 2010, it has become clear that in most of Africa, traditional authorities are a resilient lot, just as much a part of the "modern" political landscape as any constitution, legislature or local council. Analysts have proposed a wide array of possible explanations for this phenomenon, focusing variously on sources of legitimacy, issues of performance or function, and leadership qualities. They draw sharply different conclusions, most notably with regard to whether they believe that traditional authorities survive and thrive because of the preferences of the mass public, or only at the behest of the state, and in fact in opposition to the popular will. Data collected in 19 countries during Round 4 (2008-2009) of the Afrobarometer allows us to explore these hypotheses more systematically and on a larger scale than previous analyses. The findings are somewhat startling in the intensity of the support for traditional authority that they reveal, presenting a stark challenge to those who still argue that traditional leadership is an unabashedly negative and decidedly undemocratic force in Africa. While Africans find these leaders to be flawed, they nonetheless believe that traditional authorities have an essential role to play in local governance. They place considerable value on the role traditional authorities play in managing and resolving conflict, and on their leadership qualities and their accessibility to ordinary people. There is also evidence to suggest that traditional leaders play an essential symbolic role as representatives of community identity, unity, continuity and stability. In fact, the evidence suggests that traditional leaders derive their support at least as much from *who they are* as from *what they do*.

Introduction
By 2010, it has become clear that in most of Africa, traditional authorities are here to stay, at least for the foreseeable future. They are just as much a part of the "modern" political landscape across most of the continent as any constitution, legislature or local council. The nature, scope, and sources of their authority, as well as their titles, their official status, and the perks of office that they enjoy, vary widely across communities and countries. But traditional leaders are clearly a resilient lot: they still exercise public authority in at least the rural zones of most of sub-Saharan African, and often well beyond. Moreover, they have in many countries been resurgent. They have successfully reasserted themselves under the auspices of political liberalization, democratization, and decentralization, frequently succeeding in carving out new political space for themselves, especially, though not only, in the arena of local governance.

What is far less clear is why this should be so. How did these institutions manage to survive despite the frequent efforts of authoritarian states to marginalize or even eradicate them, efforts that sometimes spanned decades? And why, in an era in which electoral politics have swept across much of the African continent, has this explicitly non-elected form of leadership not only survived but quite evidently thrived, despite the fact that their very existence is seen by some as a challenge, if not an open threat, to democracy? Analysts have proposed a wide array of possible explanations for this phenomenon, focusing variously on sources of legitimacy, issues of performance or function, and leadership qualities. They draw sharply different conclusions, most notably with regard to whether they believe that traditional authorities survive and thrive because of the preferences of the mass public, or only at the behest of the state, and in fact in opposition to the popular will.

To date, most of this research has relied on a case study approach, taking an in-depth look at the chieftaincy in particular countries or communities. But the informal interviews and small-N surveys often conducted as part of these studies do not necessarily allow us to achieve a clear and unbiased view of the broad public perspective on traditional authorities. Moreover, the high degree of variability often observed across traditional authority areas (Oomen 2000; Williams 2010) highlights the need to test some of these hypotheses more systematically and on a larger scale. Data collected during Round 4 of the Afrobarometer in 2008-2009 in 19 African countries allows us to do just that. The Round 4 survey instrument contained a targeted module of questions on traditional authority that enables us to explore these questions comparatively, testing alternative hypotheses about resilience.

The findings are perhaps somewhat startling in the intensity of the support for traditional authority that they reveal. Large majorities believe that the institution should still play a significant role in local governance, and this support cuts across essentially all socio-demographic groups. These results present a stark challenge to those who still argue, in the "modernist" mold, that traditional leadership is an unabashedly negative and decidedly undemocratic force in Africa, representing a collection of unpopular collaborators with colonial, authoritarian and apartheid regimes. Instead, we find that while Africans find these leaders to be flawed, they nonetheless feel that traditional authorities have an essential role to play in local governance. Most importantly, the public places considerable value both on the role traditional authorities continue to play in managing and resolving conflict, and on their leadership qualities and their accessibility to ordinary people. In fact, the evidence suggests that traditional leaders derive their support at least as much from *who they are* as from *what they do*. There is also evidence to suggest that traditional leaders play an essential symbolic role as representatives of community identity, unity, continuity and stability.

In exploring these issues, we will begin with an overview of recent debates about the sources of chiefs' continuing support. We will then highlight recent Afrobarometer findings, after which we will use this data to examine resiliency and test a number of the key hypotheses concerning its sources.

Explaining Resilience
Mamdani (1996) offers one of the harshest and most influential critiques of traditional leaders, describing them as the institutional embodiment of "decentralized despotism." He argues that the colonial state captured traditional authorities by designating them its agents of indirect rule in rural Africa. In so doing, it made chiefs upwardly accountable to the colonial state, simultaneously divorcing them from rural

communities. All vestiges of downward accountability were eliminated, and with them went any local legitimacy the chiefs may have enjoyed. Moreover, in Mamdani's view, the post-colonial state has for the most part replicated these patterns of authority and interaction, continuing to use traditional authorities as their instruments of control over the vast rural hinterlands. He sees traditional leaders as, in short, nothing without the state and the authority it bestows upon them, having no "independent or autonomous source of legitimacy" (Williams 2010: 13), that is, no local legitimacy.

But Mamdani's argument is not without its contradictions. It is true that in the last two decades states have increasingly offered formal recognition and even institutionalization to traditional authorities, and that they have often done so with an eye toward capturing the allegiances of these leaders, and with it the votes of their constituents. But prior to 1990, as Mamdani himself notes, the record of African states' treatment of traditional leaders was much more mixed, and often as not involved efforts to marginalize or even abolish the chieftaincy, rather than use it to serve state purposes (although there are many examples of the latter as well). Yet Mamdani fails to offer an adequate explanation for how the chieftaincy has survived in the face of sometimes overt and extended state attacks, if the institution is indeed as dependent on the state for its survival as he suggests.

Englebert (2000) offers a sharp counter-argument. From Englebert's perspective, far from being the source of any chiefly legitimacy, African states have historically been in competition with traditional authorities for popular legitimacy. Rather than finding that chiefs derive what authority they have from the state, he argues instead that the fundamental problem of the state in Africa has been its inability to establish its own base of legitimacy and draw support away from chiefs and other customary sources of political authority. He notes that the efforts of historically illegitimate post-colonial states to establish themselves often took a revolutionary turn, aimed at "imposing the new state on the lives and minds of their citizens. . . . All these regimes had in common their desire to quash competing centers of institutional allegiance (ethnic identification and ethnic-based political parties were often banned, as were customary chieftaincies), to force their societies into a new mold . . ." (97). However, Englebert observes that most of these revolutionary undertakings failed to meet their goals, most notably because "the resilience of alternative loyalties remained too high."(98) According to Englebert, Africa's neopatrimonial politics in fact arises from the redirection of the states' efforts toward co-opting customary authorities after their attempts to overthrown them failed, with an eye toward capturing the loyalty of their many followers. Most importantly for the purposes of this discussion, he finds that far from ruling merely at the behest of the state, the authority of customary leaders is independent of the state, resilient, and rooted in the historical continuity of the institution and its moral claim to rule.

Williams (2010) delves further into the claims of chiefs in South Africa to historical and moral legitimacy, regarding the moral claims of the chieftaincy as a key source of sustained popular legitimacy. He contends that much as Mamdani may have been correct that the colonial use of indirect rule changed the institution of traditional authority in fundamental ways, this did not sever the moral and ideological connections between chiefs and their communities. He finds evidence in South Africa that communities "wanted the chieftaincy to continue not only for what it *did* on a daily basis, but because of what it *meant* to the community in the broader sense." (26, emphasis in original)   In addition to resolving disputes or helping to provide development (and to a lesser extent, maintain law and order and allocate land), he found frequent reference to the role of the chieftaincy in securing "discipline, dignity, and respect" for the community, and providing the foundations for communal harmony and unity (26).

At the same time, Williams asserts that chiefs' role as a symbol of unity is neither uncontested nor sufficient to secure their position in society. He presents a "multiple legitimacies" framework, with important roots in Ekeh's (1975) work on the "two publics" in Africa and Galvan's (2004) analysis of institutional syncretism (see also Schaffer 1998; Schatzberg 2001; and Sklar 1999). He argues that the public assesses the claims of both the state and traditional leaders to moral legitimacy alongside of their claims to "performance legitimacy," which in South Africa, and likely in most of Africa, is rooted in the delivery of development and

social services. He identifies this as a second arena of both cooperation and conflict between the state and the chieftaincy (though perhaps in Williams' view more often the latter) as both seek to claim credit for successes and shift blame for failures. But most importantly, he cites performance legitimacy as "a critical part of the overall legitimation process" (29) – traditional leaders, he argues, cannot survive on moral authority alone.

This issue of performance is in fact an increasingly prevalent, perhaps dominant, thread in the most recent literature on the role and resilience of traditional authorities. The crux of the performance argument is that the main reason traditional leaders continue to be important to rural communities is because of the failure of the state, at both central and especially local levels, to perform or provide an effective alternative (Dionne 2010, LiPuma and Koelble 2009; Bratton *et al.* 2005; see also Williams 2010: 14-16). Local governments, on average, receive very poor performance ratings in most of Africa (Bratton 2010). The explanations for why this is so are varied. Ntsebeza (2005) focuses on the impacts of globalization. He argues that the global dominance of the neo-liberal agenda, which minimizes the role of the state in the economy, has produced weak states that may control the instruments of coercion, but that are helpless when it comes to delivering services and development in rural areas. Others focus on the lack of elite commitment to decentralization, leaving nascent local governments powerless and thus irrelevant (Ribot 2001), or the lack of sufficient state resources and capacity – both human and financial – to establish a fully functioning local government system (Bratton *et al*. 2005; Keulder 1998). Still others highlight the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of a corrupt and often anti-developmental state. In some cases, such as Malawi and Namibia, functioning local governments have simply never been introduced, or have been established so recently that traditional leaders still remain virtually the only source of public authority in rural areas.

But whatever the sources of poor government performance, an often implicit, and sometimes explicit, assumption of performance-based explanations is that for lack of a better alternative, local communities are essentially forced, often against their will, to rely on traditional authorities to help them secure their most basic needs. According to Ntsebeza, for example, "The argument that traditional authorities and their structures are popular because rural residents utlise them is specious because using alternative authorities is not practical and the options of rural residents to oppose the present structures are very limited." (2004: 85-86). But whether or not local communities are viewed as willing or unwilling followers of chiefs in the absence of an effective state, the implication of this explanatory framework is that, if and when government institutions, especially at the local level, become more effective in the delivery of public goods and services, this will signal the beginning of the end for traditional authorities. They will no longer be a necessity for survival, and their resilience would thus be threatened.

