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**HOW CONTEXT MEDIATES THE
EFFECTS OF ELECTORAL
INSTITUTIONS ON THE
STRUCTURE OF PARTY
SYSTEMS IN AFRICA'S
EMERGING DEMOCRACIES**

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How Context Mediates the Effects of Electoral Institutions on the Structure of Party Systems in Africa's Emerging Democracies

Abstract

Do electoral institutions in Africa's emerging democracies impact the strategic coordination among voters, candidates and parties and shape the structure of party systems independently or are their effects mediated by contextual variables? The paper attempts to answer this question through analysis of systematic data on 99 national legislative elections held under 55 electoral systems in 37 countries. Specifically, it examines how two contextual variables – (1) institutional variables related to presidential elections and (2) patterns of ethno-political fragmentation and concentration – mediate the direct effects of electoral institutions on the structure (degree of fragmentation or concentration) of party systems. Regression analysis shows that electoral institutions have negligible independent effects, while contextual variables independently and interactively with each other and with electoral institutions account for the largest amount of variance on the degree of fragmentation or concentration of party systems. The conclusion discusses the implications of the results for the consolidation of Africa's emerging democracies in the context of ethno-political diversity.

An extensive comparative literature provides incontrovertible evidence that both electoral institutions and context shape the structure of party systems, but it also remains divided in privileging each with mutually exclusive causal significance.¹ If both institutions and context matter, then privileging one with *a priori* theoretical precedence is conceptually misconstrued. A more appropriate analytical task is to explicate theoretically and empirically *how* they matter. I undertake this task in the paper with a systematic analysis of the separate and joint impact of context and electoral institutions on the structure of party systems in Africa's emerging democracies.

¹ I do not cite this extensive and well-known literature to save space. Cox (1997: 14-27) provides a useful summary and synthesis

Theoretical explication of how institutions and context shape the structure of party systems raises a number of analytical questions. First, since both institutions and context matter, what is the best way to specify this relationship without privileging one with *a priori* theoretical precedence but enabling empirical validation of their separate and joint effects? Second, institutions derive their theoretical significance as efficient sources of strategic coordination, but what is the mechanism by which contextual variables structure political interactions? Third, social cleavages are the standard contextual variables hypothesised as conditioning party systems, but should all objectively identifiable cleavages be included in the analysis or only those that are politicised? If only politicised cleavages are to be included, then how does one deal with the problem of endogeneity? These questions have particular relevance for the inclusion of ethnic cleavages as the key contextual variable in the analysis presented in this paper. In much of extant scholarship, the mere presence of objective ethnic cleavages is typically interpreted as a reflexive indicator of their political salience. But, like other social cleavages, not all ethnic cleavages are politicised and not all politicised ethnic cleavages become the basis of partisanship. Fourth, a growing body of comparative scholarship over the past two decades attests that ethnic groups and identities are not primordially fixed but are constructed in the course of social, economic and political interactions. Since not all constructed ethnic groups and identities become politicised, is it possible to classify constructed and politicised ethnic groups (i.e., ethnopolitical groups) and develop measures of the resulting ethnopolitical cleavage patterns?

To answer these questions systematically, I present data analysis to clarify how ethnopolitical cleavage patterns measured by the degree of fragmentation and concentration of ethnopolitical groups independently and interactively with each other, as well as in additive and interactive combination with two sets of electoral institutions – the rules governing legislative elections and the rules governing presidential elections – affect the structure (fragmentation and concentration) of electoral and legislative party systems. The analysis is based on systematic data on 55 electoral systems covering 99 elections to the lower house of the national legislature in 37 African countries.

The paper is organised in four parts. Part 1 clarifies a number of theoretical concerns and elaborates the notion of “embedded institution” as an analytically sound conceptualisation of the relationship between institutions and context and specifies how this relationship might affect political outcomes. Part 2 describes the logic and method behind the specification of ethnopolitical groups and the construction of two measures of ethnopolitical cleavages, fragmentation and concentration. Part 3 describes the research design. Part 4 presents the results of

the data analysis. In the conclusion, I summarise the central findings and discuss the implications.

1. Theory

My analysis is based on a theoretical approach that attempts to resolve two analytical concerns involved in sorting out the relative impact of institutions and context on political outcomes: (1) the problem of endogeneity and (2) the mutually exclusive influence of institutions and context on the structure of party systems.

1.1 “Separating the Dancer from the Dance”

Systematic examination of the relative impact of institutions and context on political outcomes raises the vexing problem of endogeneity, for example, whether electoral institutions shape party systems, whether party systems reflecting the prevailing pattern of social cleavages shape electoral institutions, or whether party systems provide incentives to modify cleavages over time. The problem lies at the heart of sociological critiques of Duverger’s institutional propositions (Cox 1997: 14-17) and persists in comparative institutional research more generally (Carey 2000: 751-755). But it is not fatal. Sociological critiques of Duverger that emphasise social cleavages as determinants of party systems are misconstrued because they mirror the monocausal determinism of institutional explanations they reject. Nor are they uniformly supported by empirical evidence (Jones 1993; Lijphart 1994; Mainwaring 1991; Mozaffar 1997, Rae 1971; Reynolds 1999). In a brief but particularly innovative analysis of 16 democracies worldwide (circa 1990), Cox (1997: 20-23) directly tested the validity of sociological and institutional explanations by controlling for social diversity and examining the impact of different electoral formulas for lower and upper houses on the effective number of electoral and legislative parties in each chamber. He found that differences in electoral formulas produced the expected differences in the party system independent of social structure.

More generally, comparative research on the choice of new democratic institutions contains pragmatic solutions to the endogeneity problem. These solutions turn on institutional choice as a coordination problem. The central logic here is that institutional choice, even as it reflects a solution to political conflicts rooted in structurally determined power relations, is fundamentally about future political outcomes and is thus informed by political actors’ expectations and calculations about these outcomes. Social structure, in other

words, constrains but does not determine the choice and design of new institutions. Democratic transitions as moments of crises and major political change, moreover, tend to diminish the influence of standard constraints and heighten the salience and autonomy of agency in shaping institutional design. Also, the time and political capital that political actors invest in institutional bargaining are themselves crucial measures of the importance they attach to the prospective consequences of new institutions. Finally, the sunk costs of institutional bargains underscore the uncertainty of renewed negotiations and, combined with the pervasiveness of coordination problems in political life, tend to reinforce the stickiness of new institutions (See, among others, Bawn 1993; Boix 1999; Carey 2000: 751-755; Colomer 2000; DiPalma 1990; Knight 1992; Luong 2000; McFaul 1999; Przeworski 1988; 1991; Remington and Smith 1996; Seely 2000; Waterbury 1997).

The lesson here is that privileging either institutions or context in explanations of political outcomes is not a very helpful research strategy. An alternative and, in my view, a more realistic and useful approach is to view electoral institutions as embedded in wider institutional frameworks and social settings (Bowler and Grofman 2000; Grofman, *et al.* 1999; Granovetter 1985). This approach leaves open the question of whether electoral institutions have independent effects or whether those effects are contextually mediated. The issue, in Grofman's (1999: xi) poetic characterisation, is: "How can we separate the dancer from the dance?"

