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Electoral Systems, Ethnic Fragmentation and Party Systems Volatility in 31 Sub Saharan African Countries

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Abstract

This paper thus addresses two primary issues. What is the relationship between the types of electoral systems that have been used to govern initial elections in the democratizing states of Africa and the degree to which party systems volatility has emerged? What other factors impact on the levels of volatility? I examine the above questions using data from 31 African countries. I find that most of the factors often cited as impacting on party systems development do not account for the level of legislative volatility. However, the dominance of the ruling party in the first election following democratic transition does impact the extent of legislative volatility later. Nonetheless these cases are also less likely to lead to democratic or politically stable outcomes

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In recent years there has emerged a great deal of scholarly attention to the relationship between political institutions and political party development among third wave democratizing states. Although there has been some literature that examines the determinative effects of political institutions (such as electoral systems) on party systems generally in Africa and elsewhere¹, most of this work has focused almost exclusively on the number of parties rather than the degree to which stable party systems have emerged. Although there has been some work on party systems volatility on Latin America and post communist Eastern Europe² there has been relatively little consideration of the relationship between electoral systems and party systems volatility in Africa.

This is relatively surprising given that most scholars agree that the development of stable, coherent representative parties which can shape and channel popular references is crucial to successful democratization in the wake of political transition. Moreover, a widely held view is that widespread party systems instability militates against successful democratic consolidation. Indeed, excessive instability undermines the basis for political representation. Party systems volatility, though less studied than the number of parties in the party system, is arguably just as important. Mainwaring and Scully consider volatility as a singularly important dimension of political institutionalization.³ They argue that, when electoral volatility is high, “democratic politics is more erratic, establishing legitimacy is more difficult, and governing more complicated.” When parties come and go at the whim of sudden and violent shifts in electoral coalitions, increasing the chances of populists coming to power and generating high levels of uncertainty for voters, who struggle to make informed choices about electoral choices and hold politicians accountable for their performance in office. For parties in power, uncertain if they will be

around tomorrow, time horizons are shortened, making it less likely that politicians will engage in reform projects that may engender short term pains.

More specifically, according to Sarah Birch a consistently high level of party system instability has four main consequences that are detrimental to democratic consolidation.⁴

1. It reduces accountability – voters cannot ‘throw the rascals out’ if the rascals no longer exist as a unified group.

2. It impedes party institutionalization by decreasing the level of long-term commitment which politicians, activists, and voters have to ‘their’ party.

3. It significantly increases uncertainty, hampering the ability of politicians and voters to engage in strategically-driven co-ordination

4. It raises the stakes of the electoral game. This may have the consequence of weakening the democratic commitment of politicians who may seek other ways to insure themselves against possible political loss at the next election.

The successful consolidation of democracy thus requires enough uncertainty to keep losers in the political game, but not so much that elections become a lottery.

On the other hand, extremely low volatility can also be a problem, especially when it is symptomatic of permanent exclusion of one portion of the electorate from

power.⁵ Lack of turnover may also indicate the entrenchment of patronage links. Moreover under such conditions, incumbency advantages can become ever more entrenched, making it even less likely that the opposition will have access, thus inviting “exit” using Albert Hirschman’s term.⁶ Exclusion can lead to a hardening of opposition and increasing embitterment regarding democracy with the opposition viewing it as the tyranny of a fixed majority, not a pluralism consistent with democracy.⁷ In sum, too much electoral volatility can be a bad thing, but so can too little. Further, larger and more dominant parties might become increasingly complacent if there is little in the way of a threat to their continued dominance. As a result they will have less incentive to deliver positive outcomes to the electorate.

This paper thus addresses two primary issues. What is the relationship between the types of electoral systems that have been used to govern initial elections in the democratizing states of Africa and the degree to which party systems volatility has emerged? What other factors impact on the levels of volatility? I examine the above questions using data from 31 African countries.

