



Solvay Brussels School
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Ethnofederalism and ethnic voting : evidence from Kenya

We investigate how ethnic voting reacts to changes in the administrative-territorial structure in diverse countries. Both 'ethnofederal' structures, where administrative borders follow ethnic boundaries, and 'crosscutting' structures, where administrative borders divide ethnic homelands, have been proposed as policy instruments that may reduce the importance of ethnicity in national politics. Exploiting the 2010 constitutional reform in Kenya together with survey data and an event study design of voting intentions, we test these theories and show that ethnic voting decreases among co-ethnics for which the reform increased local homogeneity. We find no evidence for an effect of changes in the fragmentation of groups across administrative units. Taken together, the evidence suggests that creating homogenous administrative regions with sufficient political power (i.e., ethnofederalism) reduces the costs of not voting for a co-ethnic candidate in national elections and matters more than uniting (most) ethnic kin in the same administrative region.

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