1.2 Institutions *versus* Context or Institutions *and* Context

In arguably one of the few instances of cumulative theoretical development in comparative politics, an impressive body of works (Cox 1997; Duverger 1962; Lijphart 1990, 1994, 1999; Powell 1982, 2000; Rae 1971; Riker 1982; Sartori 1976, 1994; Taagepera and Shugart 1989) offers powerful insights and incontrovertible evidence about how different electoral institutions facilitate the coordination strategies of voters, parties and candidates, aggregate the individual decisions of voters to shape party systems, structure opportunities for political representation, and affect the prospects for congruence between voter preferences and policy outcomes. An equally impressive body of works with a venerable tradition in comparative sociology (Lipset and Rokkan 1967) suggests the importance of social structure in conditioning party systems. While the theoretical mechanism linking social structure and party systems remains weakly specified in these works (Cox 1997: 19; Taagepera and Grofman 1985: 343), the number and pattern of social cleavages clearly have some impact on

the structure of party systems. Thus, plurality systems that typically produce two-party systems tend to produce multiparty systems if voters are geographically concentrated in above plurality proportions, as, for example, in India and Canada (Kim and Ohn 1992; Rae 1971; Riker 1982), while proportional representation (PR) systems that typically produce multiparty systems do so only in ethnically heterogeneous societies but not in ethnically homogeneous ones (Ordeshook and Shvetsova 1994).

A number of works attempt to move beyond the “institution or context” debate and systematically sort out the independent and joint (additive and interactive) effects of institutions and social structure on party systems (Cox 1997; Ordeshook and Shvetsova 1994; Powell 1982).² Their findings show that while electoral institutions do have the theorised mechanical effects on the structure of party systems, contextual variables, measured especially by ethnic cleavages, exert a powerful mediating influence. These works, however, (a) focus on the effects of ethnic heterogeneity based on ethnic groups classified by primordialist logic, (b) conflate politically relevant and irrelevant ethnic groups and, therefore, do not distinguish politicised ethnic cleavage from those that are not politicised, (c) measure ethnic cleavages at only one level of inclusiveness and, therefore, do not capture politically relevant inter-group as well as intra-group cleavages, and (d) do not examine the effect of ethnic concentration.

My analysis draws on the theoretical insights of the larger comparative literature and specifically builds on the insights and findings of recent works, but extends them in several ways. First, I emphasise the importance of an embedded institution approach as a useful way to sort out the independent and joint effects of institutions and context. Second, I explicitly stress the role of ethnopolitical cleavages as alternative sources of information and strategic coordination that exist in a relationship of structured tension with institutions as sources of information and strategic coordination. Third, I use a dataset that includes only ethnopolitical groups classified on the basis of constructivist logic (i.e., constructed and politicised ethnic groups). Fourth, I measure ethnopolitical cleavages at three levels of inclusiveness to capture politically relevant inter-group and intra-group cleavages. And, fifth, I measure and utilise two dimensions of ethnopolitical cleavages, fragmentation and concentration.

² For a very interesting analysis of the individual and joint effects of cleavage structures and electoral institutions on legislative party fragmentation in subnational governments, in this case, the Swiss cantons, see Vatter (2003)

1.3 Embedded Institution

The central logic of the embedded institution approach is that electoral institutions are embedded in a wider context that is typically comprised of the overall institutional framework of governance and social setting (Grofman 1999: xi). The obvious intuition here is that similar institutions are likely to produce different outcomes in different contexts. While the intuition behind the approach may be obvious, perhaps even trivial, the analytical implications are not. An embedded institution approach avoids the conceptually misconstrued debate over privileging institutions and context with mutually exclusive causal precedence in explanations of political outcomes. By conceptually situating electoral institutions in context, it facilitates systematic analysis and empirical validation of the separate and joint institutional and contextual variables.

In particular, by facilitating systematic analysis of *how* electoral institutions and ethnopolitical cleavages shape party systems, it enables discovery of variations in structure of party systems due to combined variations in design of electoral institutions and the patterns of ethnopolitical cleavages. Electoral institutions and ethnopolitical cleavages matter in structuring party systems because they each inform and shape the mutual expectations of voters and candidates about winning and losing, thus facilitating their strategic coordination over votes and seats. However, the information and incentives that each variable contains and conveys may not necessarily be consistent; indeed, they may be profoundly at odds with each other. This may explain why Duverger outcomes in many new democracies often do not materialise in expected ways (Filippov, Ordeshook, and Shvetsova 1999; Moser 1999, 2001; Mozaffar 1997, 1998). That expected institutional outcomes do not occur, however, is not necessarily an indication of the failure of electoral institutions to behave in expected ways. An alternative, and not entirely unrelated, explanation might be that contextual variables provide more relevant information and incentives for voters and candidates that modify the impact of electoral institutions. It is useful, therefore, to sort out this relationship of structured tension between electoral institutions and ethnopolitical cleavages by carefully specifying and examining their independent, additive and interactive effects on party systems. The notion of embedded institution enables this specification.

1.4 Institutions, Cleavages and Strategic Coordination

The strategic coordination role of electoral institution is now well established (Cox 1997, Duverger 1962; Jones 1993; Katz 1997; Lijphart 1990, 1994, 1999;

Powell 1982, 2000; Rae 1971; Riker 1982; Sartori 1976, 1994; Taagepera and Shugart 1989). Cox's (1997) definitive work on the subject clarifies the motivating logic: (a) candidates wish to economise on their resources and voters wish to economise on their votes and (b) their expectations of winning and losing tend to be mutually reinforcing. Electoral institutions, principally district magnitude, structure these two micro-processes to obtain Duverger outcomes, in most cases. Non-Duverger outcomes do occur, however, due to the mitigating effects of social structure, as, for instance, in Canada and India, where regional parties rely on the support of geographically concentrated blocs of voters to overcome the standard institutional constraints on the winning potential of smaller parties. I will show below that in African countries, as well, the geographical concentration of ethnopolitical groups also tend to condition Duverger outcomes, but in a different way.

The role of electoral institutions in strategic coordination is premised on political actors' mutual knowledge and understanding of the incentives and information these institutions convey. Such knowledge and understanding facilitate communication among voters and candidates and reinforce their mutual expectations about the prospects of winning and losing. In emerging democracies, however, electoral institutions are new and their incentives and outcomes not well known or understood by political actors, who compensate for the resulting information deficit by relying on alternative sources of information and coordination. In Africa, ethnopolitical cleavages are these alternative sources.

The role of ethnopolitical cleavages in facilitating strategic coordination is best understood if ethnicity as a definition of individual and group identity is viewed as a strategic resource that efficiently solves collective action problems and is strategically (not reflexively) activated to define group interests and organise group action in response to institutional incentives for doing so in the competition for power and resources. *Ethnicity, ethnic identities and ethnopolitical groups, in other words, are not primordially fixed.* They are fluid and constructed, engendering variability in both the number of potential groups with which individuals can identify and the ethnopolitical demography resulting from shifting group membership (Brass 1991; Chandra 2001; Fearon and Laitin 1996, 2000; Hardin 1995; Mozaffar 1995, 2001).

In Africa, colonial institutions defined the initial political conditions for the construction of ethnopolitical identities as bases of group organisation and political mobilisation (Coleman 1958; Laitin 1986; Posner 1999; Vail 1989). Varying post-colonial authoritarian and democratic regimes that structured the political struggle for power and resources reinforced the incentives for ethnic-based definition of group interests and resulting ethnopolitical action. In most

African countries, moreover, the general absence or weakness of alternative bases of political organisation, such as class, increases the comparative advantage of ethnicity in forging and sustaining group solidarity through the provision of access to state resources by ethnic leaders in exchange for the political support of ethnic followers and in motivating incipient class formation mediated by the central role of the state in economic management. For risk-averse leaders, moreover, the uncertainty of political competition makes ethnicity a valuable social capital for demonstrating political power *vis-à-vis* the state and other similarly constituted groups and in maintaining access to land, labour and food in the context of economic decline and diminishing state resources (See, among others, Bates 1989, 1990, 1999; Berry 1993; Ensminger 1992; Posner 1999; Mozaffar and Scarritt 1999: 242-243; Rothchild 1997; Rothchild and Olorunsola 1983; Scarritt, McMillan and Mozaffar 2001; Sklar 1979).

