

In this article, the authors investigate the effects of economic conditions on support for an incumbent regime in a new African democracy. Drawing on two unique data sources from Zambia—the results of a 1,200-respondent postelection survey and a pair of 10,000-household poverty surveys conducted in the same years as that country's first two posttransition general elections—the authors find evidence that declining economic conditions coincide with the withdrawal of support for the incumbent president, although the effects of changing economic conditions are relatively small compared to noneconomic determinants of the vote such as ethnic affiliation and urban/rural location. The authors also find that, to the extent that voters respond to declining economic conditions, they do so via withdrawal from the electoral process rather than via support for the opposition. The findings suggest that African electorates are at least modestly responsive to economic trends but that noneconomic motivations still predominate in any given election.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND INCUMBENT SUPPORT IN AFRICA'S NEW DEMOCRACIES Evidence From Zambia

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Do voters in Africa's new democracies withdraw their support from incumbent regimes when their living conditions decline? This is an important question both for understanding the dynamics of political and economic reform in the region and for contributing to the comparative literature on economic voting. Unfortunately, at present, it is a question without an answer, because the effects of economic conditions on support for incumbent regimes in Africa have yet to be systematically investigated. Although stud-

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ies of individual African countries occasionally speculate about the role that economic conditions may have played in shaping the outcomes of particular elections,¹ rigorous quantitative analyses of the relationship between economic conditions and incumbent support along the lines of those regularly undertaken in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries—or, increasingly, in Latin America and Eastern Europe²—have yet to be undertaken in the region.

There are good reasons for this. First, whereas many African countries now hold regular and reasonably competitive multiparty elections, the number of such contests is still too small for meaningful comparative analyses to be possible. As of the beginning of 2002, only 14 of Africa's new democracies had held back-to-back elections that were sufficiently free and fair as to allow for a meaningful analysis of the relationship between changes in economic conditions and incumbent support.³ Second, although African governments and international financial institutions have invested significant resources in recent years in improving the quality of macroeconomic data for the region, almost all such data are available only in the aggregate. Aggregate figures almost certainly mask a great deal of subnational variation in living conditions. For example, high rates of wealth accumulation among a small segment of the population might raise the average per capita gross domestic product (GDP) even as the majority of citizens in the country suffer declining living standards. In such a situation, if voters were to withdraw their support from the incumbent regime, a rising per capita GDP would coincide with declining support for the government. People would be voting economically, but in the data, it would look like a *disconfirmation* of the economic voting hypothesis.

Given such clear data limitations, reliable cross-national analyses of the relationship between economic conditions and incumbent support in Africa must await more cases and better measures. One solution is simply to wait a few more years. A more satisfactory approach—and the one we pursue in this article—is to look for other ways of testing the economic voting hypothesis that allow us to exploit better data that already are available. To do this, we

1. For example, Bratton (1994), Coulon (1988), Hayward (1987), and Throup and Hornsby (1998).

2. For example, Pacek (1994), Pacek and Radcliff (1995), Tucker (1999), Canache and Seligson (2000), and Fidrmuc (2000).

3. The countries are Benin, Cape Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Senegal, Seychelles, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. In identifying these cases, we omitted countries in which one or more of the elections was judged by international observers not to have been "free and fair." We further limited our analysis to presidential elections held after 1987.

turn to the case of Zambia, where we take advantage of two unique data sets. The first is a 1,182-respondent attitudinal survey undertaken immediately after the country's 1996 general election.⁴ The second is a pair of comprehensive, 10,000-household poverty surveys administered by the World Bank and the Zambian Central Statistical Office in 1991 and 1996 as part of the bank's program to monitor the household-level effects of structural adjustment.⁵ The surveys, which collected an extremely rich cache of information about household welfare, provide an opportunity for reliably measuring changes in living standards over time across 39 Zambian districts.⁶ More important, because the timing of the surveys corresponded so closely with the timing of the elections—each was held less than 3 months before that year's electoral contest—they also provide an unparalleled opportunity for analyzing whether changes in living conditions corresponded with changes in support for the incumbent regime.

We begin, in the next section, by briefly reviewing the political and economic trends that have taken place in Zambia between 1991 and 1996. We then analyze the individual-level data from the 1996 postelection survey and find that satisfaction with the state of the economy does predict the level of support for the incumbent president. In the third part of the article, we analyze the relationship between economic conditions and incumbent support at the district level and find, again, that economic factors matter for the degree of support for the incumbent president, although not as much as noneconomic factors such as ethnic background and urban/rural location. The fourth part of the article discusses these findings, and the conclusion draws out larger lessons for the politics of economic reform, progress toward democratic consolidation, and the status of neopatrimonialism in the region.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TRENDS IN ZAMBIA, 1991-1996

POLITICAL CHANGE

On October 31, 1991, Zambia became the second major country in sub-Saharan Africa to begin a meaningful transition to multiparty democracy. In the general elections of that date, voters swept into power a party aptly named

4. Bratton (1998). Details of the survey are reported in Bratton, Alderfer, and Simutanyi (1997).

5. Details of the poverty surveys, along with a description of how the data they provided were used in this study, are provided in the appendix.

