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**Electoral Security and Legislator Attention:  
Evidence from the Kenyan National Assembly  
Debates, 2008-2017.**

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**Electoral Security and Legislator Attention: Evidence from the Kenyan National Assembly Debates, 2008-2017.**

**Abstract**

How do African legislators divide their attention between the demands of their local constituency and their responsibilities in national parliament? Majority of studies portrays African legislators as mere rubber-stamping constituency servants. I show instead significant variation in legislator attention. Building on the literature on the electoral origins of legislator behavior, I argue that electoral pressure faced by individual legislators heavily conditions their decisions about how to allocate effort between local and national priorities. Using a novel dataset of more than 56,000 speeches made by over 400 unique legislators in the Kenyan National Assembly from 2008 to 2017, I develop speech-based measures of local versus national attention. I show that Kenyan legislators in less competitive constituencies speak more in national parliament, suggesting a greater commitment to national policymaking. Moreover, when I disaggregate data by type of speech, I find that electorally vulnerable legislators engage in locally oriented speeches, whereas those with security speak more about national topics. Speech data thus reveals an interesting tension within democratizing countries: greater democracy on one dimension – contestation – may ironically create barriers to increasing democracy on a different dimension – horizontal accountability.

## INTRODUCTION

How do African legislators divide their attention between meeting the demands of their local constituency and fulfilling their responsibilities in national parliament? Existing studies claim that MPs focus only on local constituency issues rather than invest in national policy generation. Yet, we see Kenyan MPs engaging in various levels of parliamentary floor activities as this chapter will demonstrate. What explains such MP floor activities if MPs face incentives that are opposed to proving national legislative effort?

Legislators face an important allocation problem: what is the optimal division of their finite time and effort given the wide-ranging responsibilities of legislating, oversight, constituency service, and representation? On the one hand, if legislators focus mostly on national duties like legislating and oversight, they may risk their re-election chances by becoming disconnected with constituents who care primarily about their local interests. On the other hand, if legislators focus mostly on their local constituency, they may lower their chances of re-election by alienating constituents who care about legislator's national legislative functions or losing favor with party leaders. Scholars have explored the trade-off between local versus national legislative effort in the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Asia (e.g. Andre et al. 2015; Brouard et al. 2013; Kellermann 2014; Shin 2015; Sulkin et al. 2015; Vivyan and Wagner 2015). However, the nature and extent to which African legislators deal with this trade-off have attracted limited attention. Most scholars describe politicians as solely focused on meeting the demands of their constituents or buying them off due to constituents' overwhelming demand for constituency service (e.g. Barkan 2009; Lindberg 2010). Yet popular media frequently report on politicians' absence from their local constituencies once they get elected.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, more than a year after the previous election a resident in a Northeastern Kenyan province accuses that his Member of Parliament (MP) was "last spotted held shoulder high when he was declared winner" in an interview (Boniface Ongeru and

In this chapter, I argue that electoral pressure exerts a strong influence on how politicians allocate their limited resources of time and effort. While those running in safer districts have more leeway to engage in national level policy discussions, politicians from competitive districts use scarce floor time to make locally-oriented appeals. In order to test this electoral incentive model of legislator effort, I construct a novel dataset on parliamentary speeches from the 10th and 11th (2008-2017) National Assembly of Kenya by parsing information from the Kenyan Hansards - a form of parliamentary debate transcript that is also used in Britain and other Commonwealth countries. Using a combination of supervised and unsupervised machine learning techniques, I classify more than 55,000 unique speeches made by over 400 unique individual MP from constituencies of various characteristics into locally versus nationally oriented speeches, and test my hypotheses that greater electoral security leads to more speeches in general, and that different types of speeches – whether locally targeted or nationally oriented - are differentially affected by electoral incentives. The wealth of data and variation allows me to evaluate how electoral incentives affect legislator attention in a more systematic fashion than has previously been possible. The use of parliamentary speech in a text-as-data approach at the subnational level is particularly novel in the study of legislative development in sub-Saharan Africa, which has largely relied on either cross-national data to study the effectiveness of legislature as a whole or on small-n qualitative data for in-depth case studies (c.f. Gibson 1999; Hassan and Sheely 2017; Opalo 2019).

To preview the results, I find support for the electoral incentive model of legislator attention in Kenya. First, I analyze whether greater electoral security, as measured by the vote

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Adow Jubat, “Residents cry foul over absentee MPs”, March 15, 2009, The Standard, <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/1144008917/residents-cry-foul-over-absentee-mps>)

margin of the constituency, correlates with the overall number of speeches and find that it does. This relationship, however, is non-monotonic: positive effects of greater electoral security on the number of speeches delivered diminish and eventually turn negative past a certain threshold. Further nuance emerges when I classify speeches according to their local versus national attention. I find that electorally secure politicians engage in more nationally oriented speeches, while vulnerable politicians engage in more locally oriented speeches - a tendency masked in aggregate speech data. These findings hold when controlling for a variety of confounds at the individual legislator and constituency levels and absorbing variations from parliament-specific trends.

My findings shed new light on legislative politics in Africa in general and Kenya in particular and contribute to the nascent literature on legislative politics in Africa (e.g. Barkan 2009; Hassan and Sheely 2017; Opalo 2019) by offering one of the first empirical analyses of legislative debate participation in Africa.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Conventional Views of African Legislators**

Conventional views often portray African legislators as local constituency servants who provide little in the form of national legislating and oversight, while simply rubber-stamping executive decisions (e.g. Baldwin 2013; Barkan 1995; Ichino and Nathan 2013; Lindberg and Morrison 2005; Wantchekon 2003). According to this view, presidential power is strong to the degree that the presidents can dictate which laws get introduced and passed (van de Walle 2003; Barkan 2005); voters prefer locally targeted public goods and constituency service over legislative production and oversight (Barkan et al. 2010; Englebert & Dunn 2013); and

legislators do not see legislating or oversight as their core responsibilities due to the pressure from the president and the incentives created by voters (Lindberg 2003). The resulting expectation is that voters only reward MPs who provide locally targeted services, and thus MPs have little incentives to invest their efforts into national policy.

Many qualitative accounts of Kenyan politics that support this view. Politicians at various levels report pressure to provide local benefits. For instance, former Tigania West MP, Kilemi Mwiria, states that he reserves one day each week from 9 am to 8 pm and two hours from 4 to 6 pm daily, solely to meeting his constituents and listening to the demands of “wananchi,” a Swahili word for ordinary citizens.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, former ward councilor and later North Imenti MP Rahim Dawood claims that he meets with no less than 50 people daily.<sup>3</sup> Second, the pressure from the constituents is not only limited to politicians’ time but also monetary resources. For instance, Senator Mike Sonko stated in an interview that he “dish out millions of shillings daily during ‘consultations’ with [his] constituents.”<sup>4</sup> Westlands MP Timothy Wanyonyi similarly claimed that all the voters want from their MPs are money and development projects and not legislating.<sup>5</sup> Even at the aspirant level, one prominent candidate during the 2017 election cycle, Bonafice Mwaingi, claimed that “voters don’t expect you to deliver services, they just want handouts” based on his experience being on the campaign trail.<sup>6</sup> MPs thus face pressures to focus on providing goods to and be present in their home constituencies. A newspaper article reporting

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<sup>2</sup> Peninah Gakii, “Day in The Life: I feel good listening to wananchi’s problems even though I can’t solve them all”, The Star, January 28, 2012, ([https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2012/01/28/day-in-the-life-i-feel-good-listening-to-wananchis-problems-even\\_c571158](https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2012/01/28/day-in-the-life-i-feel-good-listening-to-wananchis-problems-even_c571158))

<sup>3</sup> Peninah Gakii, “Day in The Life: My motivation is service to the community”, The Star, April 7, 2012, ([https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2012/04/07/day-in-the-life-my-motivation-is-service-to-the-community\\_c601392](https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2012/04/07/day-in-the-life-my-motivation-is-service-to-the-community_c601392))

<sup>4</sup> Mwaura Samora, “The making of Nairobi Senator Mike Mbuvi 'Sonko'”, August 30, 2013, The Standard (<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000092315/the-making-of-nairobi-senator-mike-mbuvi-sonko>)

<sup>5</sup> ALC African Radio, “What does it take to be a Member of Parliament in Kenya: Perspectives from Hon. Timothy Wanyonyi”, July 20, 2018 (<http://alcafricanradio.com/what-does-it-take-to-be-a-member-of-parliament-in-kenya-perspectives-from-timothy-wanyonyi/>)

<sup>6</sup> Bonafice Mwaingi, “I sold my wife’s car: how voters create monsters”, The Nairobiian, August 2018, (<https://www.sde.co.ke/article/2001289806/i-sold-my-wife-s-car-boniface-mwaingi-reveals-how-voters-create-monsters>)

on an MP workshop attended by more than 250 MPs in 2013 writes that “[MPs] don’t like the people who elected them because most of them are always begging for money. They said voters were accosting them for handouts to pay funeral, medical, and even wedding bills. They complained that they are always the ‘guests of honour’ in events in constituencies.”<sup>7</sup>