Literature

Despite the increasing amount of literature on political parties in new democracies and transitional systems, studies of parties and party systems in post cold war Africa have not been particularly plentiful. In part this is due to the tentative nature of African democratization where many have questioned the depth and significance of the regime changes which have taken place during the ‘third wave’ . Claude Ake, for instance has observed that multi-party elections provided well known autocrats with the opportunity to

engage in a democratic “credentialing process.”⁸ Crawford Young, as well notes that “In only a handful of instances can one speak with reasonable confidence of a beginning of consolidation . . .”⁹ Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle lament that the weakness of political parties in Africa ‘bodes poorly for the consolidation of democracy.’¹⁰ However, as Michelle Kuenzi and Gina Lambright note, “even if the prospects for democratic consolidation do not seem especially propitious, most do not dispute the importance of the recent wave of democratic liberalizations and transitions.”¹¹ Thus, they argue, factors such as the development of the party system, the extent to which political volatility occurs, that directly impacts on democratic consolidation “are of acute interest.”¹²

As much of the empirical literature has indicated, the newer democracies of the developing world have had higher levels of volatility than the older democracies of Europe and North America. Mainwaring and Scully show that legislative volatility in Latin America has been much higher, on average, than volatility in Europe.¹³ Mean legislative volatility for Latin America for the 1960-89 period (for some countries, a smaller period) was 24 percent. In comparison Bartolini and Mair’s data for Europe (1885-1985), shows that the highest single case for 303 election periods was 32 percent in Weimar Germany and the highest mean over all election periods was France, at 15 percent.¹⁴ Jack Bielasiak has also demonstrated that volatility rates in the post communist Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Union (FSU) are considerably higher than either Latin America and Western Europe: average volatility for East Central Europe and Southeast Europe was around 20 percent, for the Baltic states, around 31 percent, and for FSU Europe, around 42 percent.¹⁵ Kuenzi and Lambright demonstrated that average legislative

volatility in Africa has been quite high in the 1990s, at 28 percent, with several countries exceeding 50 percent.¹⁶

Despite the considerable literature on volatility, relatively little work has focused on the relationship between electoral rules, ethnic cleavages, transitional elections and party systems volatility. Indeed most of the literature on the relationship between electoral laws and ethnicity have focused largely on explaining the number of political parties in a system as opposed to the degree of systems volatility. For instance, many comparative studies of electoral laws and ethnicity have found that the effective number of parties in a country is jointly affected by the electoral rules and the ethnic heterogeneity of a country Ordeshook and Shvetsova , Neto and Cox , and Cox.¹⁷ Small magnitude systems (like those with single member plurality rules) tend to produce only a small number of parties, even in ethnically diverse countries. However, the number of parties in more Proportional Representation systems depends on the degree of diversity: heterogeneous countries tend to support large numbers of parties, while homogeneous ones tend to produce relatively few.

More recently, a very good analysis by Mozaffer, Scarritt, and Galaich examined the relationship between electoral laws and ethnicity for African countries.¹⁸ In this work, they presented a new measure (introduced by Daniel Posner¹⁹), one that focuses on “politically relevant” ethnicity (identities that have been politicized) rather than just the commonly used ethnolinguistic fragmentation index, and second, they also consider ethnic geographic concentration as a variable as well. These innovations led to some very interesting findings, at least regarding Africa. Ethnic fragmentation on its own *reduces* the number of parties in the party system, rather than increasing it. This effect is

mitigated by the extent of the geographic concentration of ethnic groups and district magnitudes. Indeed, countries with large district magnitudes, high ethnic fragmentation, and low geographic concentration have few parties, while countries with large district magnitudes, high fragmentation, and high geographic concentration have large numbers of parties.

How might this literature relate to the extent of party systems volatility? Generally we can conceive of party systems volatility as resulting from the entrance of new competitors into the political market (which may reduce the vote share of existing parties) and the exit of other parties (through dissolution and defection). Thus, one might expect that the factors that promote party systems fragmentation would also tend to make for greater levels of party systems volatility. For instance, the existence of high district magnitudes (or the average number of seats per district) which for Ordeshook and Shvetsova represent more “permissive” electoral systems would promote greater volatility in that it provide incentives for new competitors to enter the political market.²⁰ This would also suggest that lower district magnitude systems would reduce the openings in the political market, and hence reduce the levels of volatility. On the other hand since party systems volatility is also a function of parties dropping out of the political market (which may result from mass defections and reforming of parties, as individual elites seek better opportunities for office seeking), then it may be the case that systems with lower district magnitudes (particularly single member district systems) would promote greater incentives for defections and hence greater party systems volatility (see the work of Frank Thames and Erik Herron for instance). This is also suggested by Kuenzi and Lambright when they speculate that countries with plurality single-member districts

should have very high volatility scores, while those with large, multimember districts and proportional representation should have lower volatility scores.²¹ However contrary to this expectation, they found that district magnitude (as a measure of the proportionality of the system) was not related to the legislative volatility scores.

