Literature review

Table des matières

1. [When Does Information Influence Voters? The Joint Importance of Salience and Coordination – Adida et al. 2020 – Comparative Political Studies 4](#_Toc182517311)
2. [Africa’s shifting media landscapes: Digital media use grows, but so do demographic divides - Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz et al. 2024 – Afrobarometer 4](#_Toc182517312)
3. [The Cost of Distance: Geography and Governance in Rural India – Asher et al. 2018 – WP 4](#_Toc182517313)
4. [Able and Mostly Willing: An Empirical Anatomy of Information's Effect on Voter‐Driven Accountability in Senegal – Bhanadari et al. 2023 - American Journal of Political Science 5](#_Toc182517314)
5. [Public Services, Geography, and Citizen Perceptions of Government in Latin America – Bland et al. 2023 - Political Behavior 5](#_Toc182517315)
6. [The Political Geography of Cities – Bluhm et al. 2021 - WP 5](#_Toc182517316)
7. [Distance, services, and citizen perceptions of the state in rural Africa – Brinkerhoff et al. 2018 - Governance 5](#_Toc182517317)
8. [Isolated Capital Cities, Accountability, and Corruption: Evidence from US States – Campante et Do, 2014 – American Economic Review 6](#_Toc182517318)
9. [Capital Cities, Conflict, and Misgovernance – Campante et al. 2019 - American Economic Journal: Applied Economics 6](#_Toc182517319)
10. [Misinformation technology: Internet use and political misperceptions in Africa – Cariolle et al. 2024 - Journal of Comparative Economics 6](#_Toc182517320)
11. [From phone access to food markets: How mobile connectivity is transforming rural livelihoods in West Africa – Cariolle and Carolle, 2024 - WP 6](#_Toc182517321)
12. [Mobile Internet Technology and National Identity in Sub-Saharan Africa – Choi et al. 2023 - WP 7](#_Toc182517322)
13. [Does Corruption Information Inspire the Fight or Quash the Hope? A Field Experiment in Mexico on Voter Turnout, Choice, and Party Identification – Chong et al. 2015 – The Journal of Politics 7](#_Toc182517323)
14. [Media exposure and political participation in a transitional African context – Conroy-Krutz, 2018 - World Development 7](#_Toc182517324)
15. [Mobile Internet access and political outcomes: Evidence from South Africa – Donati, 2023 – Journal of Development Economics 8](#_Toc182517325)
16. [Voter information campaigns and political accountability: Cumulative findings from a preregistered meta-analysis of coordinated trials – Dunning et al. 2019 – Science Advances 8](#_Toc182517326)
17. [Nationalism and the Internet – Eriksen, 2007 - Nations and Nationalism 8](#_Toc182517327)
18. [Understanding Education's Influence on Support for Democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa – Evans and Rose, 2012 - Journal of Development Studies 8](#_Toc182517328)
19. [Building States through Public Truth-Telling – Gautier et al, 2024 - WP 9](#_Toc182517329)
20. [Internet and Politics: Evidence from U.K. Local Elections and Local Government Policies – Gavazza et al. 2018 - RESTUD 9](#_Toc182517330)
21. [Trust, Corruption, and Tax Compliance in Fragile States: On a Quest for Transforming Africa into Future Global Powerhouse – Gebrihet et al. 2024 – Social Sciences 9](#_Toc182517331)
22. [Greater Expectations: A Field Experiment to Improve Accountability in Mali – Gottlieb, 2016 - American Journal of Political Science 9](#_Toc182517332)
23. [The Effects of Cellphone Coverage Expansion on Wealth and Political Behavior – Grossman et al. 2024 – WP 10](#_Toc182517333)
24. [3G Internet and Confidence in Government – Guriev et al. 2021 - QJE 10](#_Toc182517334)
25. [Attribution And Accountability: Voting for roads in Ghana – Harding, 2015 – World Politics 10](#_Toc182517335)
26. [Complements or Substitutes? How Institutional Arrangements Bind Traditional Authorities and the State in Africa – Henn, 2023 - American Political Science Review 10](#_Toc182517336)
27. [Determinants of institutional trust: the role of cultural context – Andriani and Kaasa, 2022 - Journal of Institutional Economics 11](#_Toc182517337)
28. [Can information improve rural governance and service delivery? – Kosec and Wantchekon, 2020 – World Development 11](#_Toc182517338)
29. [Publicising Malfeasance: When the Local Media Structure Facilitates Electoral Accountability in Mexico – Larreguy et al. 2020 – The Economic Journal 11](#_Toc182517339)
30. [Liberation Technology: Mobile Phones and Political Mobilization in Africa – Manacorda and Tesei, 2020 - Econometrica 12](#_Toc182517340)
31. [What is the geography of trust? The urban-rural trust gap in global perspective – McKay et al. 2023 - Political Geography 12](#_Toc182517341)
32. [National Institutions and Subnational Development in Africa – Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2014 - The Quarterly Journal of Economics 12](#_Toc182517342)
33. [Historical Legacies and African Development – Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2020 - Journal of Economic Literature 12](#_Toc182517343)
34. [State reach and development in Africa since the 1960s: new data and analysis - Müller-Crepon, 2023 - Political Science Research and Methods 13](#_Toc182517344)
35. [Traditional institutions in Africa: past and present - Neupert-Wentz and Müller-Crepon, 2024 - Political Science Research and Methods 13](#_Toc182517345)
36. [Can Informed Voters Enforce Better Governance? Experiments in Low-Income Democracies – Pande, 2011 - Annual Review of Economics 13](#_Toc182517346)
37. [Order, Distance, and Local Development over the Long-Run – Pierskalla and Schultz, 2017 - Quarterly Journal of Political Science 14](#_Toc182517347)
38. [The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi – Posner, 2004 - American Political Science Review 14](#_Toc182517348)
39. [Accountability failure in isolated areas: The cost of remoteness from the capital city – Provenzano, 2024 – Journal of Development Economics 14](#_Toc182517349)
40. [The Political Economy of Government Responsiveness: Theory and Evidence from India – Besley and Burgess, 2002 – QJE 15](#_Toc182517350)
41. [Trust but verify? Examining the role of trust in institutions in the spread of unverified information on social media - Van Zoonen et al. 2024 - Computers in Human Behavior 15](#_Toc182517351)
42. [The ”Dark Side” Of Institutional Trust – Neal et al. 2016 - Interdisciplinary perspectives on trust: towards theoretical and methodological integration 15](#_Toc182517352)