The extent to which ethnicity facilitates strategic coordination among voters and candidates to shape party systems depends a great deal on patterns of ethnopolitical fragmentation and ethnopolitical concentration. Analysts have conventionally posited an isomorphic relationship between patterns of ethnopolitical cleavages and the structure of party systems on the assumption that each ethnopolitical group is sufficiently large and cohesive to support a party by itself. Thus, *ceteris paribus*, high ethnopolitical fragmentation produces a dispersed party system and low ethnopolitical fragmentation a concentrated one (Cox 1997: Ch. 11; Lijphart 1977; Reynolds 2000; Ordeshook and Shvetsova 1994).³ In Africa, however, the nature of constructed ethnopolitical groups and the resulting social cleavages, as described in the next section, reveal a complex group morphology that seriously militates against such a reflexive relationship between ethnopolitical cleavages and party systems, even though it is somewhat counteracted by a high degree of geographical concentration (Mozaffar and Scarritt 1999: 235-243; 2002; Mozaffar, Scarritt and Galaich 2003; Scarritt 1993; Scarritt and Mozaffar 1999). In most African countries, if each ethnopolitical group voted for its own party, the prevalence of large numbers of such groups is likely to produce such a high degree of vote dispersion among large numbers of small parties that none is likely to secure enough votes to win seats. High ethnopolitical fragmentation, in other words, is likely to constrict rather expand party system. The geographical concentration of ethnopolitical groups and the institutional design of electoral systems can mitigate this restrictive effect. Geographical concentration by itself, however, is unlikely to overcome the restrictive effect of high fragmentation due to the

³The intellectual origin of this assumption can be traced to political sociology and its emphasis on social cleavages (class, religion, region) as reflexive definitions of group interest and automatic bases of group action. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) remains the classic statement.

presence of large numbers of small ethnopolitical groups. Systems with low fragmentation, on the other hand, usually feature a small number of large ethnopolitical groups that are also likely to have dispersed populations and therefore unlikely to need concentrated voters to sustain a small number of parties corresponding to the small number of ethnopolitical cleavages. These variations in the configurations of ethnopolitical cleavages suggest the likelihood that ethnopolitical fragmentation and ethnopolitical concentration will interact to shape the structure of party systems.

The magnitude of this effect will depend on district magnitude and the proximity of presidential and legislative elections. There is now wide agreement in the comparative literature that district magnitude is the critical institutional variable affecting the party system (Cox 1997; Lijphart 1994; Rae 1971; Taagepera and Shugart; 1989: ch. 11).⁴ District magnitude shapes party systems by setting a minimum threshold of votes required to win one seat (or, conversely, the maximum number of votes a party can secure without winning a seat) and thus influencing the proportionality between votes and seats. *Ceteris paribus*, small districts set high thresholds that increase vote-seat disproportionality and encourage concentrated party systems, while large districts set low thresholds that reduce vote-seat disproportionality and encourage fragmented party systems.

Comparative scholarship also emphasises the importance of presidential election rules, specifically the electoral formula for presidential elections and the proximity of legislative and presidential elections, in shaping party systems (Cox 1997: 187-190, 203-221; Jones 1994, 1995; Mainwaring 1993; Mozaffar and Vengroff, 2002; Powell, 1982; Shugart and Carey 1992). This has special resonance in Africa where, with the exception of Lesotho and South Africa, new democracies have uniformly adopted presidential systems.⁵ Presidential elections in Africa are important for several reasons. First, with the presidency as the top prize in the political game, they attract a large number of candidates, few of whom have any realistic chance of winning. Characteristic problems of post-authoritarian democracies – limited experience with competitive elections, information deficit about the extent of electoral support, plus personal ambition

⁴Other institutional dimensions of electoral systems that have also been found to affect party systems include the electoral formula, mathematical threshold (inversely related to district magnitude), the size of legislative assembly, and the ballot structure (Lijphart 1994: 10-14).

⁵Botswana and Mauritius, Africa's longest-standing democracies, have always been parliamentary systems. Gambia remained a parliamentary democracy for 17 years before shifting to a presidential democracy in 1983, the only African country to do so. All other African countries gained independence from colonial rule in the 1960s with democratically elected parliamentary governments that were soon replaced by military or single-party civilian regimes, many of which later established presidential governments.

– prevent opposition candidates from coordinating on a single candidate to oppose the erstwhile authoritarian rulers who now compete as presidential candidates armed with the standard advantages of incumbency. Second, an important strategic reason for the entry of large numbers of contenders in presidential elections is that African presidents possess substantial resources for patronage. Presidential contenders with weak winning potential often expect to demonstrate sufficient electoral support to bargain entry in post-election coalitions and secure state resources for their constituencies in return for political support of the winners. Third, for leading presidential candidates and winners, such bargaining resources possessed by weaker candidates are also strategically important because of the salience of ethnopolitical groups for electoral support. Just as it constrains legislative candidates, the combination of ethnopolitical fragmentation and concentration constrains leading presidential candidates from securing outright electoral majorities. And since the weaker candidates usually control small but cohesive blocks of votes, leading presidential contenders have strong incentives to form minimum-winning coalitions with them to ensure an electoral victory and a governing majority.

The extent to which strong and weak presidential contenders are able to negotiate minimum-winning coalitions will depend, in addition to ethnopolitical cleavages, on the rules of presidential elections. Most African countries have adopted majority runoff formulas that are particularly conducive to forming such coalitions. However, 58 out of the 69 presidential elections held under majority runoff rules in Africa since 1990, only 17 have been decided in the second round. This suggests that two other dimensions of presidential elections rules play a more important role in shaping party systems: (1) the proximity of presidential and legislative elections, and (2) the effective number of presidential candidates (Cox 1997: 209-213).

To summarise, the theoretical concerns discussed in this section suggest three things. First, the embedded institution approach offers a solution to the endogeneity problem that bedevils attempts to examine the effects of institutions and context on political outcomes. Second, the approach usefully situates electoral institutions in wider institutional frameworks (e.g. presidential systems) and social contexts (e.g. ethnopolitical cleavages), thus highlighting the importance of examining the independent and joint (additive and interactive) effects of electoral institutions and contextual variables on party systems. Third, comparative scholarship and empirical observation suggest that the following variables are the crucial ones in shaping the structure of electoral and legislative party systems: (a) district magnitude; presidential election rules related to (b) the proximity of presidential and legislative elections and (c) the effective number of presidential candidates; and ethnopolitical cleavages measured by the degree of (d) ethnopolitical group fragmentation and (e) ethnopolitical group

concentration. Before describing the operationalisation of these variables, I clarify the constructivist specification of ethnopolitical groups and the measurement of resulting ethnopolitical cleavages in the next section.

2. The Constructivist Specification of Ethnopolitical Groups and Cleavages⁶

The logic of constructivism turns on the notion that individuals have multiple ethnic identities that are constructed in the course of social, economic and political interactions. This malleability of ethnic identities derives (a) from the multiplicity of objective ethnic markers (language, religion, race, caste, “tribe,” territory, etc.) that may be invoked to define and distinguish ethnic groups, (b) from the relative complexity of these markers that may foster intra-group divisions combined with inter-group differences (e.g. sectarian divisions in a religion, “tribal” differences among same language speakers or subjects of the same kingdom), and (c) from temporal changes in the relevance of these composite markers and their components in defining and distinguishing ethnic groups as well as in the politicisation of resulting inter-group and intra-group cleavages (Chandra 2001, 7-8; Laitin and Posner 2001, 13-16).