6. Zambia actually contains 57 districts. For reasons explained in the appendix, we were forced to limit our analysis to 39 of them.

the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) and displaced Kenneth Kaunda and his United National Independence Party (UNIP), which had held power uninterrupted since independence in 1964. The MMD's victory, and that of its presidential standard bearer, trade union leader Frederick Chiluba, was overwhelming: Both won 75% of the vote, and the MMD captured 125 of the 150 seats in the National Assembly. The only factor that kept UNIP's repudiation from being total was the MMD's weak support in Kaunda's home region, Eastern Province.⁷

Five years later, on November 18, 1996, Chiluba and the MMD faced the voters again. Though marred by a UNIP boycott, the election passed peacefully and was judged by international observers to have been free and fair.⁸ This time, Chiluba defeated four challengers with 72% of the vote. The MMD's Parliamentary candidates won 61% of the vote and increased its hold on parliament to 130 of the 150 seats. In the aggregate, the high level of support that President Chiluba enjoyed in 1991 would appear to have been largely unchanged in 1996: His vote share dropped by a relatively small 3 percentage points (or 4%). The MMD, on the other hand, suffered more of a decline, losing roughly 14 points (or 19%) off their collective 1991 vote share.

National-level results, however, mask substantial subnational variation. Viewed at the district level, broad differences emerge in the degree of support for the incumbent party and president around the country.⁹ In Mongu and Senanga districts, for example, support for the MMD/Chiluba ticket tumbled by more than 50%, whereas in the districts of the boycott-affected Eastern Province, it *rose* by the same margin. Of course, numerous factors might

7. Indeed, outside of Eastern Province, the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD)/Chiluba ticket won 81% of the vote and swept 125 of the 132 legislative seats.

8. Like many other "second" elections in Africa, the 1996 contest was marred by accusations that the ruling party's behavior during the run-up to the election had made the electoral playing field far from level. The Movement for Multiparty Democracy's (MMD's) most egregious action in this regard was its decision to amend the constitution in a way that effectively forbade Kaunda from recontesting the presidency—a move that ultimately led United National Independence Party (UNIP) to boycott the election. The clause in question stipulated that the parents of presidential candidates must have been born within the boundaries of present-day Zambia, which (as was well known by the amendment's drafters) Kaunda's were not. Despite its many flaws, however, the 1996 election did offer Zambians an opportunity to render a judgment on the incumbent party's and president's performance. For this reason, we are confident that it serves as a meaningful benchmark for assessing whether changes in economic well-being correspond with changes in support for MMD/Chiluba. For more on the politics surrounding the 1996 election, see Bratton and Posner (1999).

9. Because of the district-level nature of the economic data we use in this study, our unit of analysis is the administrative district rather than the electoral constituency. Throughout the article, election results for Zambia's 150 electoral constituencies (which are all geographically contained within single administrative districts) have been aggregated to the district level.

account for these differences—the UNIP boycott being only the most obvious one. In this article, we explore whether this variation might be accounted for by changes in voters' economic conditions.

ECONOMIC CHANGE

When it came to power in 1991, the MMD inherited an economy that had declined at an average annual rate of 2.5% over the previous two decades. To reverse this trend, President Chiluba immediately announced an ambitious, donor-backed program of economic stabilization and structural adjustment. Although the reform program did succeed in bringing a measure of macroeconomic stability to the economy, a variety of factors both in and out of the government's control prevented it from stimulating economic growth. According to World Bank figures, per capita GDP continued to decline—by more than 15%—between 1991 and 1996.

The extent of this continued decline, however, varied considerably in its impact. When Zambians compared their living standards in 1996 to how they were faring in 1991, some were better off and others were decidedly worse. Asked in 1996 how they felt about their life compared to 5 years earlier, roughly equal proportions of respondents reported that they were *less satisfied* as *more satisfied*.¹⁰ District-level data gleaned from the 1991 and 1996 World Bank poverty surveys also reflect the diversity of Zambians' economic experiences during Chiluba's first term. Whereas the rate of poverty—defined as the share of households in the district whose average adult income puts them below the extreme poverty line of K20,181 per month (in 1996 Kwacha)—rose by an average of 2 percentage points nationwide, the district-level changes ranged from a drop of 25 points to an increase of 20 points. Similarly, whereas the depth of poverty—defined as the mean distance below the poverty line of those households in the district that fell below it—tended to decrease almost everywhere, it did so to different degrees. For the 39 districts for which data from the two poverty surveys are available and comparable, the depth of poverty index ranged from a fall of 23 points to an increase of 7 points.

Changes in economic conditions and changes in support for the incumbent regime thus varied both across districts and across individuals. The question is whether they *covaried*. Were individuals who claimed to be less satisfied with their own and/or the country's economic outlook in 1996 also less likely to support President Chiluba in that year's election? Were districts in which households became poorer on average between 1991 and 1996 more

10. Twenty-eight percent of respondents in the 1996 post-election survey stated that they were *much less satisfied*, 17% that they were *slightly less satisfied*, 31% that they were *slightly more satisfied*, and 23% that they were *much more satisfied*.

likely to withdraw their support from the incumbent regime? In short, can we point to evidence that economic conditions shaped patterns of electoral support in Zambia? To address these questions, we begin by analyzing the individual-level data from the 1996 postelection survey. Then we turn to the district-level data from the World Bank poverty surveys. Given that local factors relating to candidate-specific attributes are likely to cloud the economic voting effect, we would expect economic factors to exert their influence more clearly on the presidential race than on the parliamentary races. Accordingly, and for brevity's sake, we present only the analysis of voting patterns in the presidential election. Analyses of the parliamentary elections yield consistently similar results.

INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL ANALYSIS

The 1996 postelection survey asked each of its 1,036 respondents how satisfied they were with the general state of the Zambian economy at the time of the interview, how satisfied they were with their own living conditions, how satisfied they felt compared with 5 years ago, and how satisfied they expected to be in 1 year's time. Using the responses to these questions and controlling for age, gender, ethnic background, and urban/rural residence, we employ logistic regression techniques to estimate the likelihood of voting for President Chiluba given a respondent's level of satisfaction with the economy.¹¹ We code for ethnic background in two ways. First, we use a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent is, like President Chiluba, a member of the Bemba language group.¹² By including the Bemba variable, we seek to control for the likelihood that, all else equal, Bemba voters are more likely to support a president from their own ethnic group. For similar reasons, we also include a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent is from Eastern Province. President Kaunda was closely identified with this part of the country, so by including the Eastern variable, we seek to control for the likelihood that Eastern Province voters are more likely to vote against the man who unseated their favorite son.

Our unambiguous finding is that Zambians who were dissatisfied with the state of the economy were less likely to vote for Chiluba in the 1996 election

11. We omit all respondents who were not eligible to register to vote, but include those who were eligible but did not register.

12. We include as members of the Bemba language group all respondents who, when asked about their tribal background, identified themselves as members of one of the following Bemba-speaking tribes: Ambo, Aushi, Bemba, Bisa, Chishinga, Namwanga, Kabende, Mambwe, Ngumbo, Tabwa, or Unga.

than those who were satisfied. Although this effect was not extremely strong, it was highly statistically significant. In Table 1, we use the estimates from our logistic regression to calculate the probability that 30-year-old males from different ethnic/regional backgrounds would have reported voting for President Chiluba in 1996. Note that we exclude three of the four possible categories of Eastern Province residents, as the vast majority of Easterners are non-Bemba and live in rural areas.

The core result is that regardless of background, respondents who expressed dissatisfaction with the economy were 10 to 15 percentage points less likely to vote for Chiluba than their more satisfied counterparts. For example (reading from the upper left cells of the table), we estimate a 62% probability that a 30-year-old Bemba male from a rural area other than Eastern Province voted for Chiluba if he was *very* or *fairly* satisfied with the state of the economy at the time of the election. That probability drops to 52% if the otherwise identical person were *not very* or *not at all* satisfied with the economy. Of course, the fact that such a dissatisfied voter would still be more than 50% likely to have supported Chiluba suggests that economic conditions were not the only factor driving the voting calculus. In fact, holding level of satisfaction constant (that is, reading across the rows), we find noneconomic factors such as urban-rural location and ethnic background to have been at least as important as economic factors in shaping voting behavior. For our purposes, however, the more important finding is the clear difference that satisfaction or dissatisfaction makes.

It is worth pointing out that this relationship holds regardless of the specific indicator of economic (dis)satisfaction that we use. Whether our measure is sociotropic ("are you satisfied with the state of the economy?"), egotropic ("are you satisfied with your own economic situation?"), retrospective ("are you more satisfied today than 5 years ago?"), or prospective ("do you expect to be more satisfied in 1 year's time?"), the results are the same: Greater satisfaction predicts greater likelihood of support for the incumbent president.

Although these results are highly suggestive, the fact that survey enumerators visited less than a third of the predominantly rural districts in the country advises against drawing too strong inferences from these findings alone. Moreover, in light of the manner in which elections were conducted during the Kaunda era (during which UNIP officials demanded that citizens demonstrate their patriotism by unconditionally supporting the ruling party), respondents may have been wary of truthfully reporting how—and even whether—they voted.¹³ Absent an ability to confirm that respondents actually voted as they said they did, we hesitate to read too much into these findings.

13. Indeed, this may explain why the share of survey respondents who reported that they were registered to vote was significantly higher than the actual rate of registration countrywide.

Table 1
Estimated Probability That a 30-Year-Old Male Will Vote for President Chiluba in 1996, Conditional on His Ethnic Background, Urban/Rural Residence, and Satisfaction With the State of the Economy (Among All Respondents Eligible to Vote; ns = 1,174, 1,158, 1,168, and 1,086)

	Bemba, Non-Eastern, Rural	Bemba, Non-Eastern, Urban	Non-Bemba, Non-Eastern, Rural	Non-Bemba, Non-Eastern, Urban	Non-Bemba, Eastern, Rural
Sociotropic					
Not satisfied with the state of the economy	.520	.523	.451	.454	.338
Satisfied with the state of the economy	.620	.623	.554	.557	.436
Egotropic					
Not satisfied with own economic condition	.513	.521	.451	.459	.348
Satisfied with own economic condition	.628	.636	.568	.576	.462
Retrospective					
More satisfied 5 years ago than today	.462	.468	.416	.421	.325
More satisfied today than 5 years ago	.618	.623	.573	.578	.476
Prospective					
Expects to be less satisfied in 1 year	.449	.454	.407	.413	.317
Expects to be more satisfied in 1 year	.617	.622	.576	.582	.479

Source: Logistic regression results based on data from Bratton (1998).