# When Does Information Influence Voters? The Joint Importance of Salience and Coordination – Adida et al. 2020 – Comparative Political Studies

Studies show that for performance information to influence voters in clientelistic democracies, two conditions must jointly hold: voters must care about the performance dimension (salience) and believe others in their constituency also care about it (coordination).

# Africa’s shifting media landscapes: Digital media use grows, but so do demographic divides - Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz et al. 2024 – Afrobarometer

African media landscapes are experiencing significant transformations, with radio remaining the continent's most democratic and widely accessible medium even as digital platforms gain ground. This digital expansion, while promising, shows marked demographic disparities - primarily benefiting urban, educated, affluent, male and younger populations while leaving behind rural, less educated, poorer, female and older citizens.

The African public demonstrates robust support for media's democratic function, with nearly three-quarters endorsing media's investigative role in government oversight and corruption, and roughly two-thirds supporting press freedom from government control. Most citizens perceive their media as relatively free from state interference.

This evolving mediascape presents a dual dynamic. Digital platforms potentially democratize information access and reduce traditional gatekeepers' influence. However, they simultaneously facilitate the spread of mis/disinformation and inflammatory content with fewer verification mechanisms. Despite these challenges, strong public support for media independence potentially serves as a bulwark against democratic regression, though citizens must remain vigilant against subtle forms of media control through regulatory and financial mechanisms.

The media's capacity to enable informed citizen participation, foster accountability, and facilitate public discourse emerges as crucial for democratic governance, underscoring how Africans increasingly view free media as fundamental to their democratic aspirations.

# The Cost of Distance: Geography and Governance in Rural India – Asher et al. 2018 – WP

Research demonstrates that greater physical distance between citizens and administrative centers reduces access to public goods and worsens economic outcomes, as transport costs and information frictions constrain both state capacity to deliver services and citizens' ability to demand accountability.