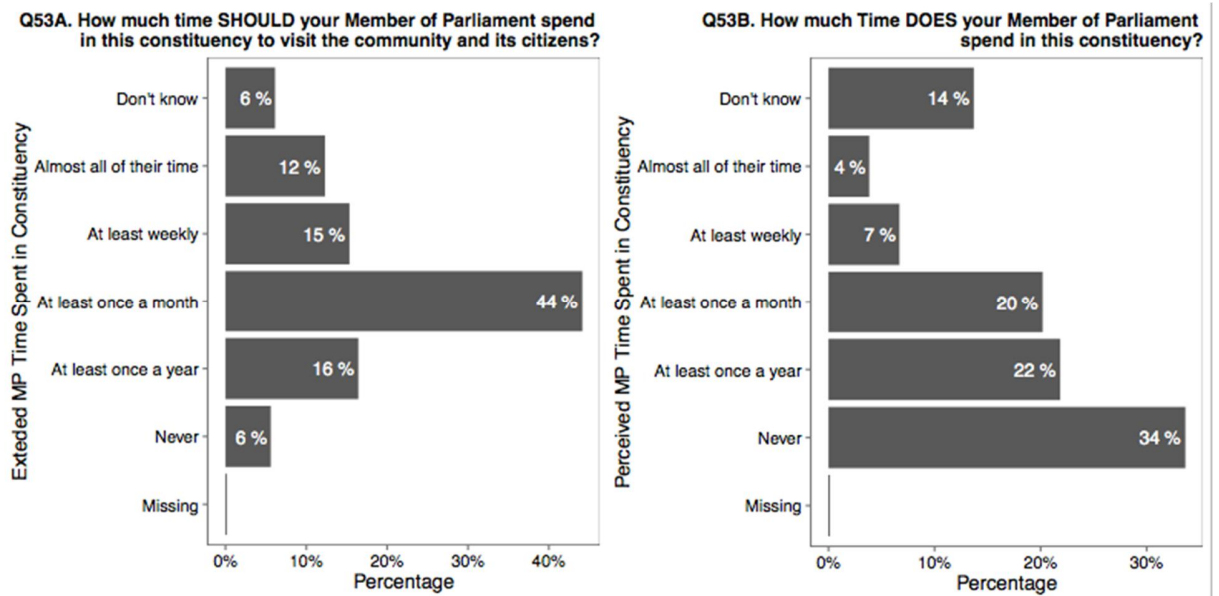
### **Locally Oriented Legislators?**

If legislators are pressured to perform at the local level, why would they bother to invest effort or devote time in parliamentary floor debates? First, if we assume politicians to be rational and strategic in their use of time and attention, we would expect them to spend most of their time in their constituencies. The data, however, shows otherwise. Data from Afrobarometer Round 4 (2007-2008), for instance, shows that more than one-third of the survey respondents believe that their members of parliament (MPs) never spend time in their constituencies (Figure 1). While survey respondents’ perceptions about MP presence is perhaps not sufficiently precise to capture the true level of MP activities, and can be influenced by other factors such as partisanship, this result highlights that MPs are at least not doing a good job of convincing voters they are present in their local constituencies.

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<sup>7</sup> Alphonse Shiundu, “Don tips leaders on their legislative role”, The Standard, September 14, 2013 (<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000093501/don-tips-leaders-on-their-legislative-role>)





**Figure 1. Expected Versus Perceived Time Spent in Local Constituencies by Members of Parliament (Afrobarometer Round 4)**

Second, despite the pressure to focus on local matters, MPs do attend parliamentary debates and make speeches on the floor. During the period of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> National Assembly (2008-2017) this paper studies, for example, the mean number of speeches made by an MP was 115.6 per parliaments, with a total of over 55,000 speeches made by more than 400 MPs. This number is surprising because there has been no real punishment for being absent during a parliamentary session despite the formal regulations against missing sessions in place.<sup>8</sup> Even members whose absence record far exceeds the formally allowed threshold - such as the Emgwen MP Alex Kosgey who missed more than 60 parliamentary sittings during the 11<sup>th</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The constitution contains a general language which states that no MP should be absent from the sessions without a prior written approval from the Speaker of the House and the standing order specifies the maximum number that an MP can be absent to be eight consecutive days (David Mwere, “Absentee MPs to lose seats”, The Star, June 16, 2014, [https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2014/06/16/absentee-mps-to-lose-seats\\_c955360](https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2014/06/16/absentee-mps-to-lose-seats_c955360)). The Kenyan National Assembly has also introduced a digital fingerprinting equipment to keep the attendance record of the MPs, but such attendance record has never been made public (Kenyan MPs fingerprinted to show parliamentary attendance” BBC Africa, February 11, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26137631>).

Parliament - have managed to keep their seats thanks to the protections from their fellow MPs.<sup>9</sup>

That a majority of Kenyan MPs do not follow the example of MP Kosgey and attend the parliamentary sessions with high regularity seems rather surprising, given the lack of enforcement.

Finally, there is also evidence that at least some legislators devote significant time and effort to fulfilling their national-level responsibilities. For instance, Barkan et al. (2010) show that MPs from six Sub-Saharan African countries spend equal or more time preparing for committee and plenary works compared to conducting constituency work. In the Kenyan context, the House Speaker for the 11<sup>th</sup> Parliament, Justin Muturi, for instance, emphasized the MPs' responsibility of "having the supreme authority to make laws, and what it means to be an oversight institution".<sup>10</sup> Similarly, in an interview about her role as an MP, the former nominated MP Sunjeev Kaur Birdi argued that the most important role of an MP was to discuss and pass laws.<sup>11</sup> These accounts show the importance that legislators attach to their responsibility to provide national orientation at the floor.

### **Electoral Pressure and Legislator Attention**

Scholars who argue that African legislators do not invest much in providing national attention have largely focused on institutional factors to explain where and why we see differences in legislator attention. For example, electoral institutions can structure legislators' incentives and encourage party-centric or personalistic behavior. Party-centered incentives make

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<sup>9</sup> Titus Too and Rael Jelimo, "Emgwen MP Alex Kosgey summoned for skipping 60 sittings", *The Standard*, August 17, 2014 (<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000131702/emgwen-mp-alex-kosgey-summoned-for-skipping-60-sittings>), "House Team Backs MP in Absentee Suit", *The Nation*, September 10, 2014 (<https://www.nation.co.ke/news/politics/House-team-backs-MP-in-absentee-suit-/1064-2448558-ovseb0/index.html>)

<sup>10</sup> Alphonse Shiundu, "Don tips leaders on their legislative role", *The Standard*, September 14, 2013 (<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000093501/don-tips-leaders-on-their-legislative-role>)

<sup>11</sup> Yash Pal Ghai and Jill Cotterell Ghai, "Interview with the honourable Sunjeev Kaur birdi, MP", September 13, 2014, *The Star* ([https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2014/09/13/interview-with-the-honourable-sunjeev-kaur-birdi-mp\\_c1002124](https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2014/09/13/interview-with-the-honourable-sunjeev-kaur-birdi-mp_c1002124))

legislators responsive to their party's reputation for national policy. Personalistic incentives tend to make legislators more interested in seeking particularistic policy and patronage for their constituency because they can use them to claim credit in electoral competition. These institutional theories expect that the more candidate-centered or intra-party competition, the less legislators will be interested in bargaining over national policy, and the more they will be willing to swap votes for patronage (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987; Carey and Shugart 1995).

While these studies provide valuable insights into how political and electoral institutions structure legislator behavior, they do not tell us much about within system variation (Ashworth and Bueno de Mesquita 2006; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987; Norton and Wood 1993). Moreover, the empirical evidence linking legislators' behavior to electoral institutions is arguably weak. As André, Depauw, and Martin (2015) argue, these studies ignore the fact that individual legislators are not uniform and that institutions translate behavior differently for different legislators. Finally, despite the growing theoretical significance assigned to legislators' attention, researchers have had difficulty measuring the behavior of individual legislators (Martin 2011).

While I agree that electoral institutions shape legislator behavior in the broader context, I argue that electoral pressure critically shapes how individual legislators divide their attention between locally and nationally oriented activities. Strategic legislators allocate their scarce resources of time and effort to best appeal to their constituents, and voters respond by rewarding the legislators by voting. In making this argument, I build upon a rich literature on the electoral connection, which offers considerable evidence that politicians facing greater electoral pressure act differently from those who enjoy electoral security. Vulnerable legislators in developed democracies undertake more casework for individual constituents (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina

1987), take different positions on roll call votes (Shapiro et al. 1990); increase efforts to raise campaign funds (Hall and Van Houweling 2006); travel back to home state more often (Fenno 1978) and show up in the chamber less often (Fukumoto and Matsuo 2015), and propose more legislation (Campbell 1982). In addition, recent work in developing democracies also shows that electoral pressure can affect pork distribution under some circumstances (Hicken and Ravanilla 2015; Keefer and Khemani 2009).