DISTRICT-LEVEL ANALYSIS

To supplement our individual-level analysis, we turn now to the district level to see if we can find parallel evidence that economic conditions shaped the degree of support for the incumbent regime. In doing so, we take advantage of the fortuitous correspondence between the timing of Zambia's 1991 and 1996 national elections and the conducting of the two poverty surveys that we have described. In their scope and richness, these data sets match or exceed those ordinarily used in analyses of developed nations. This is not to say that the data we employ are not without weaknesses, for methodological problems associated with using district-level averages to summarize the individual-level behavior of heterogeneous populations do lurk in the background. But the data we use are at least as good as those usually employed in studies of this type.

The dependent variables we use are the district-level share of the vote for President Chiluba in the 1991 and 1996 elections and the change in the share of the vote for Chiluba between the two contests. The key independent variables are the rate and depth of poverty in each district in 1991 and 1996 and the changes in these measures between these dates. Recall that the rate of poverty (PovRate) is simply the share of households below the extreme poverty line, whereas the depth of poverty (PovDepth) is the average distance below that line of the population designated to be in poverty.¹⁴ As in the individual-level analysis, we also employ a set of controls for urban/rural location, demographic dominance by members of the Bemba language group, and location in Eastern Province.

Our strategy is to begin by building a baseline model in which we use our three controls as the sole predictors of the Chiluba vote. Only then do we add our variables for the district-level rate and depth of poverty or for the changes in these measures between 1991 and 1996. Because these variables are highly correlated, we do not attempt to include more than one of them in a given model at a time. Mindful of the need to preserve degrees of freedom, we exclude from our final analyses any controls that failed to generate significant or near-significant regression coefficients in the baseline regression.

We begin our analysis with the 1991 election. Our findings are reported in Table 2. As the results in column 2 suggest, districts in Eastern Province voted for Chiluba at much lower rates than the rest of Zambia, and urban districts voted for Chiluba at higher rates than rural ones. The reason for the significance of the Eastern Province variable has already been explained: Eastern Province voters remained loyal to Kaunda in 1991 and voted against the

14. For details of how these variables are calculated, see the appendix.

Table 2
Economic Conditions and Support for the Incumbent in the 1991 Zambian Presidential Elections

	1	2	3	4
Eastern	-.481** (.061)	-.499** (.059)	-.509** (.062)	-.502** (.064)
Bemba	.046 (.040)			
Urban	.077 (.045)	.095* (.043)	.129 (.067)	.101 (.068)
PovRate 91			.127 (.190)	
PovDepth 91				.029 (.253)
Constant	.738** (.026)	.756** (.022)	.659** (.147)	.739** (.154)
R ²	.72	.70	.71	.70

Note: $N = 39$. The dependent variable is the share of vote (among actual voters) won in 1991 by President Chiluba. Standard errors in parentheses.

*Significant at the .05 level. **Significant at the .01 level.

countrywide tide of change. The significance of the urban variable stems from the fact that the MMD had its roots in urban protests and was organized principally by business-oriented urban elites. Chiluba, a union leader, also had a very strong following in the industrialized urban sector.¹⁵

What happens when we add our economic variables to this baseline model? Because of the referendum nature of the 1991 election, and because the referendum was on the long-term economic record of the incumbent UNIP regime (whose adverse effect on living standards was shared by all Zambians), there is little reason to expect marginal differences in poverty levels across districts to correlate with the relatively small variation in support for the challenging MMD, particularly after controlling for Eastern and Urban. Indeed, as columns 3 and 4 indicate, the addition of the economic variables adds little explanatory power to the baseline model. Neither of the measures of economic conditions is statistically significant.

This is not to say that economic factors did not motivate electoral behavior in 1991, for it is clear that, as was the case elsewhere in Africa during the early 1990s, they were at the root of the demand for change. Rather, it is to suggest that they did so universally and that economic differences between districts paled in comparison with the effects of the more general decline in living standards over the *longue durée*. The relevant comparison for Zambian voters in 1991 was not how their living standards had changed since the one-party

15. The Bemba variable, although significant in a baseline specification when paired with Eastern alone (which we do not report), loses its significance when the Urban control is added to the model. This is because six of the nine urban districts are Bemba-speaking, so Bemba proxies for the Urban variable in the latter's absence.

election of 1988, when they had last been able to register their opinion regarding UNIP's performance, but how their living standards had changed since the time Kaunda took power in the 1960s, when Zambia's economy was booming. On that basis, the nearly unanimous sentiment was that Kaunda and UNIP had utterly failed and should be replaced.

For our analysis of the 1996 presidential election (reported in Table 3), the story varies with respect to the importance of the different controls but remains the same with respect to the effects of economic conditions on support for the incumbent regime. Unlike in 1991, whether a district was dominated by members of President Chiluba's Bemba language group (Bemba) became an important predictor of the Chiluba vote share in 1996. The significance of this variable stems from the fact that Chiluba's behavior during his first term led many Zambians to perceive him as a champion of Bemba interests and the MMD as a Bemba-dominated party. In the models in Table 3, then, the Bemba variable is picking both the greater likelihood that Bemba voters supported MMD/Chiluba and the tendency for non-Bemba voters to channel their support to candidates other than Chiluba. In the referendum-style election in 1991, ethnic voting was of only marginal importance (outside of Eastern Province). In 1996, it became a much more important factor—hence the highly significant coefficient.