Another institutional feature that theoretically impacts on the extent to which new entrants enter the political market (thus affecting party systems volatility) is whether the political system is presidential or not.²² This is because Presidential systems provide an incentive for existing parties to form broad umbrella parties that seek to accommodate new entrants into the political market. Thus there should be less volatility as these broad umbrella parties seek to control and coopt newly activated political interests.

An additional factor that may militate against the entrance of new competitors into the political market is the continued dominance of the ruling party even after the first competitive elections. For Mainwaring and Scully, this represents the 'hegemonic party system in transition' where the ruling party in the pre first election period maintains its dominance through the first elections. These systems may in fact prevent wide swings in terms of party systems volatility because that 'the existence of old, well-established, and well-organized parties means that in some respects the process of institutionalizing a party system is more advanced than in several countries that already have competitive politics.'²³ However, they point out that the continued dominance of hegemonic parties also constrains viable competitors and hence often leads to less than democratic (or ultimately politically stable) outcomes.

Ethnic fragmentation may also lead to greater levels of volatility given that, as Ordeshook and Shvetsova suggest, ethnically fragmented societies tend to promote large

numbers of parties (particularly under conditions of proportional representation electoral systems).²⁴ However as Mozzafer, Scarritt and Galaich suggest, at least generally in the case of Africa, ethnic fragmentation reduces the number of parties, hence reducing the degree of volatility (especially where ethnic groupings are geographically concentrated).²⁵ In part this finding can be explained by reference to the work of Kanchan Chandra who notes that ethnicity provides for fairly stable constituencies for political parties, so once party politics have been “ethnified” there is little reason to think that there would be frequent changes in the composition of the political market in terms of competitors.²⁶

Another factor that provides an incentive for the entrance of new competitors in the political market is the extent to which there are patronage resources for distribution to political followers by elites. This is suggested by Chandra in her discussion of patronage democracy²⁷, and also by scholars on Africa who have noted the impact of state ownership and neo patrimonialism.²⁸ Access to office provides for access to large amounts of patronage resources (such as oil revenues in some cases) and thus provides an enormous incentive for new entrants into the political market.

Finally, the extent to which a state has been exposed to globalization may also impact on the mobilization of new entrants into the political market, particularly under the conditions of ethnic fragmentation. As Joel Kotkin argues, economic globalization is breeding a new wave of ethnic awareness in reaction to the homogenizing influences of the global culture.²⁹ This “great revival” of ethnic identity would promote prosperity for some groups, but for many others globalization would produce a “...throwback to the bases kind of clannishness...increased emphasis on religion and ethnic culture often

suggest the prospect of a humanity breaking itself into narrow, exclusive and hostile groups.”³⁰ Naisbitt envisioned that globalization would lead to the growth of a new “tribalism” particularly a “belief in the fidelity of one’s own kind.”³¹ The greater integration of economies has led to smaller productive units and the revolution in telecommunications has provided the means for ethnic groups to coordinate their actions and enter the political market.

In sum, then, the literature on both party systems volatility in general, and the literature on political parties in Africa in the 1990s suggest that party systems volatility is a function of the “permissiveness” of the electoral system (i.e. the ease by which new entrants can enter the political market) the extent of ethnolinguistic fragmentation, the extent of state control over economic resources, the initial hegemony of the ruling party at the time of the first election, and the extent to which the country has been exposed to globalization forces that may activate new political forces, particularly in ethnically divided societies.

Methodology

In this study, I examine 31 African countries that have had at least two multiparty legislative elections up until 2004. The data set is similar to Kuenzi and Lambright’s data in that there is considerable overlap in terms of countries. However I include Nigeria and Ethiopia (absent from their data set) and exclude South Africa. South Africa is excluded from this sample because arguably the Republic of South Africa is very different from any other sub-Saharan country. Further I update the volatility score by including all

elections up until 2004. Finally, in the data set I employ, I include several independent variables not used in the Kuenzi and Lambright study.

In the sample are included several countries that have undergone only very recent transitions to democracy, where no alternation of power has ever occurred, and the competitiveness of the elections and extent to which political rights and liberties are extended to the citizenry are questionable at best. However I included these countries because it helps to establish a baseline for future analysis of trends in the direction of democratization and democratic consolidation processes. The 31 cases as well as the values of the primary independent variables are reported in Table 1.