Intrinsic to the logic of constructivism are three specific processes that motivate the criteria for specifying the ethnopolitical groups and the cleavages among them that we include in our analysis: construction, politicisation and participation. The construction of ethnic groups and cleavages is not detailed here, but its salient features are highlighted because it is a necessary precondition for the politicisation of ethnic groups, that is, the construction of ethnic groups into ethnopolitical groups. Like other social cleavages, however, not all ethnic cleavages become politicised, and even fewer become “*particized*, that is, made into important lines of partisan division” (Cox 1997, 26, original emphasis). I describe below how this crucial distinction between participation and other forms of politicisation of ethnic cleavages helps to solve the problem of endogeneity that is ostensibly inherent in measuring ethnopolitical cleavages in accounts of variations in the number of electoral and legislative parties.

An ethnic group is constructed when individuals in culturally plural societies self-consciously choose one or more objective ethnic markers to distinguish in-groups from out-groups. In Africa, as elsewhere, the individuals’ choice of ethnic markers and the consequent size of the constructed ethnic groups are constrained by the variety, complexity, and prior use of such markers, the

⁶ This section draws heavily on Mozaffar, Scarritt and Galaich (2003).

associated cost of forming new groups and sustaining group solidarity, and the institutional framework of governance defined by the state. Increased variety and complexity of ethnic markers expand opportunities for ethnic group construction, but also constrain unfettered construction of especially large and cohesive ethnic groups because of (a) the high start-up cost of group formation associated with the incorporation of competing groups and interests defined by varied ethnic markers to construct larger and more encompassing ethnic groups and (b) the high cost of sustaining group solidarity in the face of the varied markers serving as competing sources of group definition within the larger constructed agglomerations. These structural and strategic factors thus limit the size and the cohesion of ethnic groups that can be constructed and mobilised for collective political action.

In Africa, colonial rule and postcolonial regimes reinforced these constraints by structuring the variety and complexity of ethnic markers and politicising some of them. Colonial rulers' reliance on local agents to cope with the dilemma of maintaining control at low cost encouraged these agents to differentiate their groups from those not so privileged by colonial authority either by recombining and redefining existing objective markers of ethnicity or by accentuating previously minor group differences (Vail 1989). Colonial rulers' creation of administrative units to secure additional economies in the cost of governance incorporated culturally disparate groups within single administrative units or separated culturally similar groups into separate units. Occasionally, administrative encapsulation enabled the combination and redefinition of different ethnic markers for the construction of larger, territorially concentrated and, hence, also cohesive ethnopolitical groups. In other instances, colonial rulers privileged one ethnic marker (e.g. ancestral village) to foster spatially distributed, hence fragmented, groups over another (e.g. religion) that could foster larger and more encompassing groups (Laitin 1986). In these different ways, colonial rule emphasised the relevance of a wide range of diffuse and heterogeneous criteria of group formation, thereby increasing instead of decreasing the variety and complexity of objective ethnic markers that constrained the construction and politicisation of large and cohesive ethnic groups in Africa's culturally plural societies.

At independence, therefore, African countries inherited a distinctive ethnic morphology with three defining features that are reflected in the structure of constructed ethnopolitical groups and that have shaped the pattern of their political interactions: (1) marked differences in group size, such that virtually no major ethnopolitical group comprises an outright majority in a country, although some comprise a large plurality, (2) considerable variety and complexity in ethnic markers, such that, even as they produce politically salient inter-ethnic differences, they also produce politically salient intra-group heterogeneity but

limited cultural differences among large agglomerations of such groups, and (3) the territorial concentration of some ethnic groups that facilitates their construction as large and cohesive units for collective political action. These three features have combined with the accommodation by postcolonial regimes of instrumental (“pork-barrel”) ethnopolitical demands to foster *communal contention* as the typical pattern of political interactions in which ethnopolitical groups serve as cost-effective strategic resources for organising political competition for power and resources. Communal contention, however, underscores the high start-up cost of new group formation and the high maintenance cost of group solidarity, thus discouraging political entrepreneurs from exaggerating cultural differences among groups and encouraging them instead to maintain strong group identities, including some coexisting sub-group identities, that are strategically sustained by their ability to access the state and secure valued goods and services for their followers (Mozaffar and Scarritt 1999, 239-242).

The constructivist processes highlighted above motivate five criteria for specifying ethnopolitical groups and cleavages. The first, which derives from the distinction between the construction, politicisation and participation of ethnic groups and helps to avoid the endogeneity problem noted above, involves specifying only those groups that have demonstrated their actual political relevance or high potential political relevance based on past relevance, apart from or prior to participation. Thus, the decision rule employed was that the incidence of at least one of the following forms of long-standing politicisation other than participation would serve as a necessary and sufficient indicator of the construction of *ethnopolitical* groups: (a) organised group mobilisation unrelated to party formation (primarily in ethnic associations or cliques of leaders within the same party, the bureaucracy or the military); (b) articulation of grievances by leaders claiming to speak for a group rather than a party; (c) participation in collective action or (violent or nonviolent) conflict with other groups or the state and being subjected to state violence; (d) encapsulation within or domination of an officially designated administrative unit; (e) occupying a disproportionate number of high positions in the bureaucracy or the military; and (f) controlling disproportionate socioeconomic resources.

The second criterion involves specifying all ethnopolitical groups, even at the risk of being overly inclusive. Thus the decision rule deliberately defines forms of non-party politicisation broadly. Furthermore, the extensive secondary Africanist literature in history, anthropology, sociology and political science was carefully examined to assess the demonstrated and potential political relevance of a wide range of ethnic groups and to draw up a list of ethnopolitical groups

included in the dataset.⁷ The third criterion involves specifying ethnopolitical groups at three levels of inclusiveness in order to capture all cleavages that may affect variations in party system structure, including national dichotomous cleavages between top level groups (which are found in twelve countries), as well as a variety of more complex multiethnic ones usually involving both middle level groups (within or independent of top level groups) and lower level groups within them. Tables 1-3 display data on Nigeria, Zambia and Rwanda and Burundi, respectively, as illustrations of the three types of inter-group and intra-group cleavage structures that prevail in contemporary Africa. Nigeria, for instance, has all three levels of cleavages, the pattern found in only twelve African countries. Zambia has two levels of cleavages, the dominant pattern in Africa. Rwanda and Burundi have one level each, whereby the whole country is divided into two rigid and internally cohesive nationally dichotomous groups, a pattern found in only two other countries (Comoros and Djibouti).

The fourth criterion involves specifying the geographic concentration of ethnopolitical groups and sub-groups. As noted above, territorial concentration facilitates ethnopolitical group construction by furnishing a critical mass of individuals with similar interests based on a common location, thus reducing the start-up cost of group formation and the maintenance cost of group solidarity. The final criterion concerns specifying the time frame for the cleavages that I analyse. Thus, to be included in our dataset, ethnic groups must have been politicised at least ten years prior to the first election analysed in each country, which helps to avoid the problem of endogeneity, and the most recent evidence of their politicisation must be no more than twenty years prior to this election, which helps to establish their continued, and potential for future, politicisation.⁸ These five criteria led to the specification of 264 ethnopolitical groups and sub-groups at three levels of inclusiveness. These 264 groups are the basis for the two measures of ethnopolitical cleavages, fragmentation and concentration, employed in the data analysis.

⁷ In case of ambiguity in the secondary literature, my collaborator and I relied on our best judgments, based on our knowledge and expertise, to assess demonstrated political relevance of specified groups.