# Able and Mostly Willing: An Empirical Anatomy of Information's Effect on Voter‐Driven Accountability in Senegal – Bhanadari et al. 2023 - American Journal of Political Science

Research shows that when voters receive personally delivered and explained performance information about incumbents, they can process and retain it for political accountability - updating beliefs in a Bayesian manner and rewarding better performers both electorally (among likely voters) and through increased post-election engagement, particularly when information includes temporal benchmarks and focuses on local outcomes.

# Public Services, Geography, and Citizen Perceptions of Government in Latin America – Bland et al. 2023 - Political Behavior

Demonstrate that citizens in remote areas of Latin America are less likely to translate their dissatisfaction with public services into negative evaluations of government officials, examining four potential mechanisms: lower state presence leading to reduced expectations, weaker sense of political efficacy, insufficient information about government responsibilities, and higher deference to hierarchical authority. The evidence particularly supports political efficacy and deference effects, revealing a spatial gradient in political accountability that weakens as distance from urban centers increases.

# The Political Geography of Cities – Bluhm et al. 2021 - WP

Provide the first systematic evidence on how political status affects urban development using global data on subnational capital city reforms. They show that gaining capital status increases economic activity by 15-25% within five years, with positive spillovers to nearby cities. The effects are stronger where capitals govern larger territories and in locations with better market access, driven by skilled migration and private investment. Their findings demonstrate how administrative reforms can reshape economic geography, particularly in developing and decentralized countries.

# Distance, services, and citizen perceptions of the state in rural Africa – Brinkerhoff et al. 2018 - Governance

Examine how distance from urban centers affects citizens' perceptions of government services and state legitimacy in Africa. Using survey data from 17 countries, they show that while service access and satisfaction decline with distance, rural citizens paradoxically display more trust in government than urban residents, even when services are poor. This challenges standard accountability models by suggesting that rural citizens' lower expectations of the state may limit the effectiveness of citizen pressure for improving remote service delivery.

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*Krasner and Risse (2014; using data from Lee, Walter-Drop, & Wiesel, 2014) show that most sub-Saharan African countries contain such areas of limited state presence, where the central government is unable or unwilling to maintain authority, impose political order, or enforce rules and regulations (see also Migdal, 1988). Herbst (2000) explains the persistence of geographically isolated areas in sub-Saharan Africa with reference to the high cost and low benefit of projecting state power into sparsely populated hinterlands, which shape incentives for the state to project (or not) authority across space.*

# Isolated Capital Cities, Accountability, and Corruption: Evidence from US States – Campante et Do, 2014 – American Economic Review

Demonstrate that US states with geographically isolated capital cities have higher levels of corruption. Using historical data on capital placement, they show this relationship is causal and operates through reduced accountability - isolated capitals see less media coverage of state politics, lower voter turnout, and less informed citizens. This isolation enables corruption by weakening oversight mechanisms, revealing how geography can impact governance quality.

# Capital Cities, Conflict, and Misgovernance – Campante et al. 2019 - American Economic Journal: Applied Economics

Demonstrate that isolating capital cities from population centers promotes misgovernance in autocratic regimes by reducing the threat of revolt. They show that conflicts are more likely to start and threaten incumbent regimes when they occur closer to the capital, but only for government-targeted (not territorial) conflicts and in non-democratic countries. Isolated capitals are associated with worse governance, less power sharing, and higher military spending in autocracies. The study reveals an important tradeoff in capital city location: while isolation may protect against rebellion, it enables poor governance by reducing accountability pressures from citizens. This helps explain why many autocratic regimes deliberately isolate their capitals despite the economic costs.

# Misinformation technology: Internet use and political misperceptions in Africa – Cariolle et al. 2024 - Journal of Comparative Economics

Examines how Internet use shapes democratic attitudes in Africa. Using Afrobarometer survey data across 35 countries (2011-2018), they find that Internet use significantly reduces both preference for democracy and perception of democratic extent. The authors document that Internet users show lower trust in parliament and ruling parties, greater perceived corruption, and higher protest participation. Their evidence suggests the Internet may function as a "misinformation technology" rather than a democratizing force in the African context, as Internet users' perceptions increasingly diverge from expert assessments.