I construct a model based on Ashworth and Bueno de Mesquita (2006)'s approach of legislative particularism. In their model, Ashworth and Bueno de Mesquita (2006) outline a game where there are two players, a legislator and a voter. In the first period, a legislator is faced with an allocation problem where she chooses to divide her resources between providing localized constituency service and global legislative public goods. In the second period, the voter reelects the incumbent legislator or replaces her with a challenger after observing the incumbent's performance. The legislator values reelection, policy, constituency service, and the total amount of national policy production provided in the legislature. Similarly, the voter values ideology, constituency service, and legislative public goods, but can place different weights on these outcomes than the legislator.

The voter's information set is limited in two important ways. First, the voter does not observe the amount of legislative public goods that the legislator produces. Second, the voter only observes a noisy signal of the legislator's production of constituency service. The legislator's ability to provide constituency service is unobserved, and the voter updates their belief about this hidden ability by observing the noisy signal of constituency service. In equilibrium, the voter uses a cutoff rule based on the realization of the signal, inducing a

probability distribution over whether the legislator is reelected for a given allocation between constituency service and legislative public goods.

From this model, Ashworth and Bueno de Mesquita (2006) predict that, on average, local effort is increasing in electoral competition, increasing local effort comes at the expense of national effort, and that the equilibrium levels of both local and national attention provided by a legislator are increasing in the resources to which that legislator has access.

From these predictions, we can derive testable implications in the context of speech-making in the Kenyan Parliament. First and most straightforward is the effects of electoral security on speech making itself. MPs may have fewer incentives to go back to their constituency and provide locally targeted goods and more leeway to focus on the national agenda when MPs believe that their seats are safe. But those who face greater electoral pressure would be less likely to show up to the parliament floor and instead invest more time and effort being present in their local constituencies. Second, for those who do attend the parliamentary sessions, we can expect the legislators to utilize the opportunities presented by speech time to appeal to voters in their constituencies in a different manner. Specifically, I expect that those who face greater electoral concerns will be more likely to make more speeches that address issues targeted at the local level, while those who are relatively free from electoral pressure to engage more in nationally oriented speeches.

## **DATA**

### **Case: Kenya**

To test these expectations, I turn to the case of Kenya's 10th and 11th Parliaments (2008-2017). I use the case of Kenya and these sessions for a few reasons. First, Kenya has established

relatively stable democratic institutions and has experienced regular transitions of power since the introduction of multiparty politics in 1992 (Barkan and Matiangi 2009). Second, Kenya also shares with other former British colonies in the region a similar colonial history - including keeping the Hansards - and institutional features of a multiparty democracy under a presidential system with single-member districts (SMD) and a first-past-the-post electoral system. Third, the long-standing ethnic divide in the country exemplified by the electoral violence around the 2007 elections (Gibson and Long 2009, Kasara 2017) show the still turbulent nature of a developing democracy. These factors make Kenya both an important as well as a representative case for an in-depth investigation.

In the 10th National Assembly (2008-2012), there were a total of 222 seats in the National Assembly, with 210 directly elected at the geographical constituencies according to single-member district plurality (SMDP) electoral rules, and 12 seats reserved for nominated representatives based on party vote shares. In the December 2007 elections, the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) led by the opposition leader Raila Odinga secured a plurality of seats in the parliament, followed by the President Kibaki's party - Party of National Unity (PNU) - and other parties allied to the PNU. However, following the negotiations to resolve the violent aftermath of the elections, the ruling and the opposition parties agreed to form a grand coalition government, in which Odinga served as the Prime Minister and his party members also in President Kibaki's cabinet.

In 2010, a constitutional reform was initiated, which went into effect in 2013. The resulting 11th National Assembly consisted of 349 seats. Of these, 12 seats were still reserved for nominated representatives based on party vote shares, but 80 more seats were created, increasing the number of seats directly elected at the geographic constituencies to 290. In

addition, 47 more seats were created for women representatives selected at the county level. The new constitution also established a Senate, which has 67 seats (47 elected by county and 20 nominated based on party vote share). Another important change made through the reform was about ministerial appointments: MPs were no longer allowed to serve concurrently as cabinet members.

The 2013 general elections were concurrently held for the Presidential, National Assembly, Senate, as well as County Governors and Representatives. For the National Assembly elections, the Jubilee Alliance, which was established to support the current president, Uhuru Kenyatta, became the majority coalition, winning the most parliament seats - 167 out of 349. The Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD), which was established to support the presidential ticket of Raila Odinga, came in second, winning 141 out of 349 seats.

### **Parliamentary Speeches**

In their article comparing legislator speechmaking in Germany and the United Kingdom, Proksch and Slapin (2012, 520) argue that "[p]articipation in legislative debates is among the most visible activities of members of parliament (MPs), yet debates remain an understudied form of legislative behavior." Most MPs, regardless of individual or constituency characteristics, engage in some level of speech. While earlier literature made a distinction between parliamentary speech as debate versus speech as deliberation, recent work suggests speeches are a tool for position-taking for MPs and parties, with the intended audience being voters and other MPs (Slapin and Proksch 2014).

Even in developing democracies, MPs clearly believe that parliamentary speech matters. The media frequently broadcasts the speeches, exposing a wide swath of citizens to their

contents. In Kenya between 1998 and 2016, for example, the Daily Nation – Kenya’s leading newspaper and the largest newspaper in East Africa –published an average of 27 articles per year that discuss parliamentary debates and specifically referring to the Hansard. Since articles about floor debates could easily be written without using the term Hansard, this average number most likely provides a very conservative estimate about the extent to which floor debates are discussed in the media. In fact, even writing as early as 1970, Stultz (1970) suggested that the Kenyan public was aware of the contents of parliamentary debates, since “[t]hese proceedings are reported in considerable depth in local newspapers, [... and] public galleries which seat 600-700 persons, are regularly filled.”

Until recently, Hansards have been kept in government archives where access is limited. Moreover, methods of analyzing speech data have traditionally been extremely time-consuming. As a result, studies of legislative speech have tended to be qualitative in nature. In the African context, for example, Elischer (2013) uses the Kenyan Hansards to investigate the evolution of ethnic politics in the country through a qualitative examination of the changes in bill sponsorship patterns. Similarly, Tsubura (2014) uses the Tanzanian Hansards as a source of qualitative archival content in her study of constituency development funds in Tanzania. To date, only a handful studies - such as Gibson (1999) who conducts a systematic statistical test to illustrate how the party and electoral rules influenced parliamentarian behavior in his study of wildlife policy in Zambia and Kenya using the contents of parliamentary debate on the 1982 Amendment to the Zambian National Parks and Wildlife Bill, Humphreys and Weinstein (2012) who use the Ugandan Hansards to calculate the total number of lines each MP spoke in order to create a simple measure of participation, or Wang (2014) who uses the same data to show no significant



differences by gender in overall speech activity as measured by the number of lines spoken - have used the Hansards to conduct quantitative analyses.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>NATIONAL ASSEMBLY</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>OFFICIAL REPORT</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2011</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">The House met at 2.30 p.m.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">PRAYERS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PETITIONS</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Eng. Rege stood up in his place and proceeded to the Dispatch Box)</i></p> <p><b>Mr. Deputy Speaker:</b> Eng. Rege, are you sure that is a Petition?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Eng. Rege resumed his seat)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Next Order!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PAPERS LAID</p> <p>The following Papers were laid on the Table:-</p> <p>Report of the Select Committee on Delegated Legislation and Departmental Committee on Energy, Information and Communication on the scrutiny of the energy, Importation of Petroleum Products Quota Allocations Regulations 2010.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(By Eng. Rege)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Hon. Mbuvi entered the Chamber and took a seat in his place)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>POINT OF ORDER</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">IN APPROPRIATE DRESSING BY HON. MBUVI</p> <p><b>The Assistant Minister for Information and Communications</b> (Mr. Khaniri): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir. I rise to seek your ruling on this particular issue. Hon. Gideon Mbuvi has just walked in and you can see him putting on shades and some things in his ears. I want you to rule whether that is appropriate dressing.</p> <p><b>Mr. Deputy Speaker:</b> Hon. Mbuvi, whereas in the history of this House that I have known myself – many hon. Members will bear me out – I have never seen any situation in which an hon. Member of Parliament who is male has come in the Chamber in earrings. Do you have any explanation for that?</p> <p><b>Mr. Mbuvi:</b> Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think it is not supported in the standing orders. It is just a matter of dressing. I am representing the youth in this House. I think the hon. Member should concentrate on his constituency instead of interfering with me.</p> <p><b>The Assistant Minister for Lands</b> (Mr. Bifwoli): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir. In the history of this world since God created it, men have never imitated women.</p> <p><b>The Assistant Minister for Information and Communications</b> (Mr. Khaniri): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, this House is guided by the Standing Orders and the precedents of rulings that have been made before. I stand here to inform the House that sometimes back, hon. Martha Karua, myself and other Members of Parliament were involved in an accident and I had some damage to my eyes and the doctor recommended that I put on shades. When I walked with those shades in the House, the Speaker who was in the Chair then, hon. Kaparo, ruled me out of order until I had to produce evidence from the doctor that it was a medical condition. Therefore, there is precedence.</p> <p><b>Mr. Outa:</b> On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir. You heard hon. Mbuvi saying that he is representing the youth. In my constituency there are young people but I have never seen them wearing earrings. Could he be clear to this House who these youth he is representing are? Are they in his constituency or are they the young people in Kenya?</p>
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**Figure 2. Example Hansard Except from Tuesday, March 1st, 2011**