⁸ An exception was made to the ten-year rule for inclusion in the case of politicisation of groups through violence because this is so clearly independent of participation. For example, ethnic associations which were instrumental in politicising the Yorubas and the Ibos in Nigeria were founded in the 1920s and 1930s and have continued to be active within the last twenty years, while the politicisation of the Ogoni and other “oil minorities” in that country occurred only a little more than ten years prior to the 1999 election and involved considerable violence.

Table 1. Ethnopolitical Cleavage Patterns in Nigeria*

<i>Ethnopolitical Groups (%)</i>	<i>Concentration Codes</i>
NORTH (50.00%)	3
<u>Hausa-Fulani (31.56)</u>	<u>2</u>
<i>Sokoto coalition (14.00)</i>	3
<i>Kano coalition (13.5)</i>	3
<i>Bororo (1.55)</i>	3
<u>Middle Belt (13.26)</u>	<u>3</u>
<i>Adamawa (2.00)</i>	3
<i>Idoma-Igala-Igbirra (2.71)</i>	3
<i>Nupe (1.24)</i>	3
<i>Tiv (3.00)</i>	3
<u>Kanuri (5.17)</u>	<u>3</u>
SOUTH (50.00%)	3
<u>Yoruba (20.70)</u>	<u>2</u>
<i>Ekiti (2.02)</i>	3
<i>Egba (1.39)</i>	3
<i>Ijebu (1.50)</i>	3
<i>Oyo (7.43)</i>	3
<u>Ibo (17.60)</u>	<u>2</u>
<i>Anambra (3.00)</i>	3
<u>Ibibio/Efik/Ijaw (8.28)</u>	<u>3</u>
<i>Ibibio (4)</i>	3
<i>Ijaw (1.55)</i>	2
<i>Ogoni/Oil Minorities (0.5)</i>	3
<i>Anang (1.5)</i>	3
<u>Edo (3.42)</u>	<u>3</u>
<i>Urhobo (1.50)</i>	3
Fragmentation Index = 2.00	Concentration Index = 3.00
<u>Fragmentation Index = 4.96</u>	<u>Concentration Index = 2.20</u>
Total Fragmentation Index = 12.01	Total Concentration Index = 2.74

Notes:

Population percentages are in parentheses.

- * **Bold:** first level of inclusiveness.
 Underline: second level of inclusiveness.
 Italics: third level of inclusiveness.

Table 2. *Ethnopolitical Cleavage Patterns in Zambia**

<i>Ethnopolitical Groups (%)</i>	<i>Concentration Codes</i>
<u>Bemba Speakers-(Mambwe) (43%)</u>	<u>2</u>
<i>Bemba-Bisa (22)</i>	2
<i>Luapula (8)</i>	2
<i>Lamba-Lala (8)</i>	2
<i>(Mambwe) (5)</i>	2
<u>Tonga-Ila-Lenje (19)</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Nyanja Speakers- (Tumbuka) (18)</u>	<u>2</u>
<i>Chewa-Ngoni (13)</i>	2
<i>Kunda (2)</i>	2
<i>(Tumbuka) (3)</i>	<u>3</u>
<u>Lunda-Kaonde (12)</u>	3
<i>Lunda (5)</i>	3
<i>Louvale (4)</i>	3
<i>Kaonde (3)</i>	<u>3</u>
<u>Barotse (8)</u>	3
<i>Lozi (7)</i>	3
<i>(Nkoya) (1)</i>	
<u>Fragmentation Index = 3.65</u> Total Fragmentation Index = 7.14	<u>Concentration Index = 1.82</u> Total Concentration Index = 2.39

Notes:

Population percentages are in parentheses

* Underline: second level of inclusiveness.

Italics: third level of inclusiveness.

Table 3. *Ethnopolitical Cleavage Patterns in Burundi and Rwanda**

<i>Ethnopolitical Groups (%)</i>	<i>Concentration</i>
BURUNDI	
Hutu-Twa (80%)	0
Tutsi (18%)	0
Total Fragmentation Index = 1.43	Total Concentration Index = 0
RWANDA	
Hutu-Twa (90%)	0
Tutsi (10%)	0
Total Fragmentation Index = 1.22	Total Concentration Index = 0

Notes:

Population percentages are in parentheses.

* **Bold** = first level of inclusiveness.

3. Research Design

The unit of analysis is the electoral system defined as the set of “essentially unchanged election rules under which one or more elections are conducted” (Lijphart 1994: 7). The premise here is that elections “held under the same electoral system are regarded as repeated observations of the operation of a single electoral system” (Lijphart 1994: 7). The rules define a number of dimensions of an electoral system, key among which are electoral formula governing legislative elections, the electoral formula governing presidential elections, district magnitude and assembly size. I used a change in one of these dimensions as a measure of change in the electoral system. Since an electoral formula is a discrete variable, a change in it was easily measured. Thus among the 37 countries included in the analysis, only two countries changed their electoral formulas for legislative elections: Madagascar, which changed from a straight PR-formula to a mixed parallel system combining plurality formula in single-member districts and PR formula in multimember districts; and Lesotho, which changed from a plurality formula in single-member districts to the only compensatory mixed-member proportional system in Africa (Elklit 2002; Mozaffar 2003).

To limit arbitrary increases in the number of cases due to changes in the other two electoral system dimensions, both of which are interval variables, I adapted Lijphart’s (1994: 13) rule of thumb of a 20% change to establish a change of 15-20% as the measure of a shift from an old to a new electoral system. This strategy produced 55 electoral systems in 99 elections to the lower house of the national legislature in 37 countries. The data analysis below is thus based on N=55 cases. Table 4 displays these data. While the countries in the table are identified by their official names, multiple electoral systems for each country are identified by a corresponding number after the country name followed by the number of elections held under that system and the years of those elections. For instance, Botswana has two electoral systems, “botswana1” covering six elections between 1965-1989 and “botswana2” covering two elections between 1994-1999.

3.1 Variable Operationalisations

Party Systems. The structure (i.e., the degree of fragmentation and concentration) of the party system is the dependent variable. I focus specifically on the electoral and legislative party systems, measured, respectively, by the number of parties winning votes and the number of parties winning seats. I employ the widely used indices developed by Laakso and Taagepera (1989) to

operationalise both measures: the *Effective Number of Electoral Parties* (ENEP) and the *Effective Number of Legislative Parties* (ENLP).