# From phone access to food markets: How mobile connectivity is transforming rural livelihoods in West Africa – Cariolle and Carolle, 2024 - WP

*To control for these potential biases, we adopt an instrumental variable approach popularized by Manacorda and Tesei (2020) and Guriev et al. (2021), consisting in exploiting historic EA exposure to lightning strikes to predict the extent of 2G, 3G, and 4G antenna network expansion. It is known that exposure to lightning causes electrical surges that damage mobile network infrastructure, leading to higher deployment, repair and maintenance costs and lower connectivity quality (ITU, 2003; Martin 2016). Lightning resistant protection for such equipment does exist, but it is still very costly and poorly deployed in SSA. Thus, we expect lower network coverage and a lower adoption rate of mobile and internet technologies in areas more exposed to this risk.*

# Mobile Internet Technology and National Identity in Sub-Saharan Africa – Choi et al. 2023 - WP

Examine how mobile internet access affects national identity in sub-Saharan Africa. Using Afrobarometer survey data and mobile coverage maps across 35 countries (2011-2018), they find that mobile internet access reduces identification with the nation by 5-7 percentage points. They show this effect intensifies during election periods when divisive and polarizing forces are at their peak, suggesting that mobile internet undermines national identity by exposing voters to polarizing social media content. Their findings highlight how technological innovations can potentially inhibit state-building in diverse societies.

# Does Corruption Information Inspire the Fight or Quash the Hope? A Field Experiment in Mexico on Voter Turnout, Choice, and Party Identification – Chong et al. 2015 – The Journal of Politics

Examine how corruption information affects voting behavior through a field experiment during Mexico's 2009 municipal elections. They find that exposing incumbent corruption through flyers not only decreases incumbent party support, but also reduces voter turnout and challenger party support, suggesting that corruption information leads voters to disengage from the political process entirely. The demobilizing effect is stronger when corruption levels exposed are high and when challenger candidates are perceived as low quality. Their findings suggest voters may interpret widespread corruption as an equilibrium from which even challenger politicians cannot credibly withdraw.

# Media exposure and political participation in a transitional African context – Conroy-Krutz, 2018 - World Development

Examines how access to FM radio affects political participation in Uganda during its democratic transition. Using an instrumental variables approach based on radio signal propagation, he finds that radio exposure significantly increases political participation. The positive effect appears to work through increased political knowledge rather than through changes in efficacy, interest, or attitudes. The study demonstrates that media access can enhance democratic engagement in transitional contexts by providing citizens with information about how to participate politically.

# Mobile Internet access and political outcomes: Evidence from South Africa – Donati, 2023 – Journal of Development Economics

Studies the impact of mobile internet on political outcomes in South Africa, finding that 3G coverage increased voter turnout by 2 percentage points and reduced the incumbent party's vote share by 3 percentage points. The effects appear to work through both information and coordination channels: voters in areas with 3G access became more informed about political scandals and corruption, while the technology also facilitated the entry of new political parties by reducing communication costs.

# Voter information campaigns and political accountability: Cumulative findings from a preregistered meta-analysis of coordinated trials – Dunning et al. 2019 – Science Advances

*Voters often have limited information about the performance of their political representatives. These information gaps may undermine democratic accountability: According to many accounts, officials whose actions are shielded from public scrutiny are less responsive to constituents’ concerns and more likely to engage in corruption (1). Providing reliable performance information prior to elections may allow voters to select politicians who are more likely to serve them well (2, 3).*

*1. T. Persson, G. E. Tabellini, Political Economics: Explaining Economic Policy (MIT Press, 2002).*

*2. J. D. Fearon, Electoral accountability and the control of politicians: Selecting good types versus sanctioning poor performance, in Democracy, Accountability, and Representation, A. Przeworski, S. C. Stokes, B. Manin, Eds. (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), pp. 55–97.*

*3. T. Besley, Political selection. J. Econ. Perspect. 19, 43 (2005).*

# Nationalism and the Internet – Eriksen, 2007 - Nations and Nationalism

Examines how the Internet, rather than weakening national identities as initially predicted, has become a key technology for maintaining and strengthening them - particularly for dispersed populations. Through case studies of various diaspora communities, he shows that the Internet allows nations without territory (like Kurds), nations with large diasporas (like Chileans), and displaced communities to build virtual nations and maintain collective identities across vast distances.