Meanwhile, the two control variables that were significant in 1991—Eastern and Urban—lose their significance in 1996. In 1996, roughly equal proportions of voters in rural districts and urban districts supported the president in his bid for reelection. Chiluba's Eastern Province liability appears to have faded away, although this is almost certainly because most of those who voted against him in 1991 heeded UNIP's boycott call in 1996 and thereby removed themselves from the pool of voters. As in 1991, the economic variables add little to these models, both when measured in terms of the rate/depth of poverty in 1996 and when measured in terms of the change in these measures over time (see columns 3 through 6). The implication is that, as in 1991, economic conditions were not a factor in determining how Zambians cast their ballots.

It might be tempting at this point to conclude that the district-level data provide no support for a link between economic conditions and incumbent electoral support. But doing so would be premature. This is because it is possible—indeed, likely—that many Zambians who were disenchanted with the economic performance of the Chiluba regime registered their dissatisfaction not by going to the polls and voting against Chiluba but by abstaining from the electoral process altogether. Indeed, proponents of the UNIP-led boycott in 1996 explicitly called on Zambians to express their displeasure

Table 3
Economic Conditions and Support for the Incumbent in the 1996 Zambian Presidential Elections

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Eastern	-.018 (.061)					
Bemba	.180** (.040)	.205** (.036)	.199** (.037)	.193** (.037)	.205** (.037)	
Urban	.069 (.046)					
PovRate 96			-.106 (.134)			
PovDepth 96				-.329 (.273)		
Change in PovRate					.153 (.179)	
Change in PovDepth						.169 (.243)
Constant	.596** (.027)	.599** (.024)	.679** (.104)	.766** (.141)	.596** (.024)	
R^2	.614** (.032)	.50	.47	.48	.49	.48

Note: $N = 39$. The dependent variable is the share of vote (among actual voters) won in 1996 by President Chiluba. Standard errors in parentheses.

**Significant at the .01 level.

with the MMD government by doing precisely this.¹⁶ Moreover, there was ample precedent for such behavior: In the four elections held during Zambia's long one-party era (1973-1991), voters had learned to use abstention as a means of expressing opposition to the ruling party (Gertzel, Baylies, & Szeftel, 1984). So it is reasonable to expect that many Zambians employed the same tactic in the multiparty era. The fact that roughly 43% of registered voters stayed away from the polls in 1996 lends credence to such suspicions.¹⁷

To address the possibility that Zambians might have registered their dissatisfaction with the MMD regime by means other than voting against President Chiluba, we turn now to a series of analyses in which we measure our dependent variable as the share of the vote won by Chiluba from among the voting-eligible population (or VEP) rather than from among the pool of actual voters. We begin with the 1991 election. Our results, reported in Table 4, mirror those of our earlier analysis. Again, economic factors do not account for any of the variation in Chiluba's district-level vote share. Given the fact that everyone had become worse off during Kaunda's 34-year reign, this was to be expected. The heightened significance of the urban variable in the reanalysis is a product of the much higher turnout rates of eligible voters in urban than rural districts.

Turning to the 1996 election, and again assessing support for President Chiluba as a share of the voting-eligible population, we find, as we did in the earlier analysis, that neither the rate nor depth of poverty in the district is significantly related to the level of incumbent support (see Table 5, columns 2 and 3).¹⁸ Changes over time in the rate and depth of poverty do, however, appear to be significantly related to support for the president. The results

16. The disappearance of the significance of the Eastern variable in 1996 suggests that this is exactly what happened in Eastern Province, where voters were most sympathetic to the United National Independence Party (UNIP) and thus most likely to respond to the boycott call. However, it is likely that voters elsewhere, whether in response to UNIP's call or for their own reasons, also chose to register their dissatisfaction with the incumbent regime by voting with their feet.

17. This figure actually represents a decrease in the abstention rate from 1991, when approximately 54% of registered voters stayed away from the polls. However, this "quirk" is partially the outcome of the fact that the voting register was far more accurate (if less complete) in 1996 than in 1991, when it was 3 years out of date and contained thousands of voters who were either dead or effectively ineligible to vote because they no longer lived in their place of official registration. Fear and uncertainty over the prospects of violence also depressed turnout in 1991. Given these factors, the more relevant comparison is the share of eligible voters who voted. By this measure, turnout fell between 1991 and 1996, from roughly 33% to roughly 30%.

18. With respect to the control variables, we find Bemba to remain a highly significant predictor of support for President Chiluba. Again, the Urban variable becomes statistically significant in the voting-eligible population replication due to the higher turnout rates of eligible voters in urban than rural districts.

Table 4
Economic Conditions and Support for the Incumbent in the 1991 Zambian Presidential Elections—Voting-Eligible Population Baseline

	1	2	3	4
Eastern	-.135** (.037)	-.149** (.037)	-.162** (.037)	-.154** (.040)
Bemba	.036 (.024)			
Urban	.127** (.028)	.141** (.026)	.188** (.041)	.154** (.042)
PovRate 91			.173 (.153)	
PovDepth 91				.063 (.157)
Constant	.228** (.016)	.242** (.013)	.110 (.089)	.204* (.095)
R ²	.63	.60	.63	.60

Note: $N = 39$. The dependent variable is the share of vote (among eligible voters) won in 1991 by President Chiluba. Standard errors in parentheses.