Table 4. *Countries, Electoral Systems, Election Year and Number of Elections*

<i>Countries</i>	<i>Electoral Systems</i>	<i>Number: Election Year</i>	<i>Countries</i>	<i>Electoral Systems</i>	<i>Number: Election Year</i>
Angola	angola	1: 1992	Madagascar	madgas1	1: 1993
Benin	benin1	1: 1991		madgas2	1: 2002
	benin2	1: 1995	Malawi	malawi	2: 1994-1999
	benin3	1: 1999	Mali	mali1	1: 1992
Botswana	botswana1	6: 1965-1989		mali2	1: 1997
	botswana2	2: 1994-1999	Mauritania	mauritan	2: 1992-1996
Burkina Faso	burkfaso1	1: 1992	Mauritius	maurtius	8: 1967-2000
	burkfaso2	1: 1997	Mozambique	mozambiq	2: 1994-1999
	burkfaso3	1: 2002	Namibia	namibia	3: 1989-1999
Burundi	burundi	1: 1993	Niger	niger	2: 1993-1995
Cameroon	cameroon	2: 1992-1997	Nigeria	nigeria	2: 1999-2003
Cape Verde	capverde1	1: 1991	Sao Tome et Principe	saotome	4: 1991-2002
	capverde2	2: 1992-2001	Senegal	senegal1	2: 1983-1988
Chad	chad	1: 1997		senegal2	1: 1993
Comoros	comoros	1: 1992		senegal3	1: 1998
Congo	congo	1: 1993		senegal4	1: 2001
Cote d'Ivoire	codivoir	1: 1990	Seychelles	seychell	3: 1992-2002
Djibouti	djibouti	2: 1992-1997	Sierra Leone	sleone1	1: 1996
Equatorial Guinea	eqguinea	2: 1993-1999		sleone2	1:2002
Gambia	gambia1	3: 1966-1977	South Africa	soafrica	2: 1994-1999
	gambia2	3: 1982-1992	Tanzania	tanzania	2: 1995-2000
	gambia3	1: 1997	Zambia	zambia	3: 1991-2001
Ghana	ghana	3: 1992-2000	Zimbabwe	zimbabw1	1: 1980
Guinea	guinea	2: 1995-2002		zimbabw2	1: 1985
Guinea-Bissau	gbissau	1: 1994		zimbabw3	2: 1990-1995
Kenya	kenya	3: 1992-2002			
Lesotho	lesotho1	1: 1993	<i>Countries</i>	<i>N = 37</i>	
	lesotho2	1: 1998	<i>Electoral Systems</i>	<i>N = 55</i>	
	lesotho3	1: 2002	<i>Number of Elections</i>	<i>N = 99</i>	
Liberia	liberia	1: 1997			

Electoral Institutions. There is now wide consensus that *District Magnitude* is the critical institutional variable that shapes the structure of party systems. Because countries with proportional representation formulas for converting votes into seats have multiple districts of varying size, I follow Lijphart (1994) and utilise average district magnitude as the summary measure for district magnitude. Also, because of the potential curvilinear relationship between

district magnitude and the number of parties (Ordeshook and Shvetsova 1994, 106-107), the natural log of district magnitude is used in the data analysis.⁹

The *Proximity of Legislative and Presidential Elections* is also an important institutional variable that shapes the structure of party systems. I utilise Cox's (1997, 209-13) formula to operationalise this variable. Cox extends the insights of the comparative literature on the reductive effects of presidential elections on the number of parties (Shugart and Carey 1992) with a more refined interval measure of the degree of proximity between legislative and elections, instead of the standard nominal measure of the two elections as concurrent or separate. Proximity is a matter of degree and ranges from maximal proximity (concurrent elections) to zero proximity when legislative elections are held at the presidential mid-term. Between these extremes, as proximity increases, presidential elections tend to reduce the number of electoral and legislative parties. The magnitude of this effect depends on the degree of fractionalisation of presidential elections as measured by the effective number of presidential candidates (Cox 1997, 211-13). I, therefore, also examine the interaction of the proximity of presidential and legislative elections with the effective number of presidential candidates, *Proximity of Presidential and Legislative Elections X Effective Number of Presidential Candidates*.

Constructed Ethnopolitical Cleavages: Fragmentation and Concentration.

I use two indices to operationalise the two dimensions of constructed ethnopolitical cleavages, fragmentation and concentration. The *Ethnopolitical Group Fragmentation* index is based on the population share of each ethnopolitical group or sub-group. As the illustrative examples in Tables 1-3 show, most African countries have different fragmentation scores derived from these population shares, depending on which of the three levels of inclusiveness is used to calculate the index. For some countries, these differences will range from very low to very high fragmentation. A strict application of constructivist logic might require calculating fragmentation at the level having greatest relevance at the time of a given election, but that would be almost impossible to do and would increase the danger of endogeneity. Therefore, I use the index of total fragmentation in our analysis. This index *combines all three levels of inclusiveness by including all undivided top and middle level groups and all lowest level groups*. In other words, total fragmentation includes all groups that are potentially politically relevant at the national level. I thus relate the greatest possible nationally relevant ethnopolitical fragmentation as identified in our dataset to variations in the structure of the party system, which makes theoretical

⁹For other measures of district magnitude, see Taagepera and Shugart 1989, 126-141, 264-269.

sense since parties can appeal to groups at any of the three levels of inclusiveness.

Table 5. Variable Description and Operationalisation

<i>Variable Description</i>	<i>Operationalisation</i>
Effective Number of Electoral Parties	$1/\sum v_i^2$, where v_i is party i 's vote share
Effective Number of Legislative Parties	$1/\sum s_i^2$, where s_i is party i 's seat share
District Magnitude	The log of the average district magnitude.
Proximity of Presidential and Legislative Elections	$\text{PROXIMITY} = 2 * \left \frac{L_t - P_{t-1}}{P_{t+1} - P_{t-1}} - \frac{1}{2} \right $ <p>where L_t is the legislative election, P_{t-1} is the previous presidential election, and $(P_{t-1} - P_{t+1})$ is the presidential term (Cox 1997, 210)</p>
Effective Number of Presidential Candidates	$1/\sum p_i^2$, where p_i is the presidential candidate p 's vote share
Ethnopolitical Group Fragmentation Index	$1/\sum g_i^2$, where g_i is the ethnopolitical group g 's share of the country's population
Ethnopolitical Group Concentration Index	$\sum (g_i * c_i)$, where g_i is an ethnopolitical group's population share and c_i is its concentration code (0=widely dispersed, 1=primarily urban or minority in one region, 2=majority in one region, 3=concentrated in one region).

The *Ethnopolitical Group Concentration* index is based on concentration codes adapted from the Minorities at Risk (Phase III) dataset: 0 = widely dispersed, 1 = primarily urban or minority in one region, 2 = majority in one region, dispersed in others, and 3 = concentrated in one region (Gurr 1993). The index for each group is calculated by multiplying its concentration code by its share of the ethnopolitically relevant population in the country, with the results for all groups summed to obtain the ethnopolitical group concentration score for the country. Because I wish to examine whether fragmentation and concentration have independent or joint effects on the number of parties, I include an interaction term reflecting their product in the analysis, *Ethnopolitical Group Fragmentation X Ethnopolitical Group Concentration*. Table 5 displays the information on the variables and their operationalisation.

3.2 Model Specification

I employ OLS regression to test eight specifications, four each for Effective Number of Electoral Parties and Effective Number of Legislative Parties.

Model 1 is an institutional specification that includes variables measuring legislative electoral institutions (District Magnitude) and two aspects of presidential elections, the Proximity of Presidential and Legislative Elections and the interaction between the Proximity of Presidential and Legislative Elections and the Effective Number of Presidential Candidates. Model 2 is a sociological specification that tests for the independent effects of Ethnopolitical Group Fragmentation and Ethnopolitical Group Concentration as well as their interactive effects (Ethnopolitical Group Fragmentation X Ethnopolitical Group Concentration). Model 3 is an additive specification in which all six variables in the previous two models are entered in the equation. Model 4 is an additive/interactive specification and hence a fully specified model. It includes five variables in Model 3 but replaces the interaction of the two measures of ethnopolitical cleavages in that model with an interaction term reflecting the product of district magnitude and the two measures of ethnopolitical cleavages (District Magnitude X Ethnopolitical Group Fragmentation X Ethnopolitical Group Concentration).¹⁰

4. Results

Tables 6 and 7 display the results of the OLS regression for the Effective Number of Electoral Parties (ENEP) and the Effective Number of Legislative Parties (ENLP), respectively. The results generally confirm theoretical expectation about the independent and joint effects of electoral institutions and ethnopolitical cleavages variations in the structure of party systems in African democracies. All four models for each dependent variable are statistically significant and the independent variables are correctly signed. The institutional model is statistically significant but the coefficient is unimpressive in accounting for only 15% percent of the variance in ENEP and slightly more impressive in accounting for 22% of the variance in ENLP. In the sociological Model 2, however, ethnopolitical cleavages explain 30% of the variance in ENEP and 40% of the variance in ENLP, an increase of 15% and 18%, respectively, over the institutional model. The additive and interactive model account for progressively increasing amount of variance in ENEP, 39% and 42 %, respectively. The additive model accounts for 58% of variance in ENLP, while the interactive model accounts for a slightly lesser amount of variance at 55% in ENLP. Both the additive and interactive model, however, reflects the continued mediating effects of ethnopolitical cleavages.