# Understanding Education's Influence on Support for Democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa – Evans and Rose, 2012 - Journal of Development Studies

Examines the role of education in promoting support for democracy across 18 sub-Saharan African countries. Using survey data, they find that education is the strongest predictor of support for democracy and rejection of non-democratic alternatives. The effects work primarily through increased political awareness and comprehension rather than through economic resources, suggesting that expanding access to education could help consolidate democracy in developing countries.

# Building States through Public Truth-Telling – Gautier et al, 2024 - WP

Study how radio broadcasting of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission affected national unity and racial relations. They find that while media exposure promoted unity among the Black majority, it also triggered backlash from the White minority, highlighting how mass media can have heterogeneous effects on different segments of society in nation-building processes.

# Internet and Politics: Evidence from U.K. Local Elections and Local Government Policies – Gavazza et al. 2018 - RESTUD

Study how broadband internet diffusion affected local elections and government policies in the UK from 2006-2010. Using detailed data on broadband penetration and rainfall-based instrumental variables, they find that internet diffusion decreased voter turnout, particularly among less-educated and younger individuals. They show that this decline in political participation was accompanied by lower local government spending and taxes. The authors provide evidence that these effects operated through the internet crowding out traditional local media with richer political content. Their findings highlight how changes in media markets can affect political participation and, subsequently, policy outcomes.

# Trust, Corruption, and Tax Compliance in Fragile States: On a Quest for Transforming Africa into Future Global Powerhouse – Gebrihet et al. 2024 – Social Sciences

Examine the relationship between trust, corruption, and tax compliance in fragile African states using survey data from Guinea, Mali, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. Using a logistic regression framework, they find that trust in the ruling party increases tax compliance by 4.6 percentage points, while corruption significantly reduces both trust in government institutions and tax compliance. The authors show that this effect is amplified in fragile states, where weak institutions and political instability create a negative feedback loop between corruption, declining trust, and reduced tax compliance. Their findings highlight how deteriorating institutional quality can undermine state capacity through reduced tax revenues, particularly in fragile contexts.

# Greater Expectations: A Field Experiment to Improve Accountability in Mali – Gottlieb, 2016 - American Journal of Political Science

Examines whether voter expectations about government performance affect political accountability in Mali through a field experiment across 95 localities. Using a randomized civics course that provides information about local government capacity and relative performance, she finds that improving voters' reference points increases their willingness to sanction poor-performing politicians. Specifically, treated voters require higher bribes to vote for low-performing candidates and are less likely to vote based on kinship or traditional authority relations rather than performance. The study suggests that low voter expectations, rather than just information asymmetries, can trap developing democracies in equilibria of poor governance and low accountability.

# The Effects of Cellphone Coverage Expansion on Wealth and Political Behavior – Grossman et al. 2024 – WP

Study the effects of 2G cellular coverage expansion in Ghana on local wealth and political behavior using a difference-in-differences design. While they find that cellular coverage significantly increased wealth (measured through night-time light density and asset ownership), they document no electoral rewards for incumbent parties. Their null political effect appears driven by voters not attributing economic improvements to government performance, consistent with citizens recognizing that private telecommunications companies, rather than government policy, drove these changes. They also find that increased cellular coverage reduced vote-buying practices, suggesting that greater wealth may reduce clientelistic political practices.

# 3G Internet and Confidence in Government – Guriev et al. 2021 - QJE

Study how mobile broadband internet affects government approval using a global sample of over 840,000 individuals across 2,232 regions in 116 countries from 2008-2017. Using the rollout of 3G networks and a difference-in-differences design complemented by an IV strategy based on lightning strike frequency, they find that 3G coverage significantly reduces government approval. However, this effect only exists when the internet is not censored and is stronger when traditional media is state-controlled. The effect is negative only in countries with at least some corruption - in the least corrupt countries, 3G increases government approval. They show that 3G helps expose actual corruption by examining how corruption incidents and Panama Papers revelations translate into corruption perceptions. In European elections, 3G expansion led to lower vote shares for incumbents and higher support for populist opposition parties, but not for other opposition parties. Their findings suggest that mobile broadband internet is an important tool for political accountability, though it may also empower populist politicians.