To examine the patterns in parliamentary speech participation, I collected information on all parliamentary floor speeches made by individual MPs in the 10th and 11th National Assembly (2008-2017) by extracting electronic copies from the Kenya National Assembly website.<sup>12</sup> After conducting optical character recognition (OCR) process on all digital copies in PDF format as necessary, I extracted the raw speech text, speaker name, speaker position, session date, and discussion header using an automated script.

<sup>12</sup> Comparing the dates from the Hansards and parliament sitting schedule revealed that there were certain days for which the online electronic transcripts were not available. For instance, for the year 2013, only partial records from March to May were available from the National Assembly website. I collected and added the missing information later by searching through the deep web such as the Internet Archive Wayback machine and by making photocopies of the physical Hansard copies during fieldwork.

To illustrate, consider a typical example of a Hansard from Tuesday, March 1st, 2011 in Figure 2. Here, we see a number of speakers (e.g. the Assistant Minister for Information and Communication, the Deputy Speaker, and Mr. Mbuvi) engaging in a discussion under the header of "Inappropriate Dressing by Hon. Mbuvi". All names were matched to the official names used in the electoral results record. I excluded speeches made by those other than sitting MPs (e.g. senators, attorney-general, clerk) as well as by those who are officially presiding over the chamber (e.g. speaker, deputy speaker, temporary deputy speaker). Next, to capture speech contributions to different substantive debates, I merged the individual speeches made by the same individual under the same header on the same day. This avoids overcounting the number of simple back-and-forth's (Lauderdale and Herzog 2016). The resulting dataset contains a total of 56,205 speeches made by 423 unique MPs across the two parliaments.

Not all speeches, however, are the same. Some, like discussions about the Security Bill, are arguably nationally oriented. Others, such as a question raised by an MP to the Minister of the Roads regarding a promise to build a new highway in one's constituency, are inherently local. Finally, there are also those which do not fall under either the nationally- or locally-oriented categories, such as discussions about parliamentary session schedules or other procedural matters. In order to consider whether MPs under different levels of electoral pressure are more or less inclined towards making a more nationally-oriented, locally-oriented, or other procedural speeches, I further classify the texts into these three categories.

Classifying more than 55,000 speeches manually is impractical. Instead, I turn to shortcuts leveraging the way speeches are presented in a typical Hansard transcript and enlist the help of advances in machine learning approaches including both unsupervised and supervised classification techniques. First, I capitalize on the fact that the Hansard is divided into sections

and subsections with headings summarizing the floor discussions. In the example presented in Figure 2, for instance, the subject heading reads “Inappropriate Dressing by Hon. Mbuvi”. Using such subsection headers (N=8,906), I ran an unsupervised document clustering algorithm similar to topic modeling to reduce the dimensions of headers down to a more manageable level, and then manually inspected and coded the headers where appropriate.<sup>13</sup> For instance, headers such as “The Statute Law Bill”, “The Finance Bill”, or “The Constitution of Kenya (Amendment) Bill” are clustered together by the common term “bill” and the speeches under such headers were classified as nationally oriented upon closer inspection. Similarly, those containing the term “adjournment” are clustered together and were classified as procedural.

Finally, terms such as “constituency” or “district” as well as prepositions such as “in” are clustered with terms that are likely to be associated with local services such as “road”, “electricity”, “school”, “hospital” or “construction”, suggesting that these clusters are likely to be associated with discussions of local constituency topics. The structure of these local headers, however, is inherently different from those for national or procedural speeches. A debate about the Finance Bill is mostly about national attention for all those involved and a discussion about the new adjournment time is likewise all procedural. But a discussion with a local header is usually raised by an initiator who is representing the constituency for which the topic is relevant, which is then followed by some response from a relevant party (for example, the Minister of Roads or Chair of the CDF Committee) addressing the concerns raised. As such, unlike the speeches under national or procedural headers which were initially uniformly coded into national or procedural categories, the individual speeches under the local headers were further manually

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<sup>13</sup> Sample topic prevalence for a select number of unsupervised topic models can be found in the Appendix.

investigated and classified separately into the three relevant categories as appropriate: local, national, and procedural.

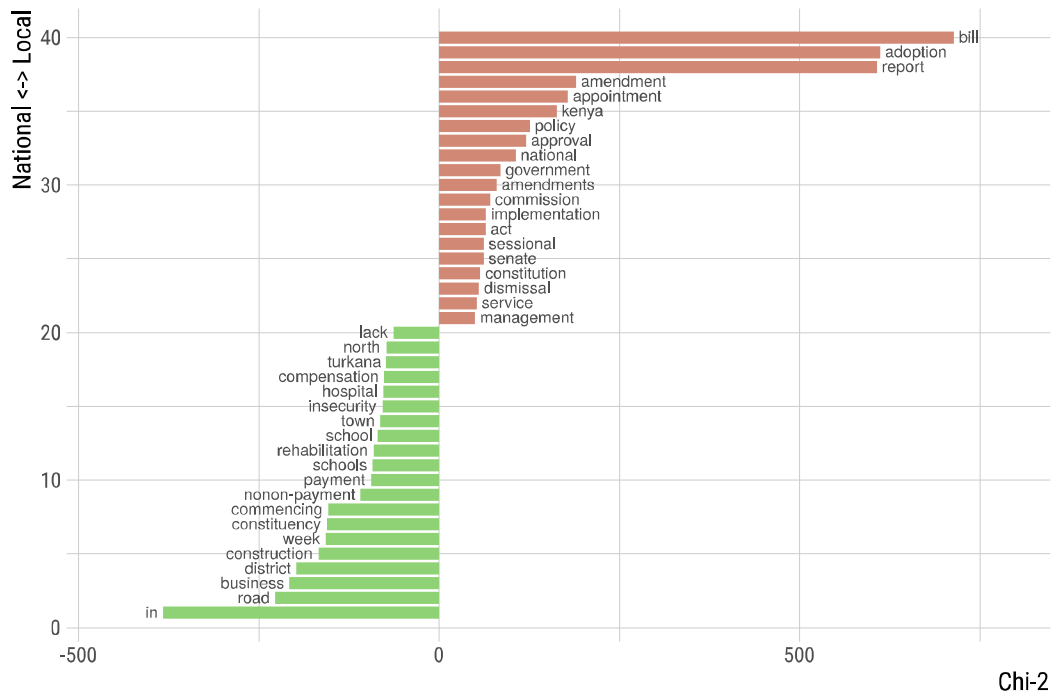
Considering that procedural speeches follow similar patterns that are specified in the standing orders, I used the individual speeches classified as procedural to create a training set of procedural speech text and ran a supervised classification algorithm to detect procedural speeches remaining in those speeches initially classified as either national or local. To ensure the accuracy of the overall classification, a 10% random sample of the total speeches (approximately 1,800 speeches each for each coder) were manually inspected by three Kenyan local research assistants for classification accuracy, and any errors were corrected where appropriate. Figure 3 shows the top discriminating terms when comparing those speeches under local versus national headers. The resulting sample contains on average 68.9 national, 27.6 local, and 19.0 other procedural speeches per individual legislator-parliament observations.

### **Sample**

During the 10th and 11th Parliament combined, there were a total of 571 seats. In this chapter, I only use a subset of MPs for the baseline models since my main predictor of interest is electoral competition. First, I limit the sample to those who are directly elected at the constituency level. This leaves a total of 500 MPs (210 in the 10th and 290 in the 11th Parliament). Here, I am excluding two classes of MPs. One consists of the nominated MPs who did not face constituency-level electoral competition and instead were chosen based on party lists and party vote shares. The other class is composed of the women representatives whose seats were created only starting

## Most Discriminating Terms

Brown (National), Green (Local)



**Figure 3: Most Discriminating Terms Using Header-Based Classification Approach**

from the 11th Parliament after the constitutional reform and whose geographical constituencies are at the county and not the constituency level. Although the women representatives are also elected members, they face a problem of having to deal with a much larger geographical constituency as some counties contain more than twenty constituencies, while they lack in resources as they are not entitled to the constituency development funds (CDF) as their other elected counterparts.<sup>14</sup> Since the main independent variable of interest is electoral security and since these two types of MPs are likely to face systematically different incentive structures, I omit them from the analysis.

