Why do politicians in ethnically diverse polities target co-ethnics with patronage resources? I argue that in settings of ethnic diversity, leaders are most likely to target co-ethnics when they have both the ability and the political incentive to do so. Ethnicity itself must be a salient political cleavage for politicians to exploit, and politicians must possess a means for directing this patronage at desired clients. Kenya’s Constituency Development Fund (CDF) provides an ideal setting in which to examine the strategic allocation of patronage resources. Using both survey data and in-depth qualitative interviews with local stakeholders, I compare three ethnically diverse constituencies, looking at how the salience of ethnic divisions and the settlement patterns of ethnic groups impact the strategic use of the Fund by politicians.

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