# Attribution And Accountability: Voting for roads in Ghana – Harding, 2015 – World Politics

Examines whether voters in Ghana use elections to hold governments accountable for public goods provision. Using an original dataset combining polling station-level electoral returns with geo-coded data on road conditions between 2004-2008, he finds that improvements in local road quality significantly increase vote shares for the incumbent. However, this effect only exists for public goods that voters can clearly attribute to executive action - while road maintenance is centrally managed in Ghana, other public goods like education inputs show no electoral effects when their provision is decentralized. The findings challenge the view that African elections are solely determined by ethnicity and clientelism, demonstrating that voters do respond to government performance on attributable public goods. The study highlights how attribution clarity shapes democratic accountability in developing countries.

# Complements or Substitutes? How Institutional Arrangements Bind Traditional Authorities and the State in Africa – Henn, 2023 - American Political Science Review

Examines how institutional arrangements shape whether traditional authorities act as complements or substitutes to state capacity in Africa. Using distance to administrative headquarters as a measure of local state capacity and a spatial regression discontinuity design around administrative boundaries, he finds that the relationship between traditional authorities and the state depends critically on whether traditional authorities are constitutionally integrated. When traditional authorities are not constitutionally recognized, they act as substitutes - gaining influence where state capacity is low. However, when they are constitutionally integrated, they act as complements - losing influence where state capacity is low. These institutional arrangements have important development implications: the effect of state capacity on local development is three times larger in places where traditional authorities are integrated compared to where they are not, suggesting traditional authorities can help compensate for weak state capacity only when not institutionally bound to the state.

# Determinants of institutional trust: the role of cultural context – Andriani and Kaasa, 2022 - Journal of Institutional Economics

Examine how cultural context shapes institutional trust at the individual level using multilevel regression analysis of European Social Survey data across 85 regions. Their key finding is that power distance—the cultural acceptance of hierarchical relationships—significantly reduces institutional trust, while other cultural dimensions like uncertainty avoidance and individualism show limited effects. This suggests that reducing perceived distance between citizens and government could enhance institutional trust. Notably, they find that commonly cited post-communist effects on trust appear to operate primarily through cultural dimensions, particularly power distance, rather than through historical legacy alone. The study contributes by demonstrating that regional cultural variations within countries significantly influence institutional trust patterns, beyond traditional country-level analyses.

# Can information improve rural governance and service delivery? – Kosec and Wantchekon, 2020 – World Development

Analyze when information interventions improve rural governance and service delivery. Reviewing 48 empirical studies, they identify three necessary conditions for effectiveness: information must be relevant to recipients, who must have both power and incentives to act on it. These conditions explain mixed findings in the literature, where information campaigns sometimes succeed (Reinikka & Svensson, 2005) and sometimes fail (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2012). Their framework suggests that future interventions should focus not just on information provision but on the institutional context enabling its use.

# Publicising Malfeasance: When the Local Media Structure Facilitates Electoral Accountability in Mexico – Larreguy et al. 2020 – The Economic Journal

Examine how local media access and market structure shape electoral accountability in Mexico's municipalities. Using detailed spatial variation in media coverage and the timing of audit releases revealing mayoral misuse of social infrastructure funds, they find that each additional local media outlet increases voter punishment of high malfeasance by up to 1 percentage point and increases rewards for zero malfeasance by up to 0.6 percentage points. These accountability effects are stronger when there are fewer competing non-local media outlets and when local stations' audiences primarily reside within their municipality. The findings suggest that local media markets play a crucial role in enabling voters to hold politicians accountable, though this capacity may be undermined by the increasing dominance of national media content.

# Liberation Technology: Mobile Phones and Political Mobilization in Africa – Manacorda and Tesei, 2020 - Econometrica

Examine how mobile phones affect political mobilization in Africa using detailed geographical data on protests and mobile coverage from 1998-2012. They find that while mobile phones do not increase protests on average, they significantly amplify protest activity during economic downturns - a 1 standard deviation fall in GDP growth leads to 8-23% more protests in areas with full mobile coverage compared to areas without coverage. This effect is stronger in urban areas, regions with past conflict, non-democratic countries, and where traditional media is state-controlled. Using individual-level data, they show mobile phones operate through two channels: making citizens more responsive to economic conditions (enhanced information) and more responsive to others' protest participation (enhanced coordination).