<sup>14</sup> e.g. Eve Women, “Do you know your woman rep?”, June 13, 2015 (<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/evewoman/article/2000165530/do-you-know-your-woman-rep>)

Second, I further constrain the sample to only those MPs who served the full-term in the national assembly. To do so, I collected information on all MP election petitions, nullifications, deaths, and the subsequent by-election results. I removed sixteen MPs from the 10th Parliament and six MPs from the 11th Parliament from the sample by excluding the MPs who either failed to defend their seats during their term or joined the parliament late.<sup>15</sup> The final resulting sample size is 471, with 191 MPs from the 10th Parliament and 283 MPs from the 11th Parliament.

### **Key Independent Variable: MP Vote Share, $t-1$**

For the key independent variable of interest, I construct a measure of vote margin in the previous general election ( $t-1$ ) by taking the difference in vote share between the winner and the first runner-up. Since there are often more than two parties competing in a district despite Kenya's SMD system, a margin of victory is a conceptually more appropriate variable to capture electoral competitiveness compared to other measures such as vote share. For instance, while the vote margin for both Saboti and Kibwezi West constituencies were around 0.5% in the 2013 election, the winning vote shares were 21.4% and 50% respectively. I use the official election tally results released by the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) for the 2007 election and the new Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) for the 2013 election.<sup>16</sup>

### **Controls**

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<sup>15</sup> These are: Ainamoi, Bomachoge Borabu, Bomet East, Embakasi South, Emuhaya, Juja, Kajiado North, Kamukunji, Kangema, Kirinyaga Central, Shinyalu, Sotik, South Mugirango, Makadara, Ndhiwa, and Wajir South in the 10th, and Gatundu South, Kabete, Kajiado Central, Malindi, Mathare, and Nyaribari Chache in the 11th Parliament.

<sup>16</sup> I also construct and consider measures of vote share, as well as the effective number of candidates. The absolute value of the Pearson correlation coefficient between the vote share and the vote margin variables, and between the vote share and the effective number of candidates variables were 0.92 and 0.63. When I use these as alternative specifications for the independent variable and do not find any substantive differences in the overall findings.

I also use a battery of controls which previous literature has found to be potentially important predictors of parliamentary participation and legislative effort. These are grouped into largely two categories, namely, legislator and constituency characteristics.

### *Legislator Characteristics*

First, I consider a number of controls capturing legislator characteristics, including previous experience, partisanship, committee membership, and gender. Since new members may require learning period to understand their roles and the rules stipulated in the standing order in order to contribute to floor debates, those who have previously served in the Parliament could participate more in debates. Existing empirical studies find that seniority as one of the key factors that increase legislative productivity. (Cox and Terry 2008; Padró i Miquel and Snyder 2004). Using the list of elected MP names for all previous general elections, I also create two additional variables capturing individual MP's experience. For earlier periods, I use the information from the booklet, *Politics and Parliamentarians in Kenya: 1944–2007* published by the Center for Multiparty Democracy (Kihoro 2007). For the more recent years, I use the official list of elected MPs from the National Assembly website. After cleaning the data for spelling inconsistencies and matching for the MP and constituency names, I created a simple indicator variable noting whether the MP is an incumbent. In addition, I also generate a variable capturing the total number of terms the MPs previously served in the parliament.

Second, majority party members, compared to their minority counterparts may enjoy a greater advantage in speech making due to the party's agenda-setting capacity (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005). The simplest measure capturing access to and control of legislative activities is partisanship and whether a party is in a ruling or opposition party status. The party

system in Kenya, however, is highly fractionalized - there were twenty-three and twenty-one parties which won at least one seat in the 10th and 11th Parliaments respectively. That said, as a presidential election approaches, different parties tend to form a coalition to support a common presidential candidate. Thus, instead of considering individual parties, I create a variable capturing whether an MP belongs to the ruling, opposition, or other coalition. For the 10th Parliament, I consider the members of the parties that supported President Kibaki's presidential bid as belonging to the ruling coalition (e.g. Party of National Unity, Kenya African National Union), while those from the parties that supported the opposition leader Raila Odinga as the opposition (e.g. Orange Democratic Movement, National Rainbow Coalition). Those in the Orange Democratic Movement – Kenya (ODM-K), which fielded their own presidential candidate, Kalonzo Musyoka, are classified as belonging to neither the ruling or the opposition coalition ("Other Coalition"). For the 11th Parliament, I classify those associated with the Jubilee Alliance as belonging to the ruling coalition (e.g. The National Alliance, United Republican Party), those associated with the Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD) as opposition (e.g. Orange Democratic Movement, Wiper Democratic Movement, Amani National Congress), and the rest as others.

Third, those who are more active in the parliamentary committees are also more likely to contribute a greater number of speeches and have higher legislative productivity in general (Cox and Terry 2008). In Kenya, the mandate for the parliamentary committee structure is codified in the constitutions, statutes, and the standing orders for both the 10th and 11th Parliament, and committee types are largely classified into departmental, public audit, ad hoc, housekeeping, and mediation committees (Parliament of Kenya, 2017). I collected information on committee leadership and membership from the official parliament website as well as various news sources



and constructed a measure of committee service score following (Fourinaies and Hall 2018). Specifically, for each MP  $i$  on committee  $j$  during parliament,  $p$ , I construct a committee activity index,  $ijp$ , which takes a value of 0 if  $i$  is not a member, a value of 1 if  $i$  is an ordinary member, a value of 2 if  $i$  is a vice chair, and a value of 3 if  $i$  is a chair of committee  $j$  during parliament  $p$ . Then I take the sum across all committees in a given parliament to derive the final aggregate measure.

Fourth, I control for the gender of MPs. Existing research shows that female politicians are more likely to facilitate congeniality and cooperation (Tolleson-Rinehart and Dodson 1991), act as facilitators (Kathlene 1994), and do more constituency service (Richardson and Freeman 1995) compared to their male counterparts. However, evidence for participation in parliamentary speech is mixed. Some studies find that women tend to speak less (e.g. Kathlene 1994; Bäck, Debus, and Müller 2014), while others find that they are just as active in debates as their male colleagues (Pearson and Dancey 2011). In the sub-Saharan Africa context, Wang (2014) and Clayton, Josefsson, and Wang (2017) show that there are no significant differences by gender in overall speech activity, but female MPs who hold parliamentary leadership positions speak significantly more than any other group in their studies of the Ugandan Parliament. In Kenya, the 2010 constitution introduced 47 county women representative positions and stipulated the so-called two-thirds gender rule which states that at least 33% of the MPs should be female - a rule that has never been met yet. Moreover, the gender-quota seats have continuously drawn criticisms for being insufficient.<sup>17</sup> Since a typical Kenyan name entails an Anglican style first name, I used the gender package in R to conduct a probabilistic matching using historical names

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<sup>17</sup> e.g. Philip Mwakio, “Women Rep’ demeaning, says Speaker Muturi”. The Standard, April 26, 2013 (<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000082415/women-rep-demeaning-says-speaker-muturi>), Wycliff Kipsang, “Gladys Boss Shollei seeks to scrap post of Woman Rep”, The Nation, July 11, 2018 (<https://www.nation.co.ke/news/politics/Gladys-Boss-Shollei-seeks-to-scrap-post-of-Woman-Rep/1064-4656772-alee29z/index.html>)

datasets derived from the U.S. Social Security Administration, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the North Atlantic Population Project. While most matches were straightforward, I conducted additional background research for the handful of cases where the match was not certain to further ascertain the gender of the MPs. There are 14 out of 192 (7.3%) and 16 out of 285 (5.6%) female MPs in our sample for the 10th and 11th Parliament respectively.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, I also consider a measure of MP's goals and ambitions. Different MPs may have different goals set for their political careers and this could affect their legislative behavior (Schlesinger 1966). In particular, studies in other contexts show that those with a more progressive ambition of seeking higher office tend to be more active in proposing bills and making speeches in the legislature (Herrick and Moore 1993), while those who are seeking re-election into the house would pursue more constituency-oriented activities (Dropp and Peskowitz 2012; Mayhew 1974). To capture MP's goal and ambition, I consider whether they run as a candidate for an MP position or a higher office (i.e. county women representative, senatorial, gubernatorial, and presidential offices) in  $t+1$  based on the official election results listing all candidate names released by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) for the elections held in 2013 and 2017.