*Significant at the .05 level. **Significant at the .01 level.

reported in columns 4 and 5 suggest that, controlling for a district's urban/rural location, its dominance (or not) by Bemba speakers and its location in (or out of) Eastern Province, a 10 percentage point (0.9 standard deviation) rise in the poverty rate between 1991 and 1996 was associated with a 2.8 percentage point decline in support for President Chiluba. Meanwhile, a 10 percentage point (1.3 standard deviation) increase in the depth of poverty was associated with a decline in the Chiluba vote of 4.4 percentage points.

Substantively, these effects are not particularly large, because Chiluba's margin of victory was in most districts much greater than 4%. But our findings nonetheless suggest that economic conditions do matter, and matter in a particular way. Juxtaposed against the irrelevance of the rate and depth of poverty at the time of the election, the significance of the changes in these measures suggests that Zambians did more than simply weigh their living standards when they decided how to (or if they would) cast their ballots. Instead, the evidence suggests that they assigned blame (or credit) only for the portion of their economic conditions that could be attributed to the policies of the incumbent government. Districts withdrew their support from (or threw their support behind) President Chiluba because their living conditions had worsened (or improved) during the course of his tenure in office, not simply because they were poor (or comparatively well off). Changes in living conditions, not living conditions per se, were what mattered.

These findings lead us to a final test of the relationship between economic conditions and incumbent support. Rather than attempting to explain the results of a single election, we explore whether district-level changes in the rate and depth of poverty were related to changes in the level of support for

Table 5
Economic Conditions and Support for the Incumbent in the 1996 Zambian Presidential Elections—Voting-Eligible Population Baseline

	1		2		3		4		5	
Eastern	-.067	(.039)	-.068	(.040)	-.067	(.041)	-.083*	(.037)	-.090*	(.037)
Bemba	.065*	(.026)	.064*	(.027)	.065*	(.026)	.062*	(.024)	.065**	(.024)
Urban	.113**	(.029)	.122*	(.054)	.115*	(.047)	.116**	(.027)	.151**	(.031)
PovRate 96			.032	(.158)						
PovDepth 96					.009	(.291)				
Change in PovRate							-.281*	(.107)		
Change in PovDepth									-.436*	(.166)
Constant	.177**	(.017)	.153	(.123)	.172	(.150)	.185**	(.016)	.140**	(.021)
R ²	.56		.56		.56		.63		.63	

Note: $N = 39$. The dependent variable is the share of vote (among eligible voters) won in 1996 by President Chiluba. Standard errors in parentheses.
 *Significant at the .05 level. **Significant at the .01 level.

the incumbent regime between 1991 and 1996. Again, we look at the voting-eligible population (see Table 6).¹⁹

Because the ethnic composition and urban/rural location of a district remain constant over time, we would ordinarily be able to drop the controls for these characteristics in an analysis of change across elections. Yet because, as we have argued, the importance of a district's location in Eastern Province and Bemba ethnic makeup varied across the two contests, we tested for the salience of these controls in our baseline analyses (see column 1). None, however, feature significant coefficients.

Turning to the effects of changes in economic conditions, we find that changes in the depth of poverty between 1991 and 1996 are negatively (and significantly) associated with changes in the level of support among eligible voters: Deepening poverty led to a withdrawal of support. Recalling that Chiluba lost at least some support almost everywhere, we can summarize the results reported in column 3 as follows: A 10 percentage point larger decline in the depth of poverty in one district than another is associated with a roughly 3 to 4 percentage point smaller decline in support for Chiluba. Although this finding confirms that changes in economic conditions have some effect on electoral support for the incumbent regime, it also reinforces the point that they did so only at the margin. A 3 to 4 percentage point change represents half a standard deviation change in the level of Chiluba's support between 1991 and 1996.

Interestingly, whereas the *depth* of poverty seems to matter, the *rate* of poverty seems not to (compare column 2 with column 3). Why would this be? The answer lies in what each measure does and does not capture. The Change in PovRate variable captures whether the share of people in the district below the poverty line in 1991 rose or fell by 1996. The Change in PovDepth measure, by contrast, picks up changes in the average poverty level of those people already below the K20,181 per month poverty line. Thus, if people who were already below this threshold in 1991 saw their living conditions decline further by 1996 (or, conversely, saw their living standards rise, but not so much as to bring them above the poverty line), then their change in living status would be picked up by the Change in PovDepth variable but would be missed by the Change in PovRate measure. With well over 50% of the population already below the poverty line in 1991, this is a very important voting block. Our results suggest that this group's behavior may account for the vari-

19. Note that we omit a parallel analysis using the actual voter baseline because of the vast difference in the voter's rolls used in the two elections. Given that appearance on the voter roll is a prerequisite for inclusion in the Actual Voter (AV) analysis, one cannot meaningfully create a variable measuring change in vote shares using the AV baseline for the two elections.

Table 6
Changes in Economic Conditions and Changes in Support for the Incumbent Between the 1991 and 1996 Zambian Presidential Elections—Voting-Eligible Population Baseline

	1		2		3	
Eastern	.068	(.036)				
Bemba	.029	(.023)				
Urban	-.014	(.027)				
Change in PovRate			-.171	(.103)		
Change in PovDepth					-.313*	(.131)
Constant	-.051**	(.016)	-.031**	(.011)	-.057**	(.014)
R ²		.24		.07		.13

Note: $N = 39$. The dependent variable is the change in vote (among eligible voters) between 1991 and 1996 for President Chiluba. Standard errors in parentheses.