# What is the geography of trust? The urban-rural trust gap in global perspective – McKay et al. 2023 - Political Geography

Develop theoretical expectations and mechanisms of why rural areas show higher trust than urban areas in less developed countries. They build their framework on three dimensions: competence, integrity, and benevolence. For competence, they expect no urban-rural divide as lower rural service quality is offset by lower expectations of state support. For integrity, they predict higher rural trust as urban residents have greater exposure to corruption through both direct encounters with officials and greater access to critical media coverage, especially online networks. For benevolence, they expect higher rural trust as rural voters remain electorally powerful in less developed countries and benefit from clientelistic networks with local political patrons. Their empirical analysis confirms these expectations, with rural areas showing systematically higher trust levels than urban areas in less developed countries, particularly driven by differences in corruption exposure through media access.

# National Institutions and Subnational Development in Africa – Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2014 - The Quarterly Journal of Economics

Exploit Africa's arbitrary colonial borders that split ethnic groups across countries to examine how national institutions affect development. Using satellite data on nighttime lights, they find that while institutional quality correlates with development across countries, this relationship disappears when comparing areas within the same ethnic group across borders. The effect of national institutions only persists near capital cities, suggesting limited state capacity in peripheral regions. Their identification strategy, controlling for both geographic and cultural factors, challenges the conventional view that national institutions drive economic development in Africa.

# Historical Legacies and African Development – Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2020 - Journal of Economic Literature

Provide a comprehensive review of recent empirical research linking Africa's historical legacies to its contemporary development. This emerging literature exploits within-country variation and novel data sources to establish that current economic, social, and political outcomes in Africa are strongly shaped by: i) colonial institutions and investments, ii) the artificial drawing of borders during the "Scramble for Africa" that partitioned ethnic groups across countries, iii) the slave trades, and iv) precolonial ethnic institutions. The studies employ innovative identification strategies and detailed historical data to isolate causal effects. The literature highlights that historical events often interact with each other, with colonial policies building on preexisting ethnic structures and slave trade patterns influencing subsequent colonial organization. An important insight is that the continent's historical legacies manifest differently across regions and states.

# State reach and development in Africa since the 1960s: new data and analysis - Müller-Crepon, 2023 - Political Science Research and Methods

Examines how state capacity affects development in post-colonial Africa by constructing novel panel data on travel times to administrative capitals (1966-2016). Exploiting within-location variation in travel times to capitals, he finds that increased state reach—measured by decreased travel times—significantly improves education, infant survival rates, and nightlight intensity. A one-hour reduction in travel time to national capitals increases primary education rates by 1.1 percentage points and reduces infant mortality by 0.38 percentage points. The results remain robust when accounting for migration, market access, and ethnic politics, suggesting that while geography constrains African state capacity, these constraints can be overcome through infrastructure and administrative reforms.

# Traditional institutions in Africa: past and present - Neupert-Wentz and Müller-Crepon, 2024 - Political Science Research and Methods

Examine the persistence of traditional institutions in Africa by linking novel data on contemporary traditional institutions with historical data from Murdock's Ethnographic Atlas. They find that while precolonial institutional complexity is positively associated with current institutional strength, this persistence is driven almost entirely by former British colonies, where indirect rule preserved local institutions, in contrast to more direct French colonial rule. The effect is particularly pronounced for functional differentiation of institutions (like councils and courts) rather than mere political hierarchies. This contributes to our understanding of institutional persistence by demonstrating that colonial administrative policies created systematic variation in how precolonial institutions survived, with implications for understanding the mechanisms behind the documented long-term effects of historical institutions.

# Can Informed Voters Enforce Better Governance? Experiments in Low-Income Democracies – Pande, 2011 - Annual Review of Economics

Reviews experimental evidence on whether improving voter information can enhance governance in low-income democracies. The paper finds that voter behavior is highly responsive to information - voters change their electoral choices when given credible information about politician performance, corruption, and the importance of voting. Better information leads to increased turnout, reduced electoral malpractice, and electoral penalties for corrupt politicians. This challenges both modernization theories suggesting poor country voters care less about governance quality, and institutional theories arguing historical conditions determine political outcomes. Rather, limited information appears to be a key constraint on electoral accountability in developing democracies. The findings suggest mandatory public disclosures and other information-provision policies could meaningfully improve governance, though understanding how politicians strategically respond to better-informed voters remains an important area for future research.