### *Constituency Characteristics*

Next, I also include a battery of controls capturing different aspects of constituency characteristics, including the distance from the capital, population density, percentage of school-aged children in primary school, and local ethnic fractionalization. First, I construct a measure for the distance from each constituency to the National Assembly building, as those MPs whose

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<sup>18</sup> The 47 female MPs elected as county women representatives and five female MPs who gained the nominated seats in the 11th parliament are not included.

constituencies are located further away may face a greater cost in terms of time, money, and effort when traveling to the capital. Kenyan MPs are given a number of supports to help them travel back to their constituency. First, they get an official car grant, a personal car loan, mileage remuneration and car monthly car maintenance support.<sup>19</sup> Still, traveling back to the home constituency requires time and resource. Moreover, given the finite nature of time and resource, MPs may have to accept some tradeoff in their activities and priorities. This issue will be even more acutely felt by the MPs whose constituencies are physically far away from the capital, Nairobi. To capture the distance of each constituency from the capital, I first collected information on the address of the MP constituency offices. Since address in the Kenyan context is often nothing more than a P.O Box number, I collected additional information on the cross streets or the names of the nearby notable landmark buildings or structures. In cases where constituency office location was unclear, I used the addresses of the constituency development fund (CDF) office, which is usually located at a central location and close to the major administrative buildings in a constituency, to account for missingness. Next, I used the Google Maps API to calculate the shortest travel distance in kilometers and expected travel time. This approach is arguably superior to simply calculating the shortest distance between two centroids, as it accounts for road networks and conditions.

Second, I control for population density. As Cox (1987) finds in his study of legislator activities in Victorian England, the size of the constituency can be positively correlated with participation in legislative debates. This could be for a number of reasons. First, those living in

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<sup>19</sup> In the case of the 11th Parliament the official car grant was set at KSh 5 million (US\$48,000) per 5-year term, a personal car loan from the government at up to KSh 7 million (US\$67,400), mileage (or business class travel by air or rail in lieu) and car maintenance of KSh 356,525 (US\$3,440) monthly (Lee Mwitii, "FACTSHEET: How much do Kenyan members of parliament earn – and are they overpaid?", Africa Check, January 15, 2017, <https://africacheck.org/factsheets/factsheet-much-kenyan-members-parliament-earn-overpaid/>, "MPs allocate Sh1.8bn to buy luxury cars for new members" Business Daily, March 14, 2016, <https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/MPs-allocate-Sh1-8bn-to-buy-luxury-cars-for-new-members/539546-3115728-kykifgz/index.html>)

more densely populated areas may have better access to information, and thereby have a better ability to monitor their MP's productivity. Second, having more constituents could mean that attracting a sufficient number of votes either by providing particularistic goods or simply vote buying becomes more expensive. I use the data from the 2009 Census to create a logged population density variable. Although the census was conducted in 2009, the number of constituencies changed from 210 to 290 between the 10th and 11th Parliament. Moreover, the 2009 census data mask the name or location of administrative units below the constituency-level, which prevents the mapping of the 2009 data on the 2013 constituency boundaries. However, in 2014, the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) published an interactive socio-economic atlas using a selected number of variables re-measured at the new constituency level (Wiesmann, Kiteme, and Mwangi 2016).<sup>20</sup> I use the raw 2009 census data for the 210 constituencies in the 10th Parliament and the data extracted from the atlas for the 290 constituencies in the 11th Parliament to create a comparable measure of population density in the two time periods.

Third, I use the percentage of school-aged children in primary school as a proxy for levels of development and information access. Ideally, I would include a direct measure of poverty or unemployment to capture development and a measure of access to radio or other media to capture information access. However, comparable measure for these is not available for the two time periods. I again extract information on primary school attendance rate from the atlas for the 11th Parliament and use the original variable from the 2009 census for the 10th Parliament. Despite the abolishment of primary school fee in 2003 by President Kibaki, there is great variation in the actual primary school attendance among the school-aged children (6-13). For instance, at the new 2013 constituency level, one constituency in the Northwestern region of

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<sup>20</sup> The online version of the atlas can be found here: <https://www.kenya-atlas.org/>

Turkana had only 9.9% of the school-aged children attending primary school. On the other end, the average attendance rate in Muranga county was above 90%. The absolute values of the Pearson correlation between the primary school variable with proportion of people with access to radio, proportion of people who are unemployed (which are only available from the 2009 Census), and proportion of people below poverty line (which is only available from the 2014 atlas) are at 0.95, 0.60, and 0.51 respectively.

Finally, I include a measure of ethnic fractionalization at the constituency level. In Kenya, parties are often organized, and a majority of voters tend to vote along ethnic lines. Moreover, many constituencies are ethnically homogeneous. The more homogeneous a constituency is, it is more likely that the incumbent MP faces competition from a coethnic and/or a copartisan. In such a situation, MPs may face greater incentive to cultivate personal vote and to cater towards local needs (Carey and Shugart 1995). To generate estimates of the ethnic composition of Kenya's 210 parliamentary constituencies, I merged data from 19 nationally representative surveys conducted between June 2011 and October 2017, yielding a total sample of 38,777 respondents.<sup>21</sup> All data comes from IPSOS Kenya. Since the original data is organized around administrative and not electoral boundaries, I used the information on locations and sublocations with provinces and districts as anchors and matched them with the electoral boundaries dataset using fuzzy matching and probabilistic record linkage technique (Enamorado, Fifield, and Imai 2018). The same exercise was repeated first for the 210 constituencies in the 10th Parliament and then for the 290 constituencies in the 11th Parliament. Using the resulting dataset, I calculated the ethnic fractionalization index and the percentage of the largest ethnic

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<sup>21</sup> From a full sample of 42,768, I exclude a total of 3,991 respondents who refused to answer or identified only as Kenyan.

group as well as the percentage of the five nationally largest ethnic group at the constituency level. The mean number of respondents per constituency was 142.10.

## **EMPIRICAL STRATEGY and RESULTS**

The goal of this project's empirical analysis is to estimate how much electoral security affects legislators' speech making behavior while controlling for the other key covariates identified in the existing literature. The main empirical strategy aims to parse out the effects on the dependent variable at the individual legislator level by employing parliament fixed effects and controlling for covariates that potentially confound the relationship of interest.

### **Aggregate Number of Speeches**

The main model for estimation is an ordinary least squares regression with log-transformed dependent variables. Since there are two parliaments considered and some MPs were reelected, the unit of analysis is at the individual MP-parliament level. In addition to including a battery of controls, I include parliament fixed effects and also use bootstrapped cluster standard errors at the county level to account for any systematic bias arising from unobserved common characteristics which are unaccounted for with the control variables considered.<sup>22</sup> Considering the possibility that the effects of the margin of victory variable are not

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<sup>22</sup> Since there are only 47 counties in Kenya, the group size is small compared to the conventional standard. Following the advice from (Cameron and Miller 2013), I use the bootstrapped corrections. While including county-level fixed effects may further account for any unobserved heterogeneity arising at the county level, there are at least two reasons why relying on the within county comparison may be less desirable. First, the current county system and its devolved structure were only finalized and implemented with the start of the 11th Parliament, which could imply that the similarities within counties between the two parliaments may be different. Second, counties themselves may be quite heterogeneous, making the reliance on within county questionable. For instance, the maximum number of constituencies in a given county range from 4 to 21. Moreover, some counties such as Nairobi county encompasses a very diverse group of constituencies in terms of partisanship and ethnic composition, while others such as Vihiga or Nyeri are highly homogeneous. That said, I do consider county fixed effects and re-run all the models presented in the main text and find no substantive difference.

linear (Barber and Schmidt 2018), I also include a quadratic term for the variable in the model.

The resulting estimation equation is:

$$Y_{ijt} = X_{ijt}\beta + \theta_{jt}\gamma + \phi_t + \epsilon_{ijt}$$

where  $Y_{ijt}$  captures the dependent variable - the log-transformed number of speeches for an MP  $i$  in constituency  $j$  in time  $t$ ; and  $X_{ijt}$  consists of the key independent variables, namely vote margin at  $t-1$  and its squared term, as well as a host of control variables capturing individual characteristics for MP  $i$  in constituency  $j$  at time  $t$ . The model also incorporates constituency characteristics ( $\theta_{jt}$ ) for a given constituency  $j$  at time  $t$ , the parliament fixed effects term ( $\phi_t$ ), and an error term ( $\epsilon_{ijt}$ ). The estimation equation provides the best predictor of electoral security as measured by the margin of victory given the observable characteristics of individual MPs and constituencies. Parliament fixed effects take into account both the observed and unobserved heterogeneity across the two parliaments. Since the key variable of interest, electoral security, as well as many of the covariates are specific to individual MPs and the corresponding constituencies, individual fixed effects are not included in the estimation equation. Moreover, while including fixed effects at a higher administrative unit level such as county or region could additionally control for any unobserved heterogeneity at a higher geographical clustering, doing so changes the substantive comparison to be between MPs in the same county or region and thereby potentially limits the external validity of any findings.<sup>23</sup> Finally, although there are some MPs who are reelected and thus could theoretically allow conducting a within-MP analysis of the data, the sample size is too small (N=54) to detect meaningful variations given the low reelection rate typical of many developing democracies. As such, the estimation is limited in terms of

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<sup>23</sup> That said, running the same estimations with county or region fixed effects yield similar results to those reported in the main text (not reported).

identifying a causal effect of electoral security on speech making behavior due to unobserved factors at the individual MP and constituency level that may be correlated with electoral security and have independent effects on speech making. Therefore, this estimation is limited to investigating associations between the variables of interest by comparing across individual MPs within a given parliament and does not claim to get at causal inference.