Ntsebeza (2004, 2005) focuses the core of his argument, however, not on performance but on function. Taking Mamdani as his starting point, he argues that traditional authorities are accountable upward, not downward, and are often feared by local communities, rarely respected by them. But he moves the discussion out of the realm of macro-level existential debates about morality and legitimacy, and into the much more pragmatic realm of the incentives people face in their day-to-day struggles for existence. With reference especially to South Africa, he argues that the ability of traditional authorities to survive in the face of such adversity, including what he perceives to be a hostile rural peasantry, as well as a sometimes-hostile state, can be directly measured by the extent to which chiefs continue to control land allocation. In southern Africa, he finds that "traditional authorities derive their authority from their control of the land allocation process, rather than their popularity amongst their subjects . . . the need for land . . . compelled rural residents willy-nilly to cooperate with traditional authorities." (2005: 22)

Linking functional and performance-based arguments, Ribot (2001) has drawn similar conclusions. Arguing that traditional authorities are "not necessarily representative, legitimate or even liked by local populations" (70) he likewise concludes that it is chiefs' continued control over land and other resources that allows them to maintain their leadership positions. He suggests that local governments have been left in the cold by central governments unwilling to take the risk of devolving real powers – including control over resource management – to them, and "An elected body that is not empowered to effectively address the needs of its

constituents is not likely to be highly respected in the community"(45). In short, in Ribot's view, legitimacy follows power; as long as chiefs continue to control critical resources, community members will turn to them, not because they like or respect them, but because it is the only way to get things done and meet their critical needs, especially for access to land.

A similar functional argument, albeit usually less negatively cast, might be made about the critical role chiefs still play in adjudicating disputes and managing conflict, at the family, intra- and sometimes inter-communal levels. The specifics of chiefs' duties vary widely across countries and communities. But with their particular knowledge of community histories and traditions, as well as, in many cases, of the individuals involved, traditional authorities are often regarded as much better suited for handling dispute resolution and conflict management than formal organs of the state such as the police and courts, or local councils (Logan 2008). We could therefore posit that it is chiefs' role in resolving local disputes and managing communal conflict, rather than, or in addition to, their control over land, that makes them indispensable in the eyes of community members.

Alternatively, chiefs' role in representing and preserving the culture and identity of community members may be a key driver of popular support. Traditional leaders may fulfill this function not just through the specific cultural and ceremonial roles that they play, but through their very existence as an institutional symbol of an enduring community and the norms and values that have shaped it (however changed they may be from the pre-colonial era). Williams (2010) suggests that: "The notion that the people are bound together with the chieftaincy and that the chieftaincy gives meaning to the identity of the people is an extremely powerful idea that might be difficult for many to take seriously" (26). Of course, it is also possible to cast this chiefly function as a symbol of communal identity in a more negative light as well, since the communities that traditional authorities symbolize and represent are, most of the time, sub-national, and ethnically-based. To the extent that allegiance to a chief and the community he or she represents comes *at the expense of* allegiance to national identity, support for chiefs might be regarded as bad for political stability and the African nation-state. And this concern may be especially pronounced in those countries where ethnic tensions are high. However, the notion that "identity" is a zero-sum concept, and that allegiance to one identity only comes at the expense of another, is open to question. As MacLean (2010) notes, "Local identities are not being definitively crushed or progressively replaced with attachment to the nation-state, but instead being reconstructed in complicated and particular ways. . . . citizenship today is not a simple, linear zero-sum competition between national and other competing identities." (212) We will return to this issue later in the discussion.

Finally, we turn to explanations that are based not on *what* chiefs do but on *how* they do it, i.e., a set of explanations that privileges the characteristics of traditional authorities and the ways in which they interact with their communities, rather than the outcomes. Traditional leaders' "closeness to the people" is typically regarded as one of the key advantages of the institution. Chiefs usually reside in close physical proximity to the communities they serve. But even more importantly, these institutions tend to function according to norms and rules – both formal and often informal – with which people are deeply familiar. Proximity and familiarity are likely to enhance participation and accessibility (Logan 2002; Oomen 2000; Owusu 1992). People know, for example, how and when they can approach chiefs to raise problems or voice their needs. And closeness and familiarity may also yield accountability in some forms, albeit rarely in an electoral sense. Certainly, as Williams (2010) makes clear, community members do have *expectations* of what the chieftaincy should do for them. And to the extent that people understand the (mostly informal) rules under which chiefs operate, they know when those rules are violated, and they know what steps they can take to achieve redress. At the same time, proximity also means that chiefs tend to be intimately familiar with their communities and the needs of their constituents (Dionne 2010).

Politicians and civil servants, on the other hand, are often further removed from the communities that they are supposed to serve. They tend to be more educated and "modernized" than chiefs (Logan 2002), often answer to their political parties or to central governments more than to local communities (Ribot 2001), and frequently come from outside these communities rather than being embedded within them (Helle-Valle

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2002). Helle-Valle (2002), for example, paints a picture of stark contrast between how chiefs and civil servants operate in rural Batswana communities, with chiefs operating far more in the open – both literally and figuratively – than their formal government counterparts. And Logan (2009) reports survey findings showing that Africans tend to rate their traditional leaders modestly higher than elected leaders in terms of their trustworthiness and willingness to listen to ordinary people, as well as their freedom from corruption. Moreover, politicians and civil servants operate within a system of local government – possibly, though not necessarily, democratic and decentralized – that is, relatively speaking, a recent innovation in most of Africa. They are thus governed (officially at least) by a set of formal rules and norms that are not deeply ingrained in local culture. As such, in at least some respects state institutions of local governance may be less accessible, participatory, and accountable than institutions of traditional authority. In short, then, this explanation suggests that it is the familiarity and accessibility of traditional authorities that fundamentally underlies the continuing value that local communities place in them.

Finally, it is worth noting yet another alternative explanation for resilience that emerges from this discussion of leadership attributes and the prior review of performance-based explanations. In short, as noted, many of the performance-based arguments for the resilience of traditional leaders focus on the failures of formal government institutions, leaving traditional authorities as the only viable alternative. However, a significant variant of this argument takes a more positive view, suggesting that, because chiefs may have better access to and awareness of their communities, it is therefore beneficial – perhaps even essential – that they *work together* with local governments in order for communities to achieve development. In short, from this perspective chiefs are valued not as an *alternative* to local government, but rather as a critical *complement* to it (see e.g., Williams 2010; Logan 2009; Oomen 2000; Owusu 1996).

We now turn to a review of recent Afrobarometer data on attitudes relating to traditional authorities, which will serve as the basis for testing may of these alternative hypotheses regarding the resilience of traditional leaders in the following sections.

Traditional Leaders and the Exercise of Local Authority, Circa 2008
The data reported on here were gathered in over 26,000 face-to-face interviews conducted in 19 countries in 2008-2009 during Round 4 of the Afrobarometer.[1] The Afrobarometer implements nationally representative, clustered, stratified area probability samples in which every adult citizen has an equal and known chance of inclusion. Sample sizes range from approximately 1200 to 2400 respondents per country. However, in the statistics reported here, the data are weighted to represent each country equally (n=1200). The country-level margin of sampling error never exceeds 3 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. We caution the reader that because Afrobarometer surveys are concentrated in countries that have undergone at least some degree of political and economic liberalization in the last two decades (although there are exceptions), these results generally represent the continent's most open societies and cannot necessarily be taken as representative of sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.[2]

What Functions?
We begin by examining the roles currently played by traditional leaders in managing key public tasks. And the results indicate that popular perceptions of these roles largely conform with the conventional wisdom. We asked respondents, "Who do you think actually has *primary* responsibility for managing each of the following tasks? Is it central government, local government, traditional leaders, or members of your

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[1] In Round 4, Afrobarometer surveys were conducted in 20 countries: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe. This analysis excludes Cape Verde since there are no traditional authorities in the country, and questions about traditional leaders were not asked.
[2] For more information on the Afrobarometer, visit the website at www.afrobarometer.org.

community?"[3] The question referred to eight areas of responsibility, including: keeping the community clean, managing schools and health clinics, collecting income taxes, solving local disputes, allocating land, protecting rivers and forests, and maintaining law and order.

Not surprisingly, the influence of traditional leaders is most evident with respect to solving local disputes, where they are perceived to play a greater role than either local or central government (Figure 1). But there are enormous cross-country differences in the distribution of this task (Figure 2). In six countries – Lesotho, Botswana, Ghana, Malawi, Kenya and Zimbabwe – the public believes that traditional leaders still dominate the resolution of local disputes, far surpassing any other actor. And while they are less dominant in Mali and Zambia, they are still far more important than local government. In several other countries, including Senegal, Liberia, Uganda, Nigeria and Burkina Faso, traditional authorities and local governments are of roughly equal importance. But in four – Benin, Madagascar, South Africa and Tanzania – the role of traditional leaders appears to be relatively marginal; local governments play the dominant role in resolving local conflicts in these countries.

Figure 1: Perceived Distribution of Responsibility for Managing Key Public Tasks

"WWho do you think actually has primary responsibility for managing each of the following tasks? Is it central government, local government, traditional leaders, or members of your community?"
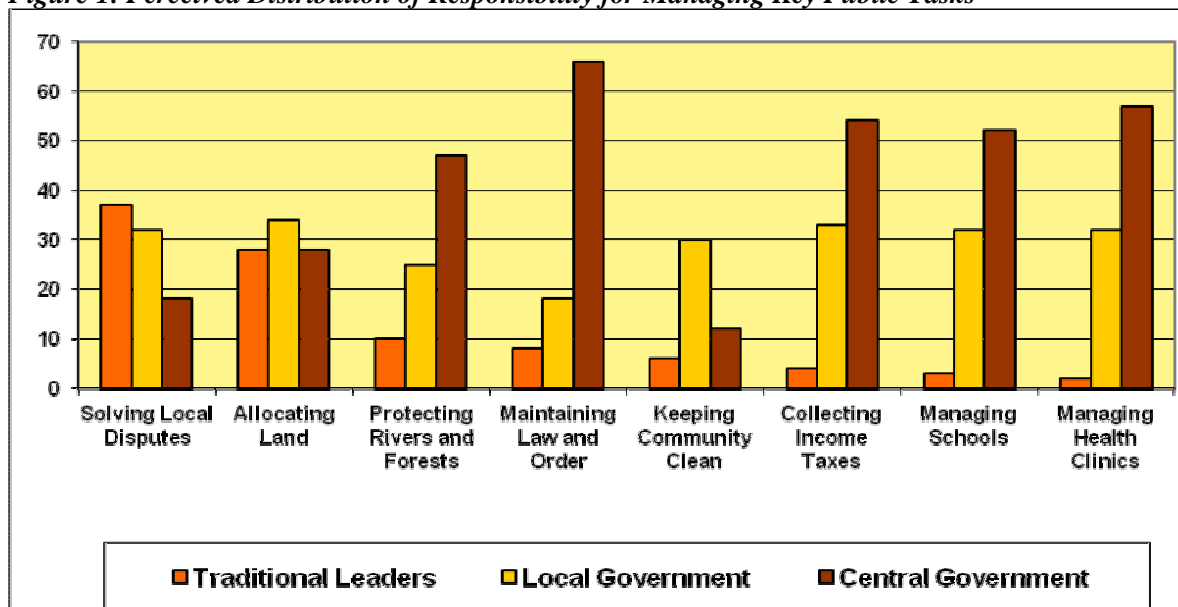
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[3] In Nigeria, "state government" was also mentioned in the list of options. In Mozambique, the option of traditional leaders was inadvertently left off of the questionnaire, so results for Mozambique are not available for this question.