¹⁰See Jaccard, Turrisi and Wan (1990, especially 40-42) for the motivating logic for the three-way interaction of independent variables.

Table 6. *Determinants of Effective Number of Electoral Parties*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
Average District Magnitude (Logged)	.35 (.64)		1.00 (.71)	-2.42* (.1.02)
Proximity of Presidential and Legislative Elections	-4.52** (1.58)		-3.35** (1.23)	-2.46* (1.05)
Proximity of Presidential and Legislative Elections X Effective Number of Presidential Candidates	1.54** (.55)		1.13** (.35)	1.08** (.38)
Ethnopolitical Group Fragmentation		-.09* (.04)	-.10* (.04)	-.04* (.02)
Ethnopolitical Group Concentration		.20 (.39)	-.06 (.50)	.62* (.34)
Ethnopolitical Group Fragmentation X Ethnopolitical Group Concentration		.06* (.02)	.06* (.02)	
District Magnitude X Ethnopolitical Group Fragmentation X Ethnopolitical Group Concentration				.05*** (.01)
Constant	3.62*** (.86)	2.69*** (.26)	3.00*** (.69)	3.28*** (.77)
R ²	.15	.30	.39	.42
F	2.92*	3.88**	3.63**	3.03**
N	55	55	55	55

Notes: Entries are standardised coefficients. Numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors.
* $\leq .05$; ** $\leq .01$; *** $\leq .001$

Overall, these results confirm the importance of ethnopolitical cleavages in structuring the strategic coordination among voters and candidates and in mediating the effects of electoral institutions on the structure of party systems in Africa's emerging democracies. Examination of the effects of individual clusters of variables provides additional confirmation. Models 2 and 3 confirm the importance of ethnopolitical cleavages in shaping the structure of party systems, both independently and interactively. Ethnopolitical fragmentation independently reduces the number of electoral and legislative parties in both models.¹¹

¹¹I ran a separate equation without the interaction term to confirm the independent effects of ethnopolitical fragmentation. I do not report the results to save space.

Table 7. *Determinants of Effective Number of Legislative Parties*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
District Magnitude (Logged)	.67 (.42)		.31 (.18)	-.96* (.52)
Proximity of Presidential and Legislative Elections	-2.77*** (.73)		-2.01*** (.47)	-1.53** (.49)
Proximity of Presidential and Legislative Elections X Effective Number of Presidential Candidates	.96*** (.24)		.70*** (.15)	.67*** (.18)
Ethnopolitical Group Fragmentation		-.05* (.03)	-.06** (.02)	-.02* (.01)
Ethnopolitical Group Concentration		.10 (.19)	-.10 (.20)	.34* (.18)
Ethnopolitical Group Fragmentation X Ethnopolitical Group Concentration		.03* (.01)	.04*** (.01)	
District Magnitude X Ethnopolitical Group Fragmentation X Ethnopolitical Group Concentration				.03** (.01)
Constant	2.27*** (.37)	1.82*** (.20)	1.86*** (.29)	2.00*** (.33)
R ²	.22	.40	.58	.55
F	6.09***	4.84**	10.67***	6.33***
N	55	55	55	55

Notes: Entries are standardised coefficients. Numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors.

* $\leq .05$; ** $\leq .01$; *** $\leq .001$

This reductive effect, which stems from the distinctive morphology of African ethnopolitical groups noted above, suggests that an increased number of group cleavages encourages candidates to forge inter-group alliances to improve on their electoral gains. Such alliances, while improving the prospect of group cooperation, also tend to reduce the number of electoral and legislative parties. Ethnopolitical concentration, however, counteracts this reductive effect of fragmentation. For example, when group concentration is high at 2.47, group fragmentation tends to *increase* the effective number of electoral parties by .04 and the effective number of legislative parties by .02. Correspondingly, when group concentration is low at .57, group fragmentation tends to *reduce* the effective number of electoral parties by -.06 and the effective number of legislative seats by -.01.¹² This counteracting influence of ethnopolitical

¹²I derived these conditional effects of fragmentation on the number of electoral and legislative parties by entering the value of one standard deviation of the concentration index

concentration on ethnopolitical fragmentation remains even with the addition of institutional variables in Model 3.

These important results can be explained by the role of group concentration in reducing the transaction costs of forging and sustaining group solidarity. Scholars of social movements (Tarrow 1994) have found, for instance, that unmediated communication of ideas, strategies and resources is crucial for reducing the collective action costs of group cohesion. The effectiveness of such communication derives from the face-to-face interaction in small groups that typically constitute the larger social movements as loosely linked “congeries of social networks” (Tarrow 1994, 22). African ethnopolitical groups are not social movements, but their morphologies are conceptually similar. As described above, the combinations of cleavages among and within groups that typically characterise African ethnopolitical groups diminish the effectiveness of strategic face-to-face interaction in forging groups that are sufficiently large and cohesive to sustain political parties of their own. Group concentration, however, helps to overcome this constraint. The physical proximity engendered by group concentration facilitates the strategic face-to-face interaction of small groups, which helps to solidify the otherwise loose links among the sub-groups. The associated affinity of place, moreover, helps to define the common interests of the emergent, spatially anchored larger group in electoral competition with similarly constructed groups. This process is the key to the interactive effect of ethnopolitical group fragmentation and concentration on increasing the number of electoral and legislative parties in Africa’s emerging democracies. And this effect occurs with or without the effect of electoral institutions.

The variables related to presidential elections consistently demonstrate the substantial effect of the Proximity of Presidential and Legislative Elections in reducing the number of electoral and legislative parties, reproducing in Africa the almost universal tendency of presidential regimes to constrict the structure of party systems. But, just as consistently, the interaction of proximity and the Effective Number of Presidential Candidates counters this effect, indicating, for the reasons detailed above, the importance of ethnopolitical cleavages in shaping strategic entry as well as voter behaviour in presidential elections (Cox 1997: 211).

District magnitude, widely acknowledged as the most important institutional variable that shapes the structure of party systems, has no independent effect on the structure of electoral party systems (Models 1 and 3 in Table 6). This unexpected result may reflect the workings of weakly institutionalised electoral

above and below the mean value into an equation to obtain the additive and multiplicative coefficients.

systems, but it also indicates the effect of context. The two, of course, are not mutually exclusive. District magnitude is a hard constraint to which political actors must strategically adjust. In emerging democracies, however, political actors' limited knowledge and understanding of institutional incentives and the salience of ethnopolitical cleavages as alternative incentive structures vitiate the expected strategic consequences of district magnitude, but without totally removing its mechanical effects. In other words, candidates and voters in emerging democracies rely on familiar cues of ethnopolitical affiliations for cost-effective coordination of electoral strategies, but district magnitude may still mechanically exert a moderating influence. This is why I test for the joint effects of institutional and contextual variables (Models 3-4). This test shows that district magnitude does have a significant effect, but only in interactive combinations with ethnopolitical cleavages. In the additive Model 3, for instance, district magnitude has no independent effect on the number of electoral and legislative parties. But in the fully specified Model 4, which includes an interaction term measuring the product of district magnitude and the two ethnopolitical cleavage measures, district magnitude substantially reduces the number of electoral and legislative parties.¹³

Large district magnitudes tend to reduce the number of parties if ethnopolitical fragmentation is high and ethnopolitical concentration is low, as exemplified by South Africa, but they tend to increase the number of parties if both fragmentation and concentration are high, as exemplified by Benin. In South Africa, ethnopolitical groups are highly fragmented (fragmentation index = 7.89) due to substantial cleavages among the nine groups that comprise the majority of African population as well as among the English-speakers and the Afrikaners that comprise the White population. They are also spatially dispersed (concentration index = 1.6). However, the continued strategic importance of race as a cost-effective basis of electoral mobilisation diminishes the political significance of intra-group cleavages among African voters, while White voters typically tend to divide their votes among several smaller parties. As a result, 2.2 is the average effective number for both electoral parties and legislative parties in South Africa over two elections, even though the average district magnitude is 40 seats and the allocation rule is the highly proportional Largest-Remainder Droop formula.