Table 1 reports the results from regressing logged number of speeches on a number of covariates, with electoral security as measured by the margin of victory in the previous election being the key regressor of interest. The ordinary least squares regression model was run four times, once with only the electoral security variables, once with individual MP characteristics variables, once with constituency characteristics variables and once with all control variables. All models include parliament fixed effects with standard errors clustered by county.

The first model represents the simple relationship between electoral security and the number of speeches. The results indicate that a statistically significant and non-linear association exists between electoral security and the number of speeches. Most importantly, while subsequent models with individual MP and constituency characteristics mostly confirm conventional wisdom about legislator effectiveness, the magnitude as well as the significance of the coefficient of the key variable of interest, Margin of Victory, remains consistent and mostly unaffected.

First, from the individual MP characteristics variables model (Model 2), we see that incumbents - that is, those who also served in the same positions in the previous parliaments - and those with greater committee involvements tend to make more speeches. Second, from the model with constituency characteristics (Model 3), we see that MPs whose home constituency is located further from the capital are less likely to make speeches. However, these effects, except

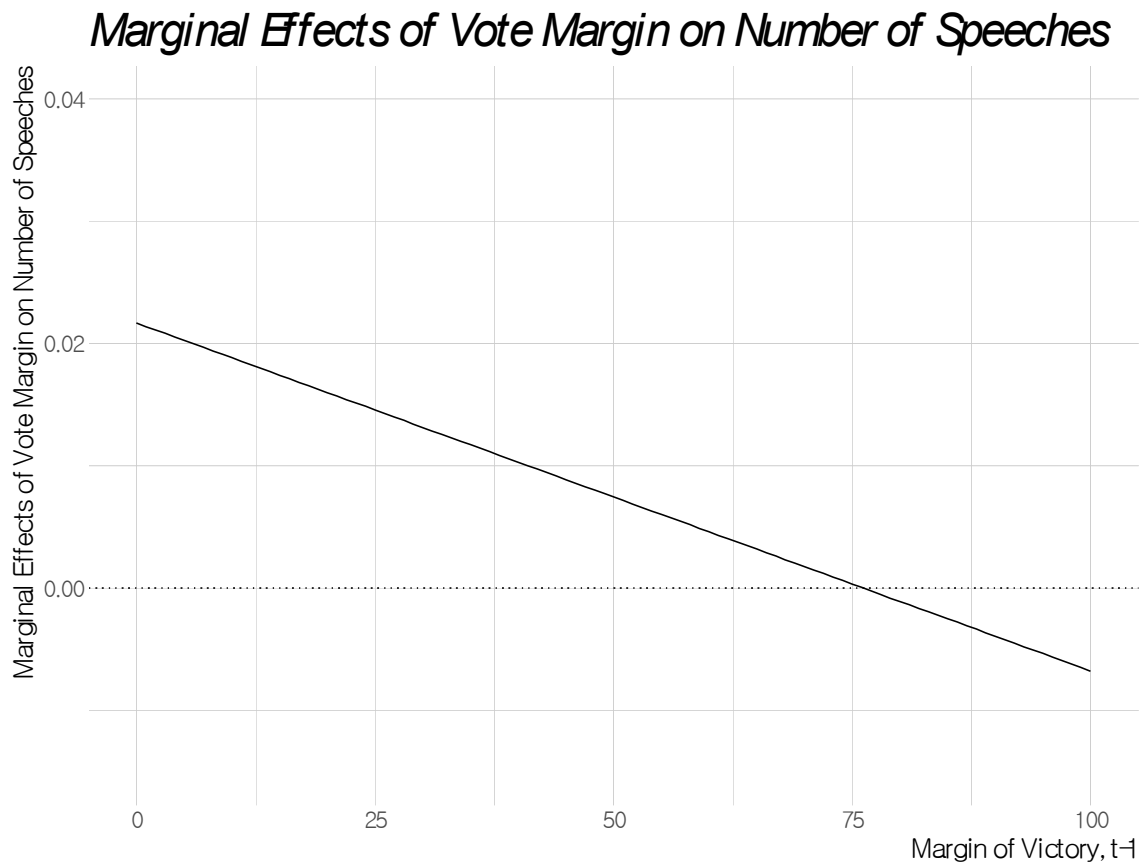


for the committee involvement are washed out in the full model with all variables included (Model 4), while the coefficient for the margin of victory variable remains statistically significant.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	log(No of Speeches+1)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Margin of Victory <sub>t-1</sub>	0.024*** (0.008)			0.022** (0.009)
Margin of Victory <sub>t-1</sub> <sup>2</sup>	-0.0003*** (0.0001)			-0.0003*** (0.0001)
Incumbent		0.227* (0.134)		0.200 (0.136)
Ruling Coalition		0.066 (0.140)		0.015 (0.137)
Other Coalition		0.011 (0.189)		-0.030 (0.191)
Committee Activity		0.128*** (0.042)		0.119*** (0.043)
Female		0.093 (0.196)		0.078 (0.167)
MP Candidate <sub>t+1</sub>		0.063 (0.137)		0.057 (0.139)
Higher Office Candidate <sub>t+1</sub>		0.114 (0.229)		0.144 (0.218)
Population Density (Logged)			-0.043 (0.040)	-0.042 (0.042)
Distance from Parliament (km)			-0.001* (0.0005)	-0.001 (0.0005)
Proportion of Primary School Attendance			-0.003 (0.005)	-0.002 (0.005)
Local Ethnic Fractionalization			-0.416 (0.262)	-0.434 (0.286)
Constant	4.193*** (0.165)	4.044*** (0.197)	5.247*** (0.453)	4.561*** (0.540)
Observations	471	471	471	471
R <sup>2</sup>	0.083	0.095	0.079	0.120

*Note:* \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

**Table 1: The Effect of Electoral Security on Making Speeches**



***Figure 4: Marginal Effects of Vote Margin on Number of Speeches***

Given that the effect is non-linear and that the dependent variable is log-transformed, Figure 3 captures the marginal effects of the electoral security variable based on Model 4 in Table 1. Here, we can observe that one additional percentage point increase in the margin of victory during the previous election cycle is associated with the greatest increase in the number of speeches when the baseline margin of victory is at zero. The positive effect of greater electoral security captured by a higher margin of victory gradually diminishes and becomes indistinguishable from zero at the 50% margin of victory threshold. Past 75% margin of victory, any additional electoral security has a small but negative effect on the number of floor speeches

made by MPs. To provide a more substantive interpretation, for a hypothetical MP with a margin of victory at the sample's first quartile level (Margin of Victory = 9.22%), improving his or her margin of victory to the sample mean level (Margin of Victory = 26.46%) is associated with making 33.4 more speeches, holding all else constant. Given that the median number of speeches in our sample is 71, this is a large improvement – a 47% increase. However, an MP with an overwhelming margin of victory, say at the 85% level, who secures ten percentage points more, is expected to make approximately 0.5 fewer speeches. These results confirm the expectation that greater electoral security allows MPs to participate more in making floor speeches. However, it also highlights that such effects are non-monotonic: the effects of an increase in electoral security is diminishing as electoral security becomes greater and even turns negative at high levels of electoral safety. This finding hints at the possibility that those legislators whose positions are extremely secure - whether due to their own popularity, running in their party's stronghold, or some other factors - face less accountability pressure to perform.