Figure 2: Role of Traditional Leaders vs. Local Government in Resolving Local Conflicts
(% primary responsibility)
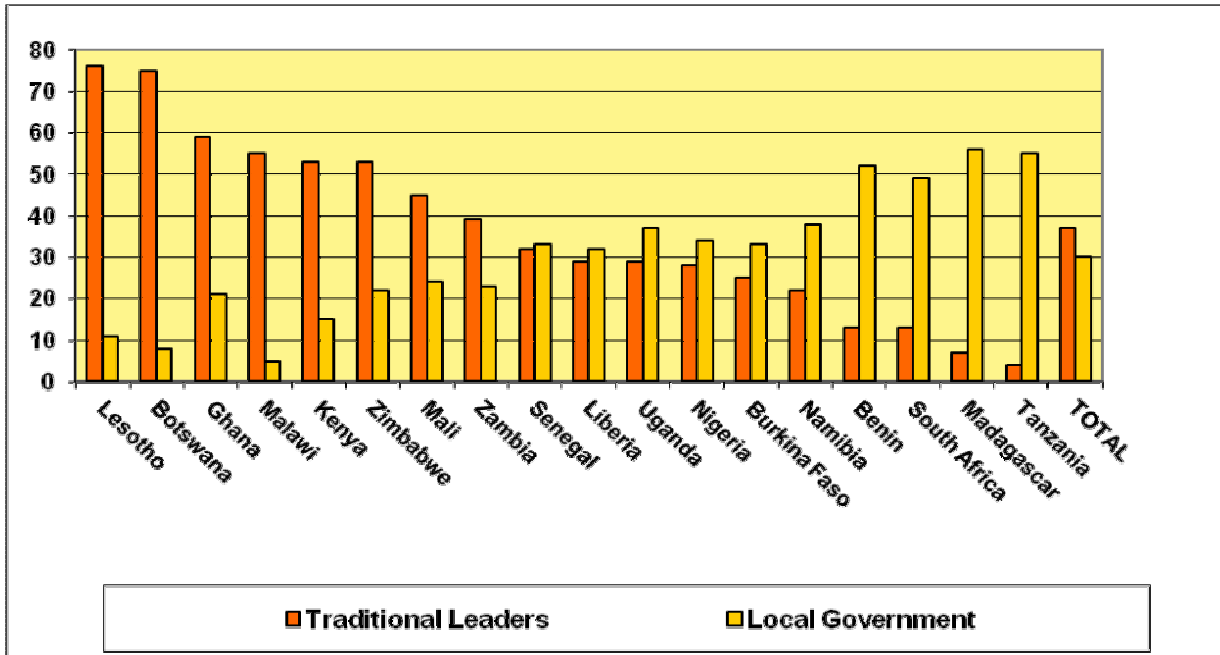
As is widely understood, traditional authorities also continue to play a key role in allocating land, although in this case, on average, local governments are seen as somewhat more important, and overall responsibility for this task appears to be relatively equally divided across traditional authorities, local and central governments. Respondents report that traditional leaders dominate this task in only three countries: Ghana, Malawi and Zimbabwe (Figure 3). In Tanzania and Madagascar, in contrast, they play virtually no role. Other countries reflect more mixed patterns.[4]

In contrast, the public reports that traditional authorities play only a small role in environmental protection, and in maintaining law and order, perhaps through their leadership of customary courts that in some cases handle petty crime as well as domestic and civil cases. But the public perceives almost no role for them in managing schools and health clinics, nor even in collecting taxes – once a primary responsibility of many traditional authorities under colonial rule. There are, however, occasional exceptions. Most notably, in Lesotho fully 29 percent credit local chiefs with primary responsibility for maintaining law and order, 25 percent with the task of protecting rivers and forests, and 21 percent with keeping the community clean. And roughly one in four also attributes responsibility for preserving rivers and forests to chiefs in Zimbabwe (28 percent), Ghana (24 percent), Malawi and Zambia (18 percent each).

How Influential?
But this is not necessarily the whole story with regard to the role of chiefs. While "local government" may play a greater role than traditional leaders on most issues, and in some countries it is the dominant actor even in the key traditional domains of chiefly authority – land allocation and conflict resolution – in many countries traditional leaders are playing a growing role *within* local government, rather than separately from or alongside of it. As chiefs increasingly advise local councils, occupy seats (albeit often advisory or non-voting ones), or even run for office themselves, the distinctions between local government and traditional authorities may become somewhat blurred. Thus, even if in a given community chiefs are not regarded as

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[4] As noted by Baldwin (2010), there can also be significant cross-regional differences in responses about the role of traditional leaders within each country.

having primary responsibility for a task, they may nonetheless be involved in managing it indirectly through their participation in organs of local government.

Figure 3: Role of Traditional Leaders vs. Local Government in Allocating Land
(% primary responsibility)
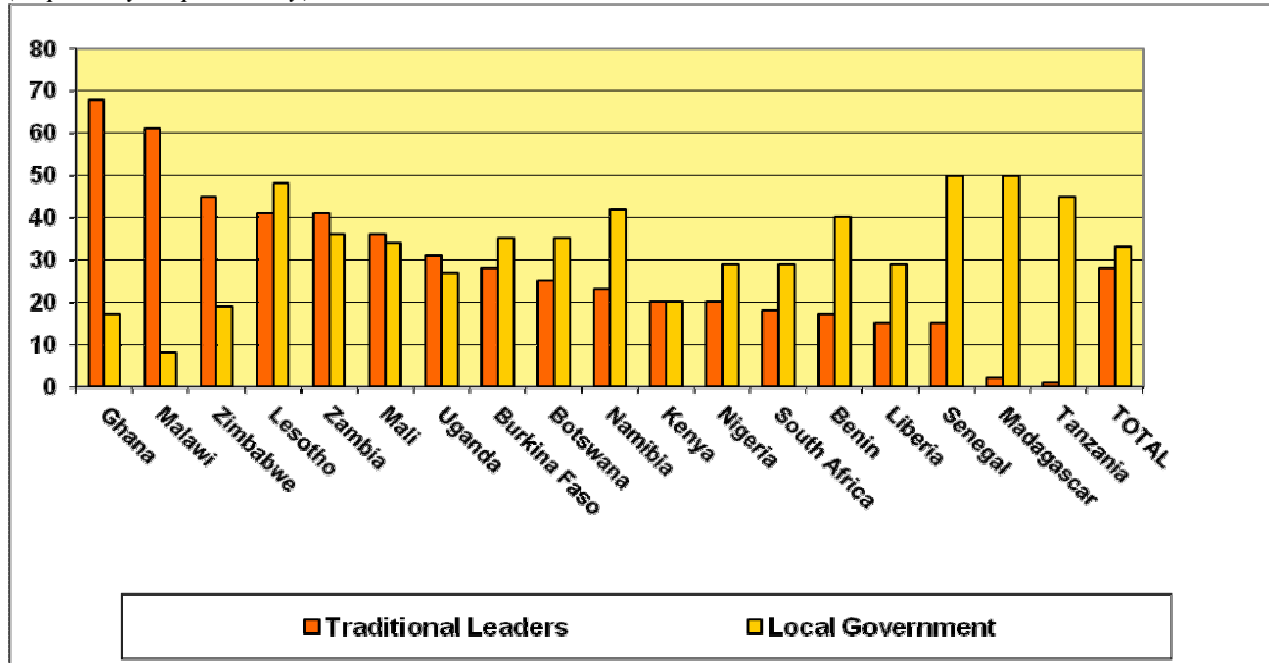
To explore this issue further, we turn to a question that asks more broadly about the role of traditional leaders. "How much influence do traditional leaders currently have in governing your local community?" Half of respondents (49 percent) report that traditional authorities wield significant influence (either "some" or "a great deal"), compared to 39 percent who report no or only low levels of influence (Table 1). Not surprisingly, urban respondents are less likely to say that traditional leaders are important (42 percent) than their rural counterparts (53 percent). But given the general assumption that traditional leadership is a predominantly a rural phenomenon (see e.g., Mamdani 1996), it is perhaps more surprising that the urban-rural difference, while sizeable, is not far greater. Roughly equal proportions of urbanites rate traditional leaders as having significant (42 percent) versus relatively insignificant (44 percent) influence.[5] At the same time, fully one-third of rural Africans (36 percent) do not rate the role of their traditional authorities as important in governing their local communities.

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[5] We cannot necessarily rule out the possibility that, when asked about traditional leaders, some urban respondents might have been referring to their ancestral home in rural communities. However, these items about traditional leaders were placed immediately after a set of questions asking about various assessments of the respondent's "municipal or local council" on the questionnaire, clearly referencing the local community where the interview was being conducted. We therefore find it unlikely that many urban respondents would have then shifted their point of reference to rural communities when asked about the influence of traditional leaders "in governing your local community." Copies of Afrobarometer questionnaires can be found at
http://www.afrobarometer.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=42&Itemid=28.

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Table 1: Influence of Traditional Leaders (percent)

	Urban	Rural	Total
None	20	15	17
A small amount	24	21	22
Some	22	23	23
A great deal	20	30	27
Don't know	14	11	12

*How much influence do traditional leaders currently have in governing your local community?*

It is unsurprising that there are again very substantial cross-national differences on this question (Figure 4). Roughly three-quarters of Malawians (74 percent), Zimbabweans (73 percent) and Batswana (71 percent) report that their traditional leaders wield significant influence ("some" or "a great deal"), compared to just 20 percent in Tanzania, and a mere 13 percent in Madagascar.[6]

We note an emerging pattern: while it is quite clear that the authority of traditional leaders is not "withering away" in most of these countries, it is equally clear that this does indeed appear to be the case in several of them, most notably Tanzania and Madagascar. Nyerere's efforts to unify Tanzania's many disparate ethnic groups by building a common sense of linguistic and cultural identity appear to have succeeded on a number of levels in Tanzania. One result appears to have been the near total marginalization of traditional leadership. In Madagascar, the roots of this finding are still unclear, and warrant further exploration.[7]

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[6] We note that responses on this question are highly correlated with the average level of responsibility attributed to traditional leaders across the eight individual tasks covered in the previous question. That is, at the country level, the mean number attributing responsibility to traditional leaders across eight tasks is highly correlated (Pearson's r=.851**) with the percent saying they have "some" or "a great deal" of influence in their local communities.