¹³A caveat is in order here. I used the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and the Bayes Criterion to determine the superiority of the three-way interaction between district magnitude, ethnopolitical fragmentation and ethnopolitical concentration over the two-way interaction between district magnitude and each of the two ethnopolitical cleavage measures. This test, however, produced ambiguous results, even though the same test used in the analysis based on a different dataset determined the superiority of the three-way interaction model (Mozaffar, Scarritt and Galaich 2003). I don't have an explanation for this discrepancy, which I will resolve when I revise the paper.

In Benin, ethnopolitical groups are only slightly less fragmented than in South Africa (fragmentation index = 7.30), but they are also more geographically concentrated, principally in the administrative provinces that form the electoral districts (concentration index = 3.0). Combined with an average district magnitude of 11 seats and with the highly proportional Largest-Remainder Hare formula as the allocation rule, this concentration has fostered correspondingly fragmented party systems, with the average effective numbers of electoral and legislative parties at 11.85 and 7.0, respectively.

Finally, even moderate levels of geographical concentration of ethnopolitical groups tends to offset the expected constraining effects of ethnopolitical fragmentation and small district magnitudes on the number of parties, as exemplified by Kenya and Malawi. In both countries, seats are allocated by plurality formula in single member districts. But in Kenya, which has a fragmentation index of 9.5 and a concentration index of 2.3, the average effective numbers of electoral and legislative parties are 3.6 and 2.7, respectively. In Malawi, which has a fragmentation index of 5.76 and a concentration index of 2.77, the effective numbers of electoral and legislative parties are 2.7 and 2.6, respectively.

The influence of district magnitude on the structure of party systems in Africa's emerging democracies thus reflects a complex pattern of interaction with ethnopolitical cleavages. Large district magnitudes tend to reinforce the reductive effect of highly fragmented and spatially dispersed ethnopolitical groups on the number of parties. Large district magnitudes tend to reinforce the expansive effect of spatially concentrated but otherwise fragmented ethnopolitical groups on the number of parties. Small district magnitudes tend to reduce the number of parties when ethnopolitical groups are fragmented, but tend to increase them when ethnopolitical groups are spatially concentrated.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The results of the preceding data analysis demonstrate that both institutions and context matter, but not reflexively. They matter strategically and contingently. Hence, they stress the need for contextually sensitive analysis that pays systematic attention to how social structural variations combine with institutional variations to produce varied political outcomes. These results also demonstrate that understanding the role of ethnopolitical cleavages in shaping electoral outcomes requires attention (1) to patterns of ethnopolitical fragmentation as well as to patterns of ethnopolitical concentration and (2) to the interaction between variations in these patterns and variations in electoral institutions governing both legislative and presidential elections. Attention to

patterns of both ethno-political fragmentation and concentration draws attention to social structural variations that has important implications for how ethno-political cleavages facilitate strategic coordination between voters and candidates over votes and seats. For instance, the two sources of ethno-political cleavages independently produce opposite effects, with fragmentation restricting and concentration expanding party systems; interactively they tend to expand party systems.

Ethno-political cleavages produce these effects independently of electoral institutions (Model 2) as well as in additive (Model 3) and interactive (Models 4 and 5) combinations with them. In the fully specified Model 4, moreover, they substantially improve both the magnitude and the significance of the effect of electoral institutions for legislative elections. But they also influence the effect of electoral institutions on presidential elections because of the interaction of the effective numbers of presidential candidates and the proximity of presidential and legislative elections. The proximity of these two elections alone tends to reduce the effective number of electoral and legislative parties. But the interaction of proximity with the effective number of presidential candidates, which partly reflects the underlying importance of ethno-political cleavages in defining the group interests presidential candidates seek to represent, tends to increase the effective number of electoral and legislative parties.

The role of ethno-political cleavages in mediating the effects of electoral institutions on political outcomes has important implications for the analysis and understanding of new democratic institutions in ethnically plural societies. It implies the need for a contextually sensitive approach that requires prior specification not only of the politically relevant ethnic groups but also of the bases of intra-group similarity *and* differences, inter-group differentiation and the resulting patterns of fragmentation and concentration. Central to this specification is the distinction, elaborated elsewhere (Mozaffar 2001), between a multi-ethnic society (typically comprised of a large number of roughly equal groups) and a deeply divided society (typically comprised of small number of highly cohesive and sharply polarised groups). Institutional solutions such as multi-ethnic coalitions, affirmative action policies and plurality formulas with single-member districts are likely to be appropriate for a multi-ethnic society, while institutional solutions such as power sharing, federalism and proportional representation formulas are likely to be more appropriate for a deeply-divided society. To complicate matters, the two types of ethnically plural societies are not rigid, but quite malleable. Multi-ethnic societies can and do become deeply-divided societies, a precondition for violent conflict, while deeply-divided societies can and do become multi-ethnic societies, the preferred outcome of negotiated settlements of violent ethnic conflicts. The analytical challenge here is to develop appropriate measures of ethno-political fragmentation that can

usefully distinguish between a multi-ethnic and a deeply divided society. The dataset on ethnopolitical groups I utilised in this paper meets this challenge by providing three levels of inclusiveness for ethnopolitical groups. It shows that twelve African countries have been, or have the potential of becoming, deeply-divided societies because they have national dichotomous national cleavages: Burundi, Benin, Comoros, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. Of these, only Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti and Rwanda are permanently deeply-divided societies. The others are typically multi-ethnic societies because they have politically significant lower level cleavages that produce politically salient intra-group cleavages.

Finally, a context sensitive analysis as presented in this paper helps to directly confront the highly problematic notion that that ethnic heterogeneity is antithetical to democracy and democratic consolidation in Africa. Claims of such antipathy typically posit a reflexive relationship between ethnicity and democracy that is grossly misconstrued, based on the fundamentally flawed primordialist conception of ethnicity, and reflects an odious one-dimensional view of ethnic identities. Democratic stability is typically threatened when ethnopolitical cleavages reflect the configuration of deeply divided societies in which two internally cohesive, sharply polarised and spatially mixed groups are implacably arrayed against each other, as exemplified most brutally in contemporary Africa by Rwanda and Burundi.¹⁴ Ethnopolitical cleavages in the other 38 African countries manifest a predominantly multiethnic configuration engendered by the combination of salient inter-group and intra-group cleavages. Within these dominant multiethnic configurations, therefore, variations in the incidence and interaction of ethnopolitical fragmentation and concentration, and in the relationship of these two cleavage dimensions to electoral institutions, offer partial but crucial insights into, as well as reasons for cautious optimism about, the relationship between ethnopolitical diversity and the prospective stability of Africa's emerging democracies.

¹⁴But Comoros and Djibouti with similar ethnopolitical configurations have not experienced similar brutality or violence.

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