As with previous studies like Kuenzi and Lambright's, I employ the often used Pedersen's index of volatility to calculate legislative volatility 31 African cases. Pedersen's index measures the net change in each party's seat share in the lower house of the legislature from election to election. It is calculated by summing the net changes in the percentage of seats won or lost by all of the parties from election to election and dividing by two.³² The resulting score for each country is an average score across each of the legislative periods for each country. The focus of both the dependent and several of the independent variables is on legislative politics as opposed to presidential politics because as Joseph Schlesinger has noted, all party systems have grown out of legislatures, and despite the importance of presidencies, parties have emerged historically out of legislatures.³³

The independent variables include the log of the average district magnitude as a measure of the electoral system, calculated as the number of seats in the lower house of the legislature divided by the number of electoral districts³⁴ and dummy variables for

whether the ruling party at the time of the first legislative election won the initial or founding election in the third wave transition election, and for whether or not the system was a presidential system.

In addition, to political/institutional variables I also use the “political relevant ethnic group” (PREG) index developed by Posner using a weighted variation of the Herfindahl Index of Concentration, whose values range from 0-1, to measure the extent to which a country is ethnically fragmented.³⁵ Further, I employ the Heritage Foundation’s Index of Economic Freedom measure of “government intervention in the economy.”³⁶ This factor measures government's direct use of scarce resources for its own purposes and government's control over resources through ownership and ranges from 1 to 5 where 1 has least government control over the economy, and 5 the most. The measure comprises both government consumption and government production. Transfer payments (the difference between government expenditure and government consumption), which consist of compulsory exchange of the rights to resources from some people to others, are excluded from this measure. Finally to measure the extent to which a country is subject to external global economic pressures I use the often employed measure of Foreign Direct Investment per Gross Domestic Product, from the World Bank’s World Development Indicators (WDI).³⁷

Table 1: Data on 31 African States

COUNTRY	PERIOD	# electoral periods	Legislative Volatility	District Magnitude	FDI/GDP	Stability Score	Polity 2	ruling party victory dummy	Presidential System dummy	Intervention Gov't	PREG
Benin	1991-03	3	50.83	3.46	2.14	.50	6.00	.00	1.00	4.00	0.30
Botswana	1969-04	7	10.00	1.00	.89	-.26	8.75	1.00	0.00	4.50	0.00
Burkina Faso	1992-02	2	24.85	7.92	.34	.77	-2.78	1.00	1.00	2.50	0.00
Cameroon	1993-02	2	31.75	3.10	.23	-.66	-4.00	1.00	1.00	3.25	0.71
Cape Verde	1991-01	2	9.88	4.50	2.82	.81		.00	1.00	2.50	0.26
CAR	1993-98	1	16.00	3.89	.19	-.61	4.33	.00	1.00	4.00	0.23
Comoros	1992-04	4	70.00	1.00	.19	-.19	1.88	.00	1.00		0.00
Congo	1992-02	2	32.23	1.00	5.60	-1.52	-3.00	.00	1.00	4.50	0.19
Côte d'Ivoire	1990-00	2	24.67	1.44	1.54	-.64	-1.89	1.00	1.00	3.75	0.49
Djibouti	1992-03	2	17.83	13.00	.51	-.69	-1.67	1.00	1.00	2.75	0.80
Ethiopia	1995-00	1	2.60	1.00	1.11	-.60	1.00	1.00	0.00	2.50	0.57
Equatorial Guinea	1993-04	2	14.20	14.29	36.70	.31	-5.00	1.00		3.50	0.44
Gabon	1990-01	2	14.38	13.33	-1.38	-.23	-4.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	0.21
Gambia	1966-02	7	8.30	1.00	5.08	.51	-5.33	1.00	1.00	2.75	0.37
Ghana	1992-04	3	23.40	1.00	1.79	-.08	3.00	1.00	1.00	3.50	0.44
Kenya	1992-03	2	24.45	1.00	.32	-.79	-.36	1.00	1.00	3.00	0.57
Lesotho	1993-02	2	64.43	1.48	14.00	.63	5.78	.00	0.00	3.75	0.00
Madagascar	1993-02	2	53.04	1.38	.85	.00	7.55	.00	1.00	1.50	0.00
Malawi	1994-04	2	12.40	1.00	.59	.19	6.44	.00	1.00	3.75	0.55
Mali	1992-02	2	41.03	1.18	1.94	.26	6.22	.00	1.00	3.25	0.13
Mauritania	1992-01	2	13.93	1.15	2.33	1.15	-6.00	1.00	1.00	3.50	0.33
Mauritius	1976-00	7	69.35	3.33	1.08	.11	10.00	.00	0.00	2.00	0.60
Namibia	1989-04	3	14.15	72.00	.88	.35	6.00	1.00	1.00	2.75	0.55
Niger	1993-04	2	45.50	13.13	.56	-.22	1.56	1.00	1.00	3.50	0.51
Nigeria	1999-03	1	10.05	1.00	3.57	-1.10	-2.00	1.00	1.00	4.00	0.66
SaoTomé	1991-01	2	18.10	7.85	2.92	.56		.00	1.00		0.00
Senegal	1983-01	4	19.28	4.00	1.29	-.76	3.00	1.00	1.00	3.50	0.14
Seychelles	1993-02	2	23.63	1.31	6.71	1.06		1.00	1.00		0.00
Togo	1994-02	2	46.38	1.00	1.76	-.54	-2.00	.00	1.00	3.50	0.49
Zambia	1991-01	2	33.20	1.00	3.87	-.24	1.56	.00	1.00	2.50	0.71
Zimbabwe	1980-05	5	20.23	1.00	1.12	-.80	-6.00	1.00	1.00	2.25	0.41