[7] In fact, we note that several analysts quite familiar with Madagascar have questioned these results, arguing that in their own experience, traditional leaders still play a very important role in the country. But there is not consensus on this. We are still exploring these findings to come to a better understanding of what explains Madagascar's outlier status on this issue.

Figure 4: Perceived Influence of Traditional Leaders, by Country (2008-9)

Legend: ■ Some / A great deal ■ None / A small amount
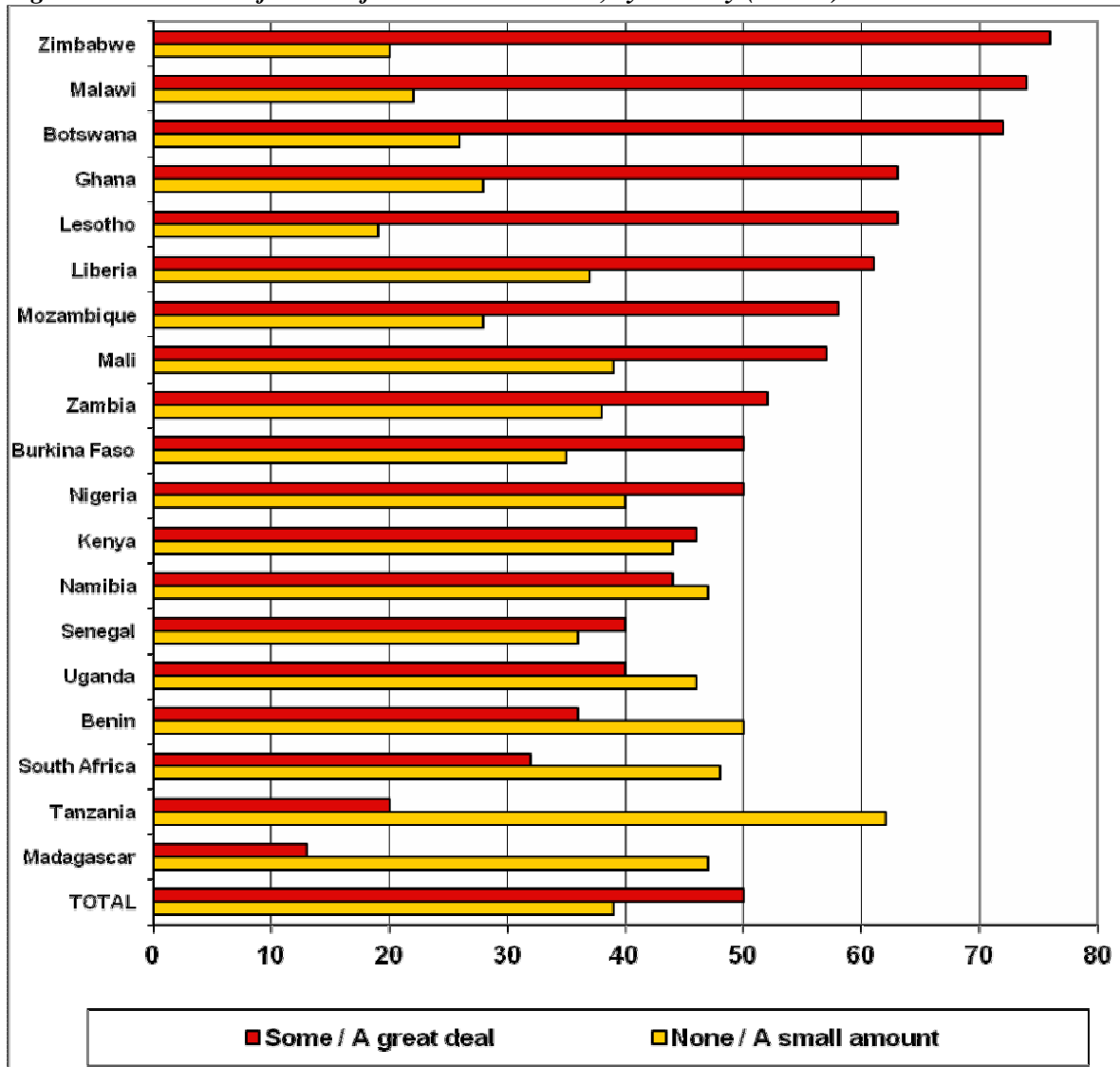
More or Less?

Now we turn to the question that perhaps best reflects the current popularity and resilience of traditional leaders, at least in the eyes of ordinary Africans. When asked whether they want more or less of their traditional leaders, the clear and (almost) unambiguous answer is: more. We asked simply: "Do you think that the amount of influence traditional leaders have in governing your local community should increase, stay the same, or decrease?" Across 19 countries, a solid majority of 58 percent indicate that they would like to see the influence of traditional leaders increase, including more than one in three (36 percent) who think that their influence should increase a lot (Figure 5). This compares to a mere 8 percent who feel their influence should decrease. One in five (20 percent) see no need for change, while 14 percent are uncertain. The extent to which this result *overwhelmingly* favors a strong continuing role for traditional leaders is hard to overstate. It presents particular challenges to those such as Mamdani (1996), Ntsebeza (2005) and Ribot (2001) who have argued most forcefully that traditional leaders are unpopular, often reviled as past collaborators, and viewed with suspicion as instruments of often still-oppressive states.

In fact, Table 2 makes it clear that the share of those who might be characterized as "anti-chief" is in fact a very small minority. About one in five (21 percent) either think that chiefs already have limited influence and want it to stay this way (10 percent, with another 3 percent uncertain), or would like to see their influence decrease from its current levels (8 percent). Another 10 percent seems entirely uncertain, unable to answer questions about either their current or desired level of influence – we can probably assume that this indicates that traditional authorities are fairly minor players in these communities as well. But this leaves fully 70 percent either content with a chieftaincy that already has significant influence (i.e., high current influence and "stay the same" in future), or who believe that it should have more influence than it does. Far from indicating a waning chieftaincy ruling a populace that is essentially coerced into relying on them due to lack of alternatives or to their dependence on chiefs for land and survival, this suggests a chieftaincy that is indeed resurgent, and, in a word, popular, enjoying the solid backing of a considerable majority of Africans.

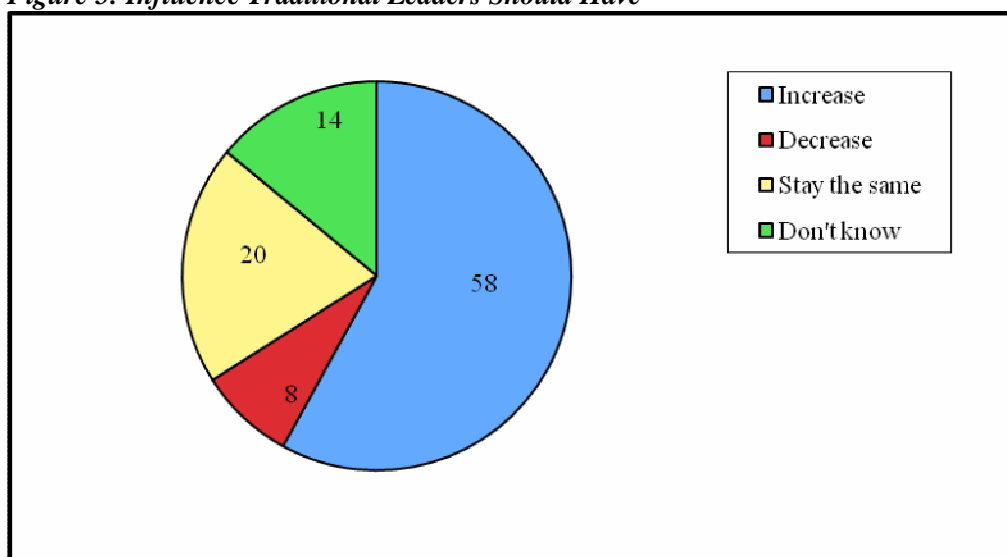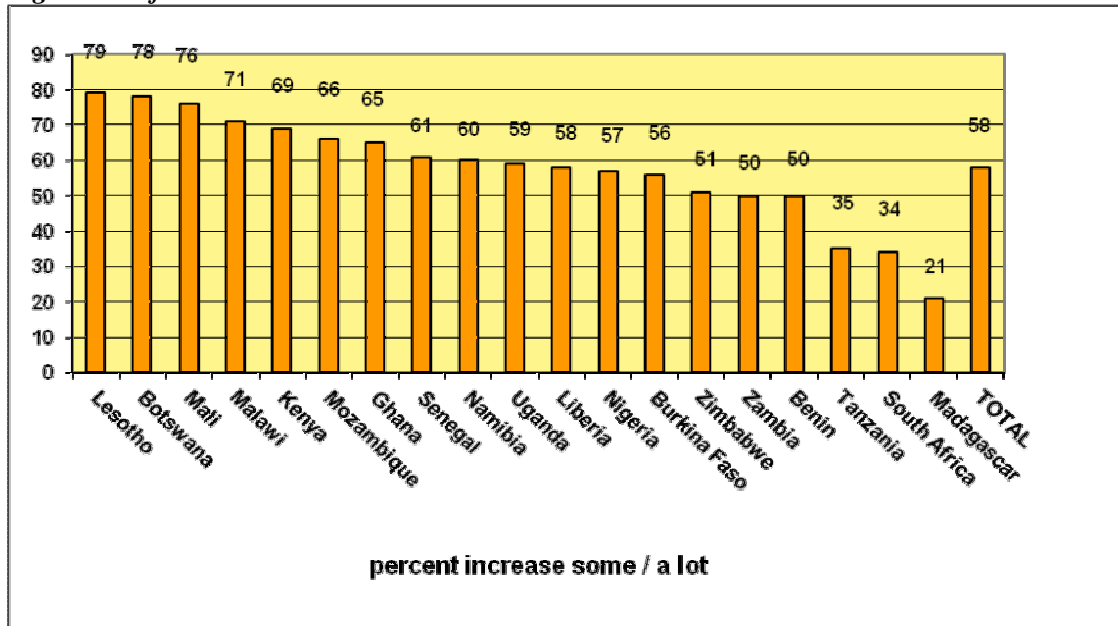*Figure 5: Influence Traditional Leaders Should Have*

Table 2: Current Influence vs. Preferred Influence

Influence Traditional Leaders *Should* Have	Influence Traditional Leaders *Do* Have					Total
	None	**A small amount**	**Some**	**A great deal**	**Don't know**	
Decrease a lot	2	1	0	1	0	4
Decrease somewhat	1	1	1	1	0	4
Stay the same	4	6	5	5	1	20
Increase somewhat	3	7	8	4	1	21
Increase a lot	4	8	8	17	1	36
Don't know	3	0	0	0	10	14
TOTAL	17	22	23	27	12	100

This reflects an astonishing level of consensus on this question. In 16 of the 19 countries, majorities favor increasing influence (Figure 6), with overwhelming support for this position evident in Botswana, Lesotho and Mali (79, 78 and 76 percent, respectively). Even in South Africa and Tanzania – two of the countries where chiefs are least influential at present – pluralities are in favor of increasing their role (although nearly as many – 31 percent in South Africa and 28 percent in Tanzania – say they "don't know"). Malagasy responses stand out, and are again somewhat confounding, as fully 55 percent responded that they "don't know" how much influence traditional leaders should have.