*Significant at the .05 level. **Significant at the .01 level.

ation we observe in the change in the level of Chiluba's support: In districts where the very poor, on average, became poorer, support for the incumbent regime declined more than it did elsewhere; in districts where the poor, on average, became better off, even if they were still classified as being below the poverty line, support for the incumbent regime declined less.

DISCUSSION

The principal finding to be gleaned from the foregoing analyses is that whereas factors such as ethnicity and urban/rural location explain the lion's share of the variance in patterns of support for the incumbent regime, economic conditions do matter. This result was borne out in both the individual-level analysis and the district-level analysis—inquiries that employed different data sets and different statistical methods. Whether or not one is better off on election day than at the time of the last election may not shape voting behavior as much it does in many advanced industrial societies,²⁰ but the effect of such considerations is measurable and statistically significant even in a developing country like Zambia. Apart from this general conclusion, two additional findings about the way in which economic conditions shape patterns of incumbent support are worthy of reiteration.

20. On the effects of economic conditions on voting behavior in advanced industrial societies, see Kiewiet and Rivers (1984), Lewis-Beck (1988), Paldam (1991), Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier (2000), and Lewis-Beck and Paldam (2000).

First, our finding that the effects of economic conditions are discernible only when we measure incumbent support against the baseline of all eligible voters strongly suggests that Zambians voted more with their feet than with their ballots. Abstention, rather than active support for the opposition, would appear to have been the method of choice in 1996 for conveying dissatisfaction with the economic status quo: Exit trumped voice.²¹ As we have suggested, this phenomenon is largely explicable as a by-product of two decades of one-party rule, during which Zambians were socialized to equate political withdrawal with opposition. In the context of the 1996 election, abstention was also almost certainly encouraged by the weakness of opposition parties, which failed to offer a credible alternative to Chiluba and the MMD. UNIP, the opposition party with the greatest (although still quite limited) strength, reinforced the trend by removing itself from the electoral process.

Second, our consistent finding that the rate and level of poverty in a district does not matter for the degree of support for the incumbent regime, but that changes in these measures do, suggests that Zambians responded more to alterations in their living conditions since 1991 than to absolute levels. Thus, it would appear that voters distinguished between the component of their living conditions that they could attribute to President Chiluba's leadership and the component that they could attribute to President Kaunda's legacy. They blamed (or rewarded) Chiluba only for the former. This may explain why, in the individual-level analysis of support for President Chiluba, the difference between *satisfied* and *dissatisfied* respondents was significantly larger when they were asked the retrospective question (i.e., "are you more satisfied today than 5 years ago?") than when they were asked about the general state of the Zambian economy or their own economic conditions.²²

CONCLUSION

What do these findings imply for larger issues of African politics and political economy? To answer this question, we must first ask to what extent we can extrapolate from our findings concerning Zambia to the rest of the continent. The Zambian experience over the past decade has been a prototypical African one. In its dramatic transition from single-party to multiparty politics, its uneven efforts at economic reform, and its reversion to many of the

21. For a similar finding in a quite different context, see Pacek (1994).

22. The average difference between *satisfied* and *dissatisfied* respondents in the five columns reported in Table 1 for the retrospective question is .155. For the sociotropic and egotropic questions it is .101 and .116, respectively.

illiberal practices of the pretransition era, Zambia's trajectory exemplifies that of much of the rest of the region. Although one may find important differences between the Zambian context and that of other individual countries, many of the developments that have characterized Zambian politics and economics since the early 1990s have been played out elsewhere in Africa.

Thus, with a paradigm of "Zambia as a modal case" in mind, we can ask about the more general implications of our study for Africa. One implication relates to the politics of economic reform. An important claim in this literature is that voters, angered by the decline in living standards that tends to accompany the onset of macroeconomic adjustment, will mobilize against elected leaders to pressure them to roll back the reforms they have undertaken.²³ Embracing these arguments, African leaders often protest that the economic adjustment policies advocated by donors and international financial institutions amount to political suicide, and they demand that the reforms be scaled back or abandoned, lest they be swept from office. However, the sustainability of such claims rests on the assumption that voters will, in fact, penalize incumbents for their declining economic conditions. Evidence on this score from other parts of the developing world is decidedly mixed (Geddes, 1995). Our finding that economic conditions have, at most, a small impact on election outcomes suggests that such claims may be overstated in Africa as well. This said, our finding that voters are able to distinguish between economic conditions attributable to the current government's actions and those bequeathed from the past suggests that the fears of African leaders are not entirely without justification.

Our inquiry can also tell us something about trends in democratic consolidation in the region. Because founding democratic elections represent the first opportunity in many years for citizens meaningfully to shape their country's political trajectory, they tend to be moments of great upheaval and political realignment. As such, their outcomes tend to be driven by a desire for broad institutional, social, or economic change rather than by concerns over marginal fluctuations in living standards. Only when the major institutional and policy changes that motivated voters' behavior during the first election come to be taken for granted—perhaps by the second election, perhaps not until the fourth or fifth—do voters begin focusing on questions of economic policy fine tuning of the sort that drive economic voting outcomes in institutionalized democracies. Our finding that differences in economic conditions across districts had no effect on patterns of electoral support in 1991 but were beginning to matter in 1996 suggests that, in Zambia at least, politics were

23. See, for example, Przeworski (1991), Haggard and Kaufman (1992), Bates and Krueger (1993), Callaghy (1994), Haggard and Webb (1994), and Herbst and Bienen (1996).

beginning to “normalize” as early as the second election. Nevertheless, the tendency for Zambian voters to express their displeasure via political withdrawal, rather than through active opposition, points to the existence of an important barrier to the development of truly competitive multiparty systems in areas where one-party rule previously held sway.