### **Speech Types**

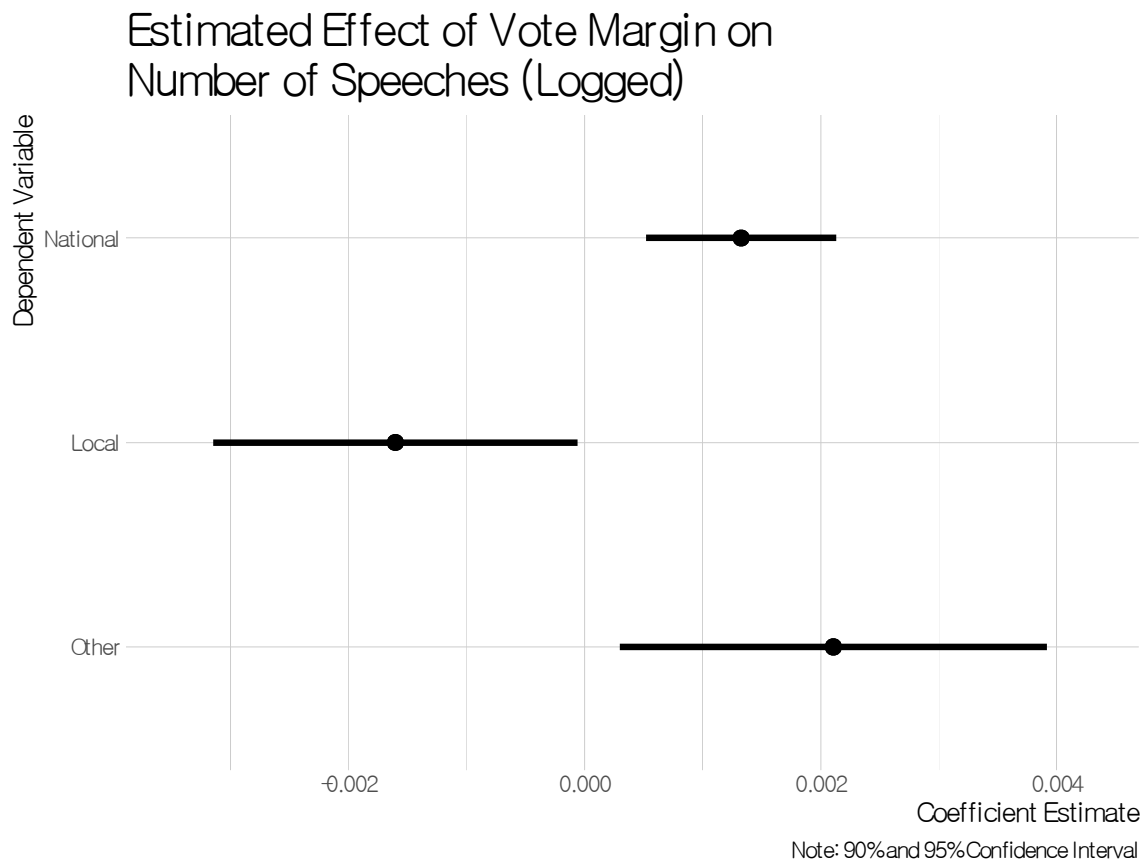
Not all speeches, however, are intended for the same audience. As previously discussed, some floor speeches may be made in relation to discussing national level policies, others in an attempt to secure attention to local constituency needs, and yet others in purely procedural purpose. By exploiting the classification of the speeches into these three categories, I re-run the full model with all individual and constituency characteristic control variables while during three different dependent variables, namely, national, local, and other speeches. Moreover, considering the possibility that an MP who generally makes many more speeches can tend to contribute

much more in all three categories of speeches, I introduce the total number of speeches made by individual MPs as an additional control in all three models.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	National	Local	Other
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Margin of Victory <sub>t-1</sub>	0.001*** (0.0005)	-0.002* (0.001)	0.002** (0.001)
Incumbent	0.034 (0.029)	-0.198*** (0.063)	0.222*** (0.057)
Ruling Coalition	0.003 (0.027)	0.025 (0.067)	-0.080 (0.057)
Other Coalition	-0.038 (0.058)	0.072 (0.088)	-0.055 (0.093)
Committee Activity	0.008 (0.007)	0.0003 (0.018)	0.055*** (0.014)
Female	0.057* (0.030)	-0.267** (0.114)	0.204*** (0.078)
MP Candidate <sub>t+1</sub>	0.004 (0.029)	-0.039 (0.061)	-0.083* (0.046)
Higher Office Candidate <sub>t+1</sub>	0.064* (0.034)	-0.224** (0.109)	0.048 (0.074)
Population Density (Logged)	0.007 (0.012)	-0.011 (0.030)	0.004 (0.026)
Distance from Parliament (km)	0.0001 (0.0001)	0.0001 (0.0002)	-0.0004** (0.0002)
Proportion of Primary School Attendance	0.001 (0.001)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.003)
Local Ethnic Fractionalization	-0.063 (0.043)	0.156 (0.116)	-0.079 (0.084)
Log(No of Speeches+1)	0.963*** (0.012)	0.740*** (0.018)	0.768*** (0.021)
Constant	-0.731*** (0.136)	0.455* (0.242)	-0.646*** (0.241)
Observations	471	471	471
R <sup>2</sup>	0.969	0.846	0.858

*Note:* \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

**Table 2: The Effect of Electoral Security on Making Different Types of Speeches**



**Figure 4: The Effect of Electoral Security on Making Different Types of Speeches**

The results are presented in Table 2 and graphically in Figure 4.<sup>24</sup> Separating the types of speeches into three categories, electoral security has opposite effects on making nationally versus locally oriented speeches. Using the same example of a hypothetical MP with a margin of victory at the sample's first quartile level (Margin of Victory = 9.22%), improving his or her margin of victory to the sample mean level (Margin of Victory = 26.46%) is now associated with making 1.7 more nationally oriented speeches while the same change is associated with making 3.4 less locally oriented speeches, holding all else constant. Considering that the total number of speech

<sup>24</sup> Both linear and non-linear specifications for the margin of victory variable were tested. In this iteration of models, the effects of electoral security tend to be closest to a linear specification.

variable is soaking up much of the variation and that the median number of national and local speeches in our sample is 43 and nine respectively, these numbers are likely to be conservative estimates and seems to indicate substantively meaningful changes. Moreover, since the average of the absolute difference between the vote margins in the 2007 and 2013 elections was 20.45 percentage points, the real-world change in electoral security from one election to another has been arguably greater than in the hypothetical examples we considered.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This study has attempted to solve an interesting puzzle in legislative development in developing democracies: how do legislators allocate their limited resource of time and attention between nationally- and locally-oriented activities? I show that the decision to allocate more or less attention to nationally versus locally oriented activities - as measured by legislators' speech making efforts - is strongly conditioned by competition: the electoral incentives that legislators face in the case of the Kenyan National Assembly of 2008-2017. Because those who experience greater electoral vulnerability face a greater need to provide locally focused attention, these legislators on average are less likely to engage in speech making. I further demonstrate that - once we unpack the speeches into those locally versus nationally oriented - the more electorally secure politicians are more likely to make a greater number of nationally oriented speeches, while the more vulnerable politicians are more likely to engage in making more locally oriented speeches. These findings challenge the conventional view that relegates the role of legislators to merely unidimensional rubber-stamping constituency servants.

There are, however, a number of important limitations to note. First, due to the observational nature of the study and the weakness in its research design, the findings presented

in this paper are limited to being exploratory and associational, without being able to shed light on the underlying true causal relationship of the key variables involved. One may, for instance, suspect that greater speech making leads to higher electoral security instead of the causal arrow originating from the electoral incentives to speech making behavior - although qualitative and anecdotal evidence tends to suggest otherwise. Unfortunately, exploiting a more rigorous research design to gain a stronger causal ground can be difficult. For example, the limited number of cases around the close election threshold prevents us from using a regression discontinuity approach. Moreover, manipulating real-world electoral security for an experimental intervention is not possible for ethical and other reasons. That said, there may still be ways to manipulate at least hypothetical information about electoral security. In future lines of inquiry, considering carefully designed survey experiment or information intervention aimed at elected officials may help further investigate the empirical relationship explored in this paper in a more robust manner.

Second, while the empirical analysis of the paper relied on the classification of speeches into different types, validation of such classification has been limited and challenging - just as in any machine learning classification exercise. For instance, unlike studies using similar techniques to investigate ideological dispositions in the American politics context where a widely accepted standard measure for ideology such as the D-W Nominate score exists against which the classification results can be compared, analogous standard measures of legislator attention are not available. Going forward, comparing any convergence and divergence between different classification exercises - such as those exploiting the nature of the headers or using a bigger sample of a manually classified train/test set as used in this study - as a pure measurement exercise could be in and of itself a valuable addition to the scholarship.

Third, and more substantively, while this paper almost exclusively focused on the incentives on the legislators' side, a parallel effort examining voters' perception would be useful. For example, which voters under what condition prefer local versus national attention? Results from my other work based on a survey experimental study suggest that voters prefer a balance between the two when presented with a hypothetical choice between legislators spending different amounts of time for local versus national attention. Building upon such finding, examining the effects of different speeches using real-world examples as vignettes in conjunction with manipulating legislator characteristics could provide us with a more nuanced and complete view of voter preference for legislator attention going forward.



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