Figure 6: Influence Traditional Leaders Should Have

"Do you think the amount of influence traditional leaders should have in governing your local community should increase, stay the same, or decrease?"

Pro-chief attitudes are also remarkably resilient across all socio-economic and demographic categories (Table 3). Although there are significant differences, especially across education categories, majorities in all groups, even among the most educated, would like to see the role of traditional leaders increase. And women and youth appear to be no less attached to this institution than men and the most elderly respondents. Moreover even where there are differences in levels of support, they are accounted for primarily by those who say their role should stay the same. Across all groups, equally small numbers – less than 10 percent in all cases –think their role should decrease. Few differences are evident across either gender or age. These initial results suggest that while there may be something to the standard modernization thesis suggestion that that urbanization and education will reduce support for traditional leadership, the power of this explanation is likely to be limited. We will test these relationships more thoroughly in the following section.

*Table 3: Socio-Demographics and Support for Traditional Leadership (percent)*

	Do you think the amount of influence traditional leaders should have in governing your local community should increase, stay the same, or decrease?			
	Increase	**Stay the Same**	**Decrease**	**Don't know**
Gender				
Men	59	21	9	12
Women	57	20	7	16
Age				
18-30	58	21	8	14
31-45	58	20	9	14
46-60	57	20	8	15
Over 60	58	20	8	14
Location				
Urban	53	22	9	16
Rural	60	19	7	13
Education				
None / Informal only	64	16	6	14
Primary some/complete	58	19	8	15
Secondary some/complete	55	23	9	14
Post-secondary	52	26	9	13

Leadership Qualities

Analysis of earlier rounds of Afrobarometer data covering seven countries revealed two key findings (Logan 2009). First, traditional leaders on average ranked consistently above other leaders with respect to their trustworthiness and other positive attributes (with some minor exceptions), but not usually by wide margins. Second, evaluations of traditional leaders and elected local government representatives were strongly and *positively* linked. Individuals seemed to display a "leadership affect" that inclined them in similar ways toward all leaders, whether positively or negatively. In other words, rather than evidence of competition between traditional and elected leaders in a zero-sum game for public support, we found evidence of complementarity. The fortunes of traditional leaders and elected councilors appear to rise and fall together.

Do these findings hold up in the Round 4 data as well? To a fair extent, they do. If we compare, for example, trust in traditional leaders and trust in local government councilors (Figure 7), we see that in most countries, traditional leaders are somewhat more trusted. On average across 19 countries, 61 percent have considerable trust in traditional leaders, and 51 percent feel the same about local government councilors. Traditional leaders are more trusted in all countries except Mozambique and our two regular outliers, Tanzania and Madagascar, where local government councilors receive much higher ratings. Very similar patterns prevail with respect to the level of perceived corruption, where there is a 7-point gap between traditional leaders and local government councilors across 19 countries (not shown). Thus, in the majority of countries, traditional leaders appear to be held in somewhat higher regard than local councilors.

Figure 7: Trust in Traditional Leaders and Local Government Councilors
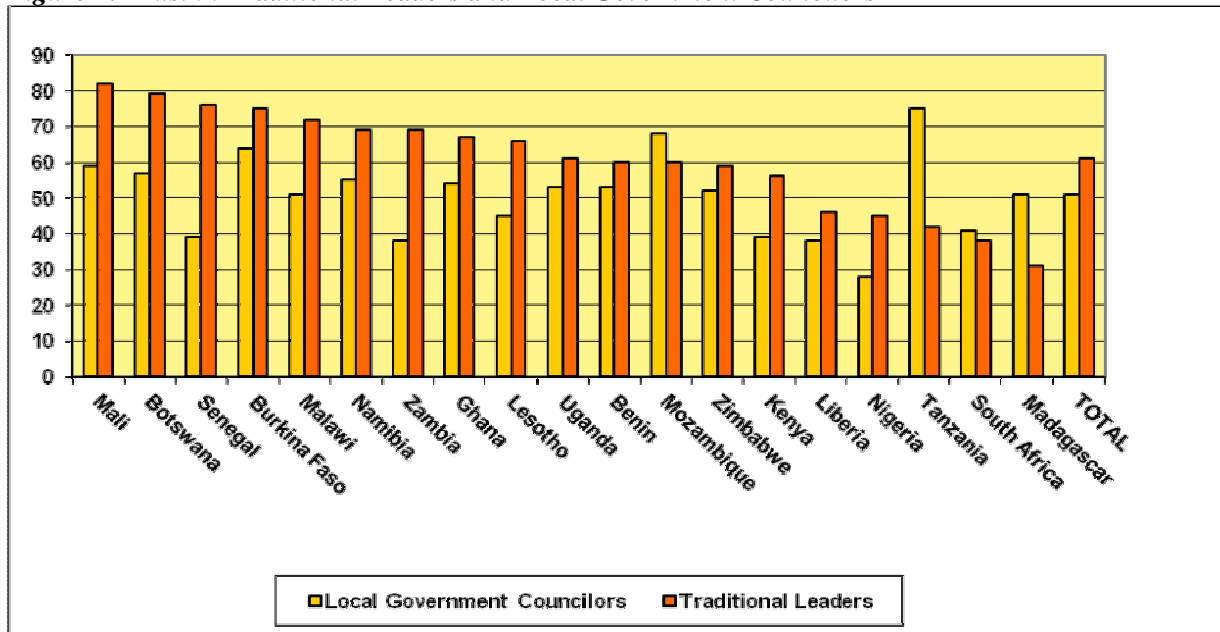
"How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?" (percent somewhat/a lot)

At the same time, ratings of the two are positively correlated. Those who trust traditional leaders are also more likely, not less, to trust their local councilors. As in the previous analysis, we see that in the minds of our respondents, the fates of the two are positively linked, rather than diametrically opposed as is so often assumed.[8]

Traditional leaders' greatest apparent advantage over local councilors, however, is that people regard them as markedly better listeners. There is a 14-point gap between the number who rate traditional leaders as good listeners (46 percent), and those who offer a similarly positive assessment of local government councilors (32 percent) (Figure 7). The only two countries, again, where local councilors outscore traditional authorities are Tanzania and Madagascar. And if these two outlier countries are dropped from the count, the average perceived "listening gap" climbs to fully 20 points (54 percent versus 34 percent say they listen "often" or "always").

Being "good listeners" (or at least, "better listeners") may be a particularly valued trait of traditional authorities. Logan and Mattes (2011) link the extent to which people perceive their elected representatives to be good listeners to the degree of regime *responsiveness*, or the extent to which governments actually respond to popular demands and do what people want. Diamond and Morlino (2005) identify responsiveness as a core democratic quality, but Logan and Mattes find that most Africans give their governments very poor ratings in this regard. African governments may be doing a much better job of protecting individual freedoms, and even advancing the rule of law and improving the quality of elections. But their ability to interact with and respond to popular needs, priorities and demands lags far behind. Traditional authorities may thus be filling a particularly glaring gap in the practice of politics in many of these countries.

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[8] Pearson's r for trust in traditional leaders and trust in local government councilors is .343**; for corruption it is .415**.

Figure 7: Who Listens: Traditional Leaders vs. Local Government Councilors
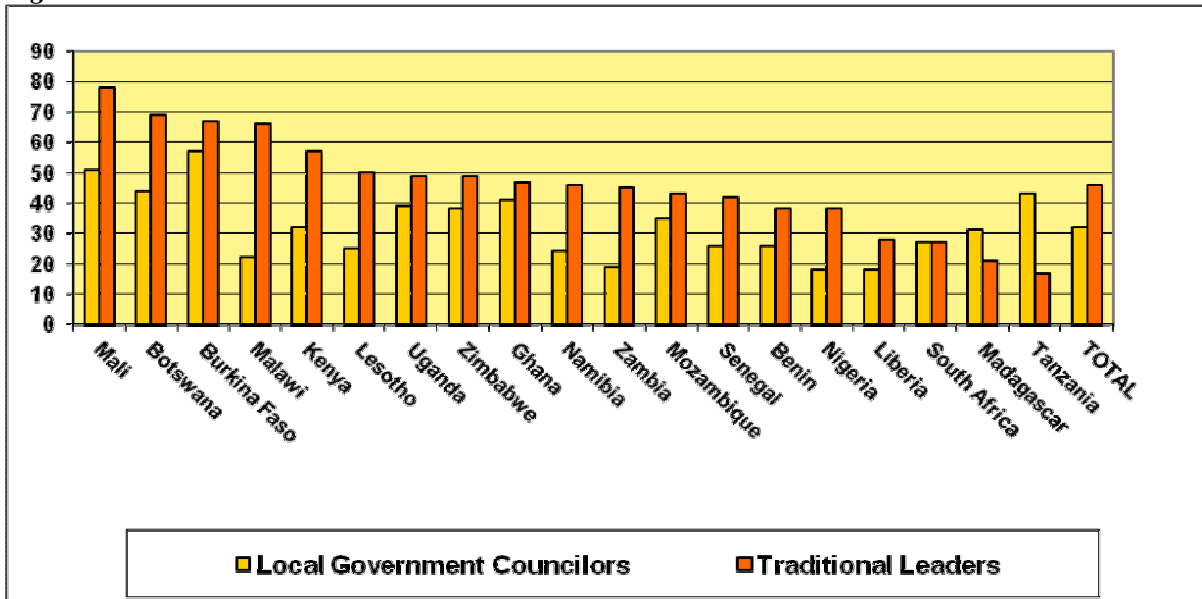
"How much of the time do you think the following try their best to listen to what people like you have to say?" (percent often / always)

Thus, it appears that as suggested above, traditional leaders benefit from a substantially better leadership reputation, and show signs of being more accountable and "closer to the people" than politicians in several core respects. In the next section, we will turn to testing whether this difference, or any of the other possible causal factors discussed, can help us to understand why traditional leaders are so resilient, and why there is such widespread support for further revitalizing their role in local governance.