In a slightly different way, the extent to which voters hold elected leaders accountable for the economic conditions they create might also be taken as an index of the strength of neopatrimonial rule. In Africa, the prevailing form of governance has been, and in many places remains, neopatrimonialism (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997; Chabal & Daloz, 1999). Neopatrimonial politics revolves around networks of patron-client relationships in which implicit mutual guarantees of economic and political support within social networks substitute for mechanisms of performance-based accountability of the sort for which we tested in this article. Where such a system prevails in Africa, we would expect to find little evidence of functioning mechanisms of political accountability for economic performance. To the extent that neopatrimonialism is weakening, however, we would expect to find growing evidence that voters are making their choices based not simply on ethnic group membership or traditional party affiliations but on assessments of how the different parties in the race—and the incumbent regime in particular—have affected their economic well-being. Although firmer conclusions on this issue will require data from a longer time period, our finding that the effects of short-term economic trends paled in comparison to ethnic group membership and enduring, regionally defined patterns of party allegiance suggests that neopatrimonial patterns of politics still prevail.

Quite apart from these theoretical implications, our investigation makes a methodological contribution by applying analytical techniques commonly used in developed countries to a part of the world in which such techniques have seldom been applied. One dimension of this contribution, then, is simply to bring Africa into the fold; another is to show how supplementing appropriately handled subnational data with individual-level data can provide leverage on important theoretical questions that, for lack of reliable cross-national data, might otherwise go unstudied.

APPENDIX

The two World Bank/Zambian Central Statistical Office (ZCSO) surveys used in this study were conducted as part of the World Bank's ongoing program to monitor the social effects of economic liberalization. Both surveyed more than 10,000 households

selected via a random stratified cluster sampling procedure. The first, Priority Survey I (PS1), was undertaken in mid-1991, a few months before the MMD came to power. The second, Living Conditions Monitoring Survey I (LCMS1), was administered in late 1996, just before that year's general election. We are grateful to the World Bank's Living Conditions Monitoring Unit and to the ZCSO for releasing these data sets. Summaries of the findings of the surveys and the sampling procedures they employed can be found in ZCSO (1993, 1997a, 1997b).

Both surveys included a range of questions about household assets, expenditures, and access to facilities. From these data, the ZCSO calculated a "per adult equivalent household expenditure" value for each household in 1996 Kwacha that reflects the household's total expenditure weighted by its size and composition. Because the measure includes goods produced for home consumption, it is analogous to a measure of household income. This value was then used to calculate the two poverty measures that we employ in the study. The first, the rate of poverty (or PovRate), measures the percentage of the district's households that are below the national poverty line of K20,181 per month at 1996 levels (which was equal to about \$16 at the time).

The second measure, the depth of poverty (or PovDepth), measures the average distance below the poverty line of those households in the district defined as poor (i.e., with per adult equivalent expenditures below the poverty line). Thus, depth of poverty for a given district = $\sum (L - E_i) / N$, where L is the national poverty line, E_i is the expenditure of the i th household, and N is the total number of households sampled in the district.

The PovRate measure has the advantage of being entirely straightforward. Its weakness stems from the fact that it provides no information about how poor—or not poor—those households falling below the poverty line really are. The PovDepth measure, on the other hand, is informative about the level of poverty but tells us nothing about the nonpoor, and these may comprise a large share of the voting population.

A complication involved in adopting the Zambian data for our purposes is that while the number (and distribution) of households sampled in each district for the 1996 survey (LCMS1) were sufficient to generate district-level assessments of living standards, this was not the case with the 1991 survey (PS1), which was designed only to assess poverty rates at the provincial level. To make certain of the quality of our district-level inferences, we eliminated from our analysis those districts in which fewer than 85 households were surveyed in 1991, because this was the minimum district-level sample size used in the 1996 survey. To preserve some of the data that the strict application of these guidelines would otherwise have forced us to discard, we combined the three small Southern Province districts bordering Lake Kariba and three sparsely populated Northwestern Province districts to create two artificial "mixed" districts. We also dropped Chingola, an urban district in Copperbelt Province, because its 1991 poverty scores were clearly inaccurate—although Chingola is one of the wealthiest districts in Zambia, per capita expenditures were estimated to be about 300 Kwacha per month in 1991 (less than 20 cents) and 100% of the population was said to be below the poverty line. The resulting sample is of 39 districts (2 of which are of the "mixed" variety).

An additional modification of the sample was also necessary to render the PS1 and LCMS1 data comparable at the district level. The samples used in both surveys were drawn using a cluster sampling technique stratified by the economic level of the cluster (high income, medium income, etc.). The problem was that the number of households from each stratum in each district did not always match across the 1991 and 1996 samples. To adjust for such differences, we weighted the 1991 data from each stratum within each district to equal the proportion from that stratum for that district sampled in the 1996 survey.

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