Analysis

Table 2 reports the results of regressing the dependent variable legislative volatility against the independent variables in three models. Model 1 is the full model which includes all of the independent variables. Models 2 and 3 include interactive variables, particularly the interaction between the number of ethnic groups and the electoral system (which was found to have an important impact on the number of parties by Mozzafar et al)³⁸ and an interactive variable between the PREG index and foreign direct investment (as a rough measure of globalization) which has been suggested above as having an important impact on the party system in new democracies.

Table 2: Coefficient Estimates and Collinearity Statistics
Dependent Variable Legislative Volatility

	Full Model 1 Coefficient (Standard Error) [Beta]	Model 2 Coefficient (Standard Error) [Beta]	Model 3 Coefficient (Standard Error) [Beta]
ruling party won first election?	-18.68** (6.77) [-.52]	-19.56** (6.28) [-.55]	-20.00** (6.06) [-.56]
presidential dummy variable	-7.24 (9.24) [-.15]	-8.98 (8.51) [-.18]	-7.74 (8.74) [-.16]
log of district magnitude	2.24 (3.01) [.14]		
politically relevant ethnic group	1.50 (13.60) [.02]		
Average Economic Freedom Index-2.95 Government Intervention Score(4.26) 1995-2003		-2.64 (3.95) [-.12]	-2.42 (3.86) [-.11]
foreign direct investment as proportion of GDP 1990-03	1.24 (1.32) [.20]		
PREG X District Magnitude		-.01 (4.13) [-.01]	
PREG X FDI			-3.60 (4.61) [-.14]
* p ≤ .10	Adjusted R ² = .21	Adjusted R ² = .24	Adjusted R ² = .26

**** p ≤ .05**
N= 31

The results in Table 2 indicate that of all of the independent variables, the only one that is statistically significant and in the correctly predicted direction is the dummy variable for whether or not the ruling party won the first competitive legislative election. As indicated, if the ruling party won, this significantly reduced the level of legislative volatility later. Further, as indicated by the beta weights across all three models this variable had the greatest weight in explaining the level of legislative volatility across the 31 cases. On the other hand, none of the other independent variables, including the interactive variables in both models 2 and 3 exhibited a statistically significant relationship with the level of legislative volatility. Further, none of the variables exhibited high levels of multicollinearity – after examination all of the Variance Inflation Factor or VIF scores were less than 2(not reported in Table 2).

The above result indicates that the key variable explaining legislative volatility is whether or not the ruling party at the time of the first competitive election won the election. This supports the findings of Mainwaring and Scully who argued that the persistence of such hegemonic parties would prevent high degree of legislative volatility, and in a way help promote some degree of party systems institutionalization. However, they also pointed out that the continued dominance of hegemonic parties may also lead to less democratic and ultimately less politically stable outcomes.

To examine this claim, in Tables 3 and 4, I cross tabulate whether or not the ruling party at the time of the first competitive election by the level of political democracy (Table 3) and by the level of political stability (Table 4). The level of political democracy is taken from the Polity IV data base for the combined autocracy/democracy

score. The scores range from -12 to 12 and is calculated for each year. I take the scores for each of the 31 countries and calculate an average polity score from 1995-2003 (generally after the initial elections). Then I bifurcate this into two categories, where the average polity score is negative or positive. The level of stability is taken from the study conducted by Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi.³⁹ The measure is based upon several components including violence, governmental stability and perceptions of risk (for a detailed description of the index see Kauffman, Kraay and Mastruzzi). The scores range from -2.5 (most unstable) to +2.5 (most stable). I take the scores from years between 1996 and 2002, calculate an average score, and then bifurcate this score into negative and positive categories.