Exploring the Roots of Resilience

These findings offer clear evidence that traditional leaders are still considered very important – and apparently undervalued and underutilized – players in local governance across much of the continent. In short, we find strong evidence of their resilience, at least from the popular perspective. We now turn back to the question of explaining why this is so. Does the public prefer them, regarding them as more accessible or more effective than elected politicians and civil servants? Or does it dislike them but essentially feel it has little choice but to back them because of their control over resources? Certainly the strength of feeling on the issue seems to suggest more of the former view than the latter, but to systematically test this we develop a model of resilience that examines several of the key hypotheses outlined above.

The model uses ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, with the preference for increasing the role of traditional authorities serving as the object of explanation. We then test several of the key hypotheses about the roots of resilience using the following indicators (details of the construction of each indicator can be found in Appendix A):

- *State Legitimacy* – To test whether chiefs' resilience runs with state legitimacy or counter to it, we use a standard Afrobarometer indicator of state legitimacy, based on three items: the public's willingness to submit to state demands by respecting court decisions, obeying police, and paying taxes.

- *Performance* – To test whether resilience is rooted in the state's failure to perform, we develop and test three performance indices. The first is based on popular ratings of central government performance across six key sectors (the economy, jobs, health, education, crime and fighting corruption). We construct the second from ratings of local government's substantive performance across six key sectors (e.g., managing markets and maintaining local roads), and the third is based on

six indicators of the procedural performance of local government (e.g., openness to public input and responsiveness to complaints).

- *Functions: land, conflict management* – To test the importance of what chiefs *do* for their resilience we utilize responses to the questions presented above on the distribution of responsibility for allocating land and for resolving local disputes. Those who attribute primary responsibility to traditional authorities for each task are compared to those who instead attribute responsibility to any other actor. Secondly, we also test whether the current amount of influence enjoyed by traditional leaders affects perceptions about how much influence they should have.

- *Functions: identity* – The available indicators only allow us to conduct a partial test of the interactions between traditional leaders potential role in representing and protecting community identity and their resilience. In particular, we do not have any direct measures to test whether the role chiefs often play as "guardians of their communities' culture" affects their standing. But we can test for interactions between the strength of ethnic versus national identities and allegiance to chiefs, as well as the effects of a sense of ethnic grievance.

- *Leadership characteristics* – We test the effects of two indices, one created from measures of trust in traditional leaders, the level of perceived corruption among them, and assessments of how well they listen to constituents, and a second constructed from the same measures for local government councilors. We also test the frequency of contact with both traditional authorities and local government councilors to assess the effects of accessibility.

- *Socio-demographics* – Finally, we also include standard socio-demographic indicators, including gender, age, education status, urban versus rural habitation, and poverty. These are standard controls, but they also allow us to test one further hypothesis about resilience, which is a simple modernization explanation.

- Finally, we have also added to the model a number of Afrobarometer indicators of *democratic attitudes and assessments*, including both the support for and satisfaction with democracy, indicators of election efficacy and quality, and several measures of basic political attitudes about authority. These indicators will allow us to test whether support for traditional leaders is associated with anti-democratic orientations as some would suggest, or perhaps arises out of disappointment or disaffection with democratic outcomes.

Table 4 shows the model results. Note that coefficients for each indicator are only reported in Table 4 if the relationship between the indicator and support for increasing traditional leaders' influence is significant; otherwise the cell is left blank.[9] As such, Table 4 is at least as revealing for what is not there, as for what is. In particular, blank cells mean that we find no significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables – i.e., between resilience and the proposed explanation for it – *and there are many blank cells*. In short, many of the proposed explanations for why African publics still show strong affinity for traditional leadership do *not* find support in our data. We take each of the proposed explanations in turn.

First, with regard to *sociodemographics*, we note that only education and age have significant effects. The effects of education are in the expected direction (more education leads to less support), but the size of the effects is quite small. The effects of age, however, are the *opposite* of what we might have expected: all other things being equal, younger respondents are somewhat more likely to support traditional leaders than older ones, although the effects are even smaller than those for education. None of the other variables is significantly related to attitudes about the role of traditional leaders. When other factors are controlled, urbanites and rural dwellers are not significantly different, nor does poverty have any effect. In short, a modernizing population does not necessarily spell the end for traditional leaders. Especially notable is the lack of a gender difference, given the fact that it is often assumed that traditional leadership institutions are inherently bad for women. Women themselves do not appear to see it this way. While this may in part

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[9] The large size of the pooled sample means that measures of association easily qualify as statistically significant at conventional levels of 0.05 or even 0.01. We therefore use a more rigorous standard for the pooled data by reporting significance only at p =<0.001.

reflect an inherent conservatism that some believe characterizes women's attitudes, overall we find little evidence to support the contention the African women are significantly more conservative politically than men (Logan and Bratton 2006). Alternatively, women may be more conflict averse than men, or find other aspects of traditional leadership such as its accessibility to be particularly beneficial. But in short, this finding in particular bears further exploration.

Turning to **state legitimacy**, we find that support for traditional leaders is in fact *stronger in more legitimate states*. While the effects are again quite modest, this is nonetheless an interesting finding in several respects. First, it suggests that, however much Englebert's (2002) thesis about the legitimacy problems of states and the *competition* for popular legitimacy that he posits between customary institutions and the state may have been a factor shaping state development in the post-colonial era, this relationship does not appear to hold in the present. But neither does it support Mamdani's (1996) thesis that chiefs derive all of their power from the state, but have *no popular legitimacy* at all. Instead, in the modern era, this result suggests that, consistent with earlier findings (Logan 2009), a rising tide lifts all boats to at least a modest degree. Rather than being a zero-sum commodity, popular legitimacy appears to be mutually reinforcing. If the state is perceived as legitimate, then all of the leaders in it – even traditional leaders who may have a limited or purely informal role – are also perceived as more legitimate, and states likewise benefit from the legitimacy of traditional leaders (see Logan 2002).

Our findings also sharply challenge the increasingly common assumption that allegiance to traditional rulers is based in significant part on the perceived **performance failures of central and especially local governments**. In fact, we find *no significant association* between support for expanding the influence of traditional leaders and the substantive performance of either local or central governments. This presents a direct challenge to an increasingly prevalent assumption that it is state weakness and ineffectiveness in delivering public goods and services that drives people to align with or hang onto traditional leaders. There is, however, a very modest negative relationship between the procedural performance of local governments and support for traditional leaders: to the extent that local governments are doing a better job of interacting with and being responsive to the communities they serve, support for traditional rulers decreases by a small amount.

Our findings also present a clear challenge to Ntsebeza's **functional** claim that control over land allocation is central to chiefs' standing. He argued that traditional authorities' control over land is the key factor determining resilience by effectively forcing people to rely on their chiefs. But he also claimed that the public gave at best reluctant acquiescence to chiefly rule because of their dependence on them for access to the means of survival, and that they would essentially abandon chiefs if only they could. In sharp contradiction to these claims, we find both that the public willingly accedes to a chiefly role in governance, and that while chiefs' responsibility for allocating land in their communities is a significant explanatory factor, the effects are relatively marginal in comparison to a number of other factors.

Other functions matter far more. In fact, bearing responsibility for managing local conflict is one of the most effective predictors of the perceived importance of chiefs. Not only is resolving local disputes the primary responsibility of chiefs, it is also the most highly valued function that they serve in the eyes of their communities. It is a role that is critical to community success and survival, and one that perhaps cannot be played as effectively by any other institution. Their role in protecting community stability is thus a cornerstone of the resilience of traditional authorities.

Although it is not linked to a specific function, we also note that the factor with the strongest explanatory power to predict how much influence people think their chiefs *should* have is the measure of how much influence they currently *do* wield. In short, the more traditional leadership people already have, the more they want, and *vice versa*. And as shown in Figure 8, this relationship holds strongly at the macro-level as well: those countries that, on average, report the highest levels of present influence are, for the most part, the same ones that would like to see the influence of traditional authorities increase.

What about traditional leaders' function as representatives of their communities – especially ethnic communities – and as symbols of their identity? We find that people who are inclined to identify with their ethnic groups more than their national identity are indeed marginally more likely to support strengthening traditional leaders. This suggests modest backing for the thesis that strong traditional leaders could be bad for national unity. However, we also find that a sense of ethnic grievance does not impel the aggrieved towards traditional leaders. Those who believe their own group has been treated unfairly are no more likely to support chiefs than others. This suggests that the link between ethnicity and the chieftaincy may indeed, as Williams (2010) suggests, be a relationship built primarily upon a positive reinforcement of cultural and communal identity, rather than around the more negative aspects of inter-group competition and conflict.

Finally, the other category in which we again find indicators with strong explanatory power is in *leadership qualities*. Not surprisingly, people who view traditional leaders in a positive light – as trustworthy, honest (i.e., not corrupt), and as leaders who listen to their people – are more likely to want their role in local governance to increase. People who have contacted their traditional leaders – i.e., those who find them *accessible* – also tend to be strong supporters of the institution. Chiefs' accessibility and leadership qualities are clearly a significant part of their popular attraction.