# Order, Distance, and Local Development over the Long-Run – Pierskalla and Schultz, 2017 - Quarterly Journal of Political Science

Examine how historical exposure to state institutions affects local economic development using novel spatial data on historical capital cities and nighttime light intensity across the globe. Using both European and global datasets, they find that areas historically closer to capital cities show significantly higher levels of contemporary economic development, even after controlling for geography, population, and current distance to capitals. This effect operates through physical infrastructure, social structures, and social practices that facilitate economic exchange. The findings contribute to debates about institutional development by showing that basic state presence and capacity to project authority across territory, rather than just institutional quality, is fundamental to economic development. Additionally, they demonstrate that institutional effects vary substantially within countries, with state capacity historically declining with distance from administrative centers.

# The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi – Posner, 2004 - American Political Science Review

Examines why cultural differences become politically salient in some contexts but not others through a natural experiment comparing Chewa-Tumbuka relations across the Zambia-Malawi border. Despite identical cultural differences between these groups in both countries, the cleavage is politically salient only in Malawi. The key explanation is group size relative to the national arena - in Malawi, both groups are large enough to be viable political coalitions (28% and 12% respectively), while in Zambia they are too small (7% and 4%). The findings challenge traditional explanations focused on the degree of cultural difference or colonial institutions, showing that political salience depends primarily on whether groups are large enough to be useful vehicles for political mobilization in their national context. This has implications for how we measure ethnic diversity and understand the effects of colonial boundaries, suggesting that demographic context rather than cultural "authenticity" determines which cleavages become politically relevant.

# Accountability failure in isolated areas: The cost of remoteness from the capital city – Provenzano, 2024 – Journal of Development Economics

Shows that isolation from capital cities causally reduces local economic development in Sub-Saharan Africa. Using a boundary discontinuity design exploiting national borders that divide ethnic homelands, he finds that a one percent increase in distance from the capital reduces local development by 3.5 percentiles in the national wealth distribution. The key mechanism operates through reduced political accountability - citizens in remote areas consume less news, maintain higher trust in leaders despite receiving fewer public goods, and are less responsive to government performance, leaving politicians with diminished incentives to invest in these regions.

# The Political Economy of Government Responsiveness: Theory and Evidence from India – Besley and Burgess, 2002 – QJE

Examine how mass media and political institutions affect government responsiveness to citizens' needs in India. Using panel data from 16 major Indian states over 1958-1992, they find that state governments are more responsive to food shortages and flood damage via public food distribution and calamity relief expenditure where newspaper circulation is higher and electoral accountability greater. The key mechanism operates through newspapers' role in monitoring politicians and enabling vulnerable citizens to evaluate incumbent performance. The effects are particularly strong for local language newspapers rather than English or Hindi publications, suggesting the importance of information reaching local populations. Their findings highlight how mass media can strengthen democratic institutions by improving political accountability - a result that has influenced subsequent work on media and governance.

# Trust but verify? Examining the role of trust in institutions in the spread of unverified information on social media - Van Zoonen et al. 2024 - Computers in Human Behavior

Examine how trust in institutions affects the sharing of unverified information on social media among Generation Z and Millennials. Using survey data from 2,600 respondents across four countries, they find that higher trust in institutions paradoxically increases reasons for sharing unverified information through two mechanisms: heightened self-efficacy in detecting misinformation (leading to overconfidence) and reduced motivation to authenticate information (as trusted sources are less scrutinized). This reveals a "blinding side of trust" where individuals who trust institutions may be more likely to share misinformation because they overestimate their ability to detect false information and feel less need to verify content from trusted sources. The findings challenge assumptions that institutional trust necessarily protects against misinformation spread.

# The ”Dark Side” Of Institutional Trust – Neal et al. 2016 - Interdisciplinary perspectives on trust: towards theoretical and methodological integration

The dark side manifests when trust is inflated beyond what is warranted by an institution's actual trustworthiness. This can occur through external processes, where institutions strategically boost trust through selective communication and heuristic cues, and internal processes, where psychological tendencies of trustors lead to overreliance on institutions. The darkest side emerges when these processes intersect, and institutions exploit individuals' internal vulnerabilities to manipulate and extract undeserved trust. In such cases, high levels of trust can lead to a lack of monitoring, reduced vigilance, and increased vulnerability to deception and exploitation by institutions acting in their own self-interest rather than in the interest of the public.