Table 3: Crosstabulation, Polity 2 score by whether Ruling Party won first election				
		Ruling Party did not win first election	Ruling Party won First election	Total
Average Polity2 score 1990-2002 negative		Congo, Togo 2 (18.2%)	Burkina Faso, Cameroon Côte d'Ivoire Djibouti Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, The Gambia, Kenya, Mauritania, Nigeria Zimbabwe 11 (64.7%)	12
Average Polity2 score 1990-2002 positive		Benin, CAR, Comoros, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Malawi, Mauritius, Zambia 9 (81.8%)	Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana Namibia, Niger, Senegal 6 (35.3%)	15
		11	17	28

Table 3 indicates that in countries where the ruling parties won the first election, these countries were much less likely to become democracies later. Indeed only six out

of seventeen (35.3%) of the countries where the ruling party won the first elections scored in the positive range of the POLITY IV (2005) index⁴⁰, as compared to 81.8% of countries where the ruling party did not win the first elections. Further Table 4 indicates that countries where the ruling party won in the first election were less politically stable later. Only thirty-three percent of the countries where the ruling parties won the first election scored in the positive range of the political stability index, whereas 61.5% of countries where the ruling parties lost the election scored in the positive range of the political stability index. Thus, these results also support the observations made by Mainwaring and Scully, that, although hegemonic parties might forestall legislative volatility they do not necessarily forestall political instability, nor promote democratic consolidation.

Table 4: Crosstabulation, Political Stability Score by Whether Ruling Party won first election			
	Ruling Party did not win first election	Ruling Party won First election	Total
Average Political Stability score 1996-2002 Negative	CAR, Comoros, Congo, Togo, Zambia 5 (38.5%)	Botswana, Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Zimbabwe 12 (66.7%)	16
Average Political Stability score 1996-2002 Positive	Benin, Cape Verde, Lesotho, Madagascar Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Sao Tome 8 (61.5%)	Burkina Faso, Equatorial Guinea, The Gambia, Mauritania, Namibia, Seychelles 6 (33.3%)	14
Total	13	18	31

Conclusion

The above results generally do not support much of the literature on party systems development in new democracies. Although there are several factors that may explain the number of political parties in newly emerging party systems in Africa, these factors (e.g. the characteristics of the electoral system, the extent of ethnic and linguistic fractionalization, government intervention in to the economy, and globalization) nor interactions between these variables impact upon the degree of party system volatility. However, the dominance of the ruling party in the first election following democratic transition does impact the extent of legislative volatility later. As I demonstrated above these cases are also less likely to lead to democratic or politically stable outcomes.

Although generally these results might indicate that hegemonic party systems in Africa will ultimately produce unstable and undemocratic results (which is very much in keeping with the tradition of consociationalism that emphasizes inclusion of opposition groups, particularly ethnically based ones) could it be that hegemonic ruling parties can lead to more democracy and political stability later? Certainly this is suggested by the Mexican and Turkish cases (and for that matter even the Japanese case) where the political process was dominated by a hegemonic party that this ultimately paved the way for democratic consolidation later. In Africa, this might be suggested by the Ethiopian case, for example, with the victory of the EPDRF (the ruling party that had seized power after the overthrow of the Derg in 1991, in the first election in 1995 and 1999). Indeed, Ethiopia scores relatively high in the POLITY IV index and respectably on the stability index (+1 and -.8 respectively). Moreover, if one examines the trends since 1995, the stability scores and Polity scores are moving in more stable and democratic directions.

Other cases, such as Botswana and Ghana, are similar to the Ethiopian case in this regard, which might also suggest that the victory of the hegemonic party may not necessarily lead to unstable political outcomes. Perhaps the key is whether the ruling party that wins the first election is institutionalized (as I think is the case with the EPDRF in Ethiopia, the BDP in Botswana or the NDC in Ghana).

Whatever the case, much more work needs to be done on how individual parties develop in Africa. Indeed, as I have suggested elsewhere (in studies particularly on post communist politics)⁴¹ that the extent to which party systems stabilize depends heavily on whether individual parties in the party system become institutionalized and can act as gatekeepers for those who aspire to enter the political market. This, however, is currently beyond the scope of this particular study, and any claims in support of this supposition must wait until further empirical work is done.

Notes

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