Figure 8: Influence of Traditional Leaders, Present and Preferred, Country Averages
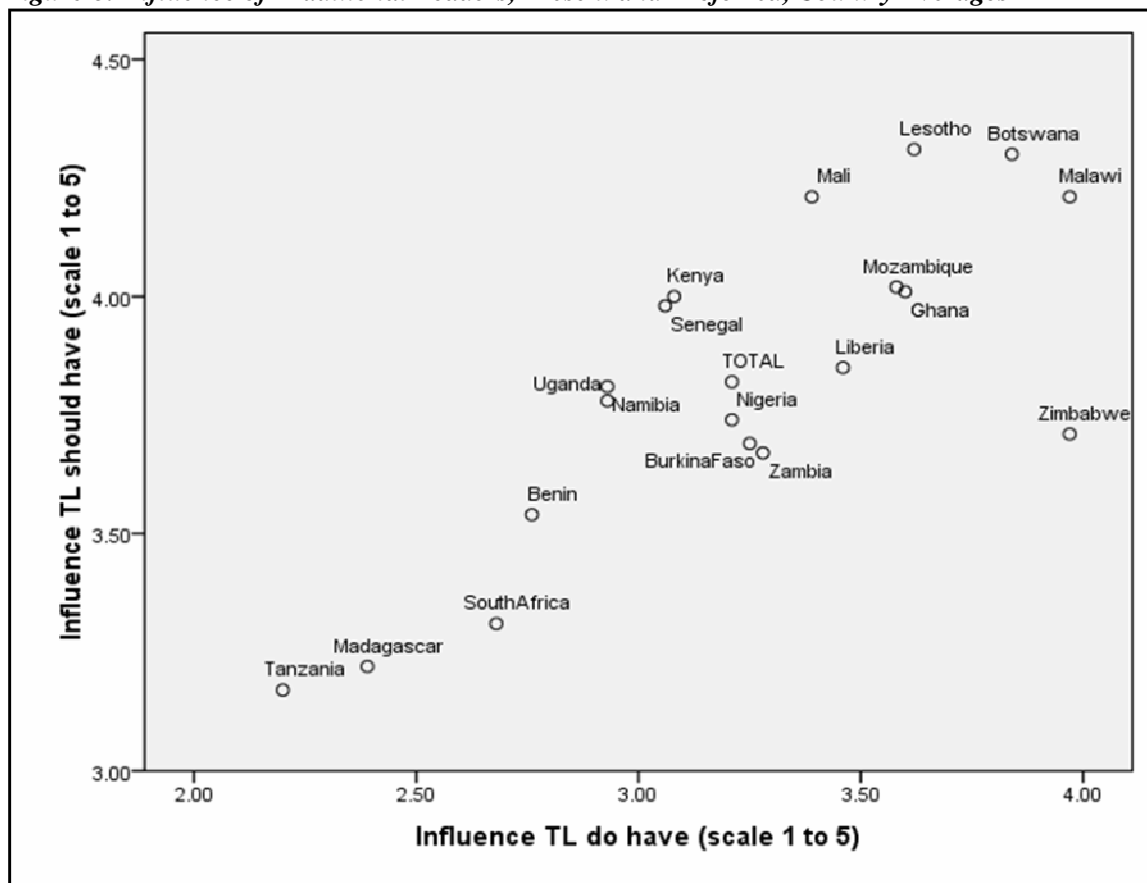
Pearsons r=.797, p<=.01

In contrast, seeing at least some of these same positive qualities in local government councilors makes respondents somewhat less likely to be interested in increasing chiefs' role in government. When elected leaders exhibit more of these positive attributes, the demand for traditional leadership declines, albeit slightly. But we should also keep in mind that perceptions of chiefs and of elected councilors are positively

correlated, so it is too simple to suggest that chiefs and elected councilors must battle each other for the public's regard. In fact, the seeming contradiction between these two findings bears further exploration in order to better elaborate the nature of the relationship between African publics and these two types of leader.

Table 4: Explaining Support for Greater Influence of Traditional Leaders[10]

	B (unstandardized)	Beta (standardized)
(Constant)	2.639***	
Socio-demographic		
Age	-.002***	-.022
Education	-.031***	-.057
Urban	-	
Gender male	-	
Poverty	-	
State Legitimacy		
Index of State Legitimacy	.048***	.041
Government Performance		
Index of Central Govt. Performance	-	
Index of LG Substantive Performance	-	
Index of LG Procedural Performance	-.027***	-.027
Functions: Land and Conflict Mgmt.		
Primary responsibility: allocating land	.057***	.023
Primary responsibility: solving local disputes	.217***	.095
Traditional Leaders' Current Influence	.153***	.204
Functions: Identity		
Ethnic ID over National	.028***	.032
Ethnic grievance	-	
Leadership Qualities		
Index of Traditional Leader Quality[11]	.206***	.184
Index of Local Govt. Councilor Quality	-.076***	-.066
Contact TL	.162***	.066
Contact LGC	-	
Democratic Attitudes & Assessments		
Support democracy	-	
Elections best for choosing leaders	-	
Election efficacy	.028***	.031
Question authority (rather than respect)	-	
Govt. like employee (not parent)	-	
Satisfaction with democracy	-	
Election quality	-	
Adjusted R square, Full Model	***.149***	

***p<=.001

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[10] Note that the model results shown here are generated excluding Mozambique, since the questions about responsibility for allocating land and managing conflict were not asked correctly there (the category of traditional leaders was not offered as a response option). However, when the model is run *including* Mozambique, but excluding these two variables from the analysis, the results are otherwise virtually identical.

[11] Note that the indices created for Traditional Leader Quality and Local Government Councilor Quality did not strictly meet standard statistical criteria for reliability and validity (see Appendix A). However, the model results were nearly identical whether using these indices or running them with all of the individual components variables included as separate items. Therefore, for the ease of presentation and interpretation, the results are presented here using the aggregate indices.

Finally, confirming earlier findings of Logan (2009), we find no evidence of any association – positive or negative – between **commitment to democracy** or a preference for **elections**, and support for traditional leaders. There is no support for the claims that allegiance to chiefs arises out of either a rejection of democracy or a dissatisfaction with how it functions in Africa, or disappointment in the quality of elections. In fact, belief in the efficacy of elections as a means for ensuring that elected leaders really represent their constituents is actually associated with modestly stronger support for traditional authorities. Clearly a majority of Africans do not perceive any contradiction between their support for democracy and their backing of traditional leaders.

Analysis: Rethinking Resilience
Overall, these findings suggest a need to question some of the common assumptions about resilience and reassess the prevailing arguments.

Most noticeably, in sharp contrast to the arguments of Mamdani (1996), Ntsebeza (2005) and Ribot (2001), we find that chiefs remain remarkably valuable to their communities. Those who insist that traditional leaders do not enjoy popular support appear to be missing the core reality on the ground: in almost all of the countries studied, solid and at times overwhelming majorities of Africans affirm that traditional leaders continue to play an important role in their societies, and that this is *desirable*. In sharp contrast to the assessments of these analysts, people want *more* of their traditional leaders, not less. And this sense of value is not just limited to the masses of rural "subjects"; many of the urban and educated – Mamdani's "citizens" – back them as well. There are, of course, dissenters, sometimes many of them. But the chiefs clearly have a majority on their side. Moreover, it is evident that whether they enjoy the backing of the state or not, chiefs do not depend on state support for their survival. African governments may at the moment be doing what they can to take advantage of the popularity chiefs still enjoy among ordinary Africans, trying to co-opt them to generate regime support, and especially to capture votes. But they do this in *response* to chiefs' popular standing; there is little evidence to suggest that they either create or control that standing.

Also importantly, and in contrast to the dominant assumption in much recent literature, we find that support for chiefs is far more intrinsic than instrumental. Contrary to the widespread assumption that pragmatic assessments of performance – and in particular, poor performance on the part of central and especially local governments – are the driving force behind the resilience of traditional leaders, performance plays at best a minor role in keeping them relevant. Instead, our evidence suggests that traditional leaders are resilient because of – not in spite of – who they are and what they do. Their character as leaders, flawed as it may be, and their connection with and accessibility to the people in their communities, set them apart from politicians and government officials. They are more available as problem solvers, and they have the advantages of local knowledge and an understanding of community norms and practices that can make them effective resolvers of local conflict as well. These roles, not surprisingly, are highly valued by the communities that they serve.

Still, we must also acknowledge that, judging from the relatively modest explanatory power of this model, there is much that remains unexplained, a factor or factors that have not been fully captured by this analysis. The evidence points primarily to sources of value that are intrinsic to the institution and the symbolic and representational role that it plays in peoples' lives, something akin to Williams' (2010) description of the moral legitimacy of traditional authorities. We draw this conclusion based on several factors. First is the fact that our more pragmatic or performance-based indicators do not bear much weight. Second are the findings that character matters more than performance, and that representation of identity matters, but *not* as a response to identity-based *grievances*. Both of these factors seem to tap into aspects of the intrinsic and moral, as opposed to the instrumental, value of these leaders. Third is the fact that the strongest predictor of how much of a role people want chiefs to play is how much of a role they already are playing. Whatever it is that is valued in traditional authorities appears to be essentially self-reinforcing. This correlates well with Williams' findings about why chiefs matter. He notes that an overwhelming proportion (88 percent) of his rural South African respondents wanted the chieftaincy to continue. He goes on to observe that while people

could name important jobs of the chiefs – resolving disputes, fostering development, and maintaining law and order – this was not the root of their resilience:

> When asked why the chieftaincy should continue, however, the responses had a decidedly different tone, which revealed its moral significance and its perceived embeddedness in society. As such, approximately 30 percent justified the chieftaincy because it leads, looks after the community, or solves community problems, and 20 percent stated that it should remain because it "has always been here." Another 30 percent, however, suggested that the chieftaincy provided discipline, dignity, and respect for the community and that there would be "disorder" without the chieftaincy. Indeed, many people utilized the dichotomies of disorder/harmony and disunity/unity to describe the importance of the chieftaincy in their areas and what would happen if the chieftaincy were abolished. (26)

Williams continues by pointing out that despite historic discontinuities and the impact of colonial rule on the forms of traditional rule, his own evidence "suggests that the ideological underpinnings of the chieftaincy, which predate indirect rule, continue to provide a frame of reference for many in the rural areas." (27) Our own findings from across the continent are entirely consistent with this conclusion.

All that said, idealizing chiefs will be no more helpful than demonizing them. Ribot and Ntsebeza may overemphasize their negative behaviors, but they are not wrong in pointing out that those behaviors exist, and in recognizing that chiefs have many warts. We do not need to look any further than the relatively poor marks they get from Afrobarometer respondents for listening well: they may score well above local government councilors, but even so, only 46 percent credit them with this attribute, hardly an overwhelming endorsement. Nor are they immune from corruption, incompetence, or a proclivity for behaving in an authoritarian manner, bad habits which may only be exacerbated as traditional authorities engage more closely with the state and the resources that it manages (Logan 2002). And they may, as charged, frequently be guilty of favoring some constituents at the expense of others, putting the needs of the state ahead of those of their communities, or treating women as second-class citizens. But it is, of course, also easy to find examples of all of these behaviors among local government authorities, including elected ones. And it likewise takes little effort to find examples of traditional authorities playing positive roles in their communities as well. The weakness in Ntsebeza's and Ribot's analyses may not be so much in highlighting very real problems that must be confronted with respect to how institutions of traditional authority function, but in overemphasizing the negatives, while failing to give full credit for the countervailing positives. In the popular assessment, the balance instead favors the chiefs. This oversight may not be entirely surprising to the extent that the some of the key value of traditional leaders is intrinsic and thus less visible or susceptible to measurement. But Ntsebeza and Ribot also undervalue chiefs' more concrete role in conflict management. In short, our evidence suggests that despite their negatives, on balance, chiefs are clearly regarded as an institution that is more beneficial than detrimental, and as long as this continues to hold true, they will likely remain resilient.

Traditional authorities are also, at least at present, viewed in a more positive light than other institutions of local governance, but it is not as clear that this is essential to their survival. We see evidence of both complementarity and competition between traditional authorities and the state, but the weight of the former appears to be greater. In short, traditional authorities are not fundamentally in competition with the state or with elected leaders. This suggests that while it is not unimportant that chiefs are, at present, perceived as better leaders than local government councilors, this is not necessarily key to their survival. If, for example, elections become increasingly effective in producing local councilors who are responsive and accountable, this likely does not spell the end for traditional leaders. As long as chiefs continue to produce (especially intrinsic) benefits for their communities, they will continue to be perceived as important players who must remain active in local governance if it is to function effectively.

Finally, we note again the dearth of evidence that allegiance to traditional leaders poses the serious threat to democracy that many have feared, especially in South Africa. There is no association between support for the role of chiefs and either support for or satisfaction with democracy. In other words, the resilience of traditional forms of authority does not arise out of either a rejection of or a perceived failure of democracy. Democracy is of course meant to be more than a purely procedural – i.e., electoral – device. Elections are in many respects the means to the democratic ends of responsiveness and accountability. But elections are also recognized as an imperfect means for achieving these ends, and this is perhaps nowhere more true than in Africa, where many have only just begun to enjoy the experience of relatively open and competitive elections. In such an environment, the institutional familiarity and accessibility that traditional authorities enjoy can potentially provide another means – also imperfect – to these same ends. Thus, to the extent that we move beyond a purely procedural understanding of democracy to a more broadly cast reflection that encompasses other democratic qualities as well, it becomes less surprising that Africans can find space for their chiefs even in the midst of a democratizing polity. The fact that *both* elections and other characteristics of democratic leadership are considered important thus helps to explain the resilience of traditional leaders in the midst of strong popular support for elections and democracy. The unelected but nonetheless potentially democratic qualities of the chieftaincy, combined with their critical role in conflict management, and their intrinsic values as symbols of community identity and solidarity, all add up to an enduring value in the eyes of a sizeable majority of Africans from across the social and economic spectrum.

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Appendix A: Question Wording And Response Options For Independent Variables

Index of State Legitimacy:
Questions:
For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree:
   a.   The courts have the right to make decisions that people always have to abide by;
   b.   The police always have the right to make people obey the law; and
   c.   The tax department always has the right to make people pay taxes.
Response options:
   1 = Strongly disagree
   2 = Disagree
   3 = Neither agree nor disagree or Don't know
   4 = Agree
   5 = Strongly agree

Index of Central Government Performance
Questions:
How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say:
   a.   Managing the economy.
   b.   Creating jobs
   c.   Improving basic health services
   d.   Addressing educational needs
   e.   Reducing crime
   f.   Fighting corruption
Response options:
   1 = Very badly
   2 = Fairly badly
   3 = Fairly well
   4 = Very well
Note: For purposes of this analysis, responses were recoded to a 5-point scale with "don't know" responses placed at the midpoint.

Index of Local Government Substantive Performance
Questions:
What about local government? I do not mean central government. I mean your [municipal or local government council]. How well or badly would you say your local government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say:
   a.   Managing local roads
   b.   Maintaining local market places
   c.   Maintaining health standards in public restaurants and food stalls
   d.   Keeping our community clean (e.g. refuse removal)
   e.   Collecting license fees on bicycles, carts and barrows
   f.   Collecting rates on privately owned houses
Response options:
   1 = Very badly
   2 = Fairly badly
   3 = Fairly well
   4 = Very well
Note: For purposes of this analysis, responses were recoded to 5-point scale with "don't know" responses placed at the midpoint.

Index of Local Government Procedural Performance
Questions:
How well or badly do you think your local council is practicing the following procedures, or haven't you heard enough to say:
 a   Making the council's program of work known to ordinary people
 b.   Providing citizens with information about the council's budget
 c.   Allowing citizens like yourself to participate in the council's decisions
 d.   Consulting others (including traditional, civic and community leaders) before making decisions
 e.   Providing effective ways to handle complaints about local councilors or officials
 g.   Guaranteeing that local government revenues are used for public services and not for private gain
Response options:
 1 = Very badly
 2 = Fairly badly
 3 = Fairly well
 4 = Very well
Note: For purposes of this analysis, responses were recoded to 5-point scale with "don't know" responses placed at the midpoint.

Primary Responsibility: Allocating Land
Question:
Who do you think actually has *primary* responsibility for managing each of the following tasks. Is it the central government, the local government, traditional leaders, or members of your community: allocating land?
Response options:
 1 = Central government
 2 = Local government
 3 = Traditional leaders
 4 = Members of the community
 5 = None of them
 9 = Don't know
Note: For purposes of this analysis, a dummy variable was created coded 1 for responses of "traditional leaders" and 0 for all other responses.

Primary Responsibility: Solving Local Disputes
Question:
Who do you think actually has *primary* responsibility for managing each of the following tasks. Is it the central government, the local government, traditional leaders, or members of your community: Solving local disputes?
Response options:
 1 = Central government
 2 = Local government
 3 = Traditional leaders
 4 = Members of the community
 5 = None of them
 9 = Don't know
Note: For purposes of this analysis, a dummy variable was created coded 1 for responses of "traditional leaders" and 0 for all other responses.

Traditional Leaders' Current Influence
Question:
How much influence do traditional leaders currently have in governing your local community?
Response options:
 1 = None
 2 = A small amount
 3 = Some
 4 = A great deal
Note: For purposes of this analysis, responses were recoded to 5-point scale with "don't know" responses placed at the midpoint.
Identity – Ethnic ID over National
Question:

[Note: Respondents were first asked "What is your tribe? You know, your ethnic or cultural group?"] Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a [Namibian] and being a [respondent's ethnic group]. Which of the following statements best expresses your feelings?
Response options:
    1 = I feel only [Namibian]
    2 = I feel more [Namibian] than [respondent's ethnic group]
    3 = I feel equally [Namibian] and [respondent's ethnic group], or Don't know
    4 = I feel more [respondent's ethnic group] than [Namibian]
    5 = I feel only [respondent's ethnic group]
Note: Those who responded that they were "only [Namibian]" on the ethnic identity question were coded as 1 = I feel only [Namibian] on this question.
Note: For purposes of this analysis, codes were reversed.

Identity: Ethnic Grievance
Question:
[Note: This question also followed the question "What is your tribe? You know, your ethnic or cultural group?"] How often are [respondent's ethnic group] treated unfairly by government?
Response options:
    0 = Never
    1 = Sometimes
    2 = Often
    3 = Always
Note: For purposes of this analysis, responses were reversed and recoded to a 5-point scale, with "don't know" responses placed at the midpoint.

Index of Traditional Leader Quality and Index of Local Government Councilor Quality
Question 1:
How much do you trust each of the following or haven't you heard enough about them to say: traditional leaders / your elected local government councilor?
Response options:
    0 = Not at all
    1 = Just a little
    2 = Somewhat
    3 = A lot
Note: For purposes of this analysis, responses were recoded to 5-point scale with "don't know" responses placed at the midpoint.

Question 2:
How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough to say: traditional leaders / elected local government councilors?
Response options:
    0 = None
    1 = Some of them
    2 = Most of them
    3 = All of them
Note: For purposes of this analysis, responses were recoded to 5-point scale with "don't know" responses placed at the midpoint.

Contact Traditional Leaders / Local Government Councilors
Question:
During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views: a traditional ruler / a local government councilor?
Response options:
    0 = Never
    1 = Only once
    2 = A few times
    3 = Often
Note: For purposes of this analysis, "don't know" responses were recoded to 0.

For traditional leaders, factor analysis extracts one factor with Eigenvalue of 1.510 explaining 29 percent of variance. Cronbach's alpha is slightly below normally accepted standards at .504.

For local government councilors, factor analysis extracts one factor with Eigenvalue of 1.463 explaining 27 percent of variance. Cronbach's alpha is somewhat below normally accepted standards at .474.s

Support Democracy
Question:
Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?
Response options:
    Statement 1 = Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.
    Statement 2 = In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.
    Statement 3 = For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.
    9 = Don't know

Elections Best for Choosing Leaders
Question:
Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
Statement 1: We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open and honest elections.
Statement 2: Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders.
Response options:
    1 = Agree very strongly with Statement 1
    2 = Agree with Statement 1
    3 = Agree with Statement 2
    4 = Agree very strongly with Statement 2
    5 = Agree with neither
    9 = Don't know
Note: For purposes of this analysis, the responses were reversed and recoded with neither / don't know coded at the midpoint.

Election Efficacy
This is an index constructed from two items:
Question:
Think about how elections work in practice in this country. How well do elections:
        A. Ensure that members of parliament reflect the views of voters.
        B. Enable voters to remove from office leaders who do not do what the people want.
Response options:
    0 = Not at all well
    1 = Not very well
    2 = Well
    3 = Very well
    9 = Don't know
Note: For purposes of this analysis, responses were recoded to a 5-point scale with "don't know" responses placed at the midpoint.

Question Authority
Question:
Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
Statement 1: Citizens should be more active in questioning the actions of leaders.
Statement 2: In our country, citizens should show more respect for authority.
Response options:
    1 = Agree very strongly with Statement 1
    2 = Agree with Statement 1
    3 = Agree with Statement 2
    4 = Agree very strongly with Statement 2
    5 = Agree with neither

9 = Don't know

Note: For purposes of this analysis, the responses were reversed and recoded to a 5-point scale with neither / don't know coded at the midpoint.

Government Like Employee
Question:
Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
Statement 1: People are like children, the government should take care of them like a parent..
Statement 2: Government is like an employee; the people should be the bosses who control the government..
Response options:
    1 = Agree very strongly with Statement 1
    2 = Agree with Statement 1
    3 = Agree with Statement 2
    4 = Agree very strongly with Statement 2
    5 = Agree with neither
    9 = Don't know

Note: For purposes of this analysis, the responses were recoded to a 5-point scale with neither / don't know coded at the midpoint.

Satisfaction with Democracy
Question:
Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [Namibia]?
Response options:
    1 = Not at all satisfied
    2 = Not very satisfied
    3 = Fairly satisfied
    4 = Very satisfied
    9 = Don't know

Note: For purposes of this analysis, responses were recoded to a 5-point scale with don't know responses coded at the midpoint.

Election Quality
Question:
On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in [20XX]?
Response options:
    1 = Not free and fair
    2 = Free and fair, but with major problems
    3 = Free and fair, but with minor problems
    4 = Completely free and fair
    9 = Don't know

Note: For purposes of this analysis, responses were recoded to a 5-point scale with don't know responses coded at the midpoint.

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