The Strategy of Dominant-Party Politics: Electoral Institutions and Election Outcomes in Africa

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Abstract: The Strategy of Dominant Party Politics: Electoral Institutions and Election Outcomes in Africa

Politics in many African countries today is defined by simultaneous differences and similarities. What we mean by difference is that the rules under which elections are conducted are different across countries. Some countries, Botswana and Zimbabwe, conduct elections under first-past-the-post plurality systems while others, like Namibia and Burkina Faso use list PR systems. In terms of similarities across countries, despite the variety of electoral rules employed, election outcomes in the above mentioned African nations are quite similar. Specifically, almost all legislative elections in Africa result in some form of dominant party systems, and this is true for those where dominance is sustained by authoritarian politics as well as those where transitions to democracy have occurred. While a number of explanations for this phenomenon exist in the literature, we take a step back and examine the strategies that governing parties use to maintain their electoral dominance. We accomplish this by using data from available Afro Barometer surveys and mapping how countries are different in terms of the groups that support their dominant parties.

In recent years, political scientists have devoted an increasing amount of attention to politics in Africa, and this growing attention has involved efforts to collect, analyze, and make available both aggregate and survey data on elections and electoral institutions. Many aspects of African politics have been examined, and, to be sure, we know more about electoral politics in Africa today than at any time in the past. Nonetheless, there is still one important problem in African electoral politics that, while discussed in the literature, remains without a satisfactory explanation. The reference here is to why legislative elections in Africa, whether democratic or semi-authoritarian, more often than not produce party systems of the dominant or predominant variety.[1]

Table **1** contains data on recent elections in a cross-section of African nations.[2] As the data show, the nations of Africa employ a distinct variety of electoral rules in their respective legislative elections. This variety includes nations like Botswana, Malawi, and Cameroon, which employ different types of plurality rules, the first two being single-member district plurality systems and Cameroon employing multi-member district plurality rule. It also includes countries which employ majority formulas (Mali), a variety of proportional representation formulas (Burkina Faso and Namibia), and countries which conduct elections under some mixed-member formula (Senegal and Lesotho in 2002). What is interesting about the variety of electoral rules employed in Africa is not only that they do not quite operate in the expected Duvergerian fashion with respect to the effective number of electoral and parliamentary parties they produce but

[1] On the difference, see Sartori (1976).
[2] The countries in the table were selected because they represent a cross-section of the different types of electoral systems that are employed in Africa. In other words, they have been selected for the purposes of illustration only and are not meant to represent a randomly drawn sample of cases.

also that, with respect to aggregate outcomes, they tend to produce similar party-system patterns across the various nations of the continent.[3]

The two narrow columns in the middle of Table **1** contain measures of the Effective Number of Electoral Parties (ENEP) and the Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties (ENPP), and while they appear to involve lower ENP values in the countries employing SMD plurality rules, these differences are not nearly as significant as they are in the advanced democratic countries. Specifically, using data provided in Mozaffar, Scarritt, and Galaich (2003), we calculated the average ENP values for SMD plurality systems and for those countries using some form of PR. Initial calculations show that the values for the PR countries were substantially higher,[4] but a closer inspection of the data revealed that these results were being driven by a single outlier, Benin, which registered very high values on its effective number of parties indicators.[5] Consequently, when Benin was eliminated and the averages recalculated, the results were nearly identical, where SMD Plurality systems had values of 2.49 and 1.96 (ENEP and ENPP respectively) and the PR systems had values of 2.51 and 2.06.[6]

This is not unexpected given that election outcomes in the countries presented in Table **1** resulted most often in single-party dominant systems. In the last column of the table, the largest party is listed along with the percentages of votes and seats it obtained in the reported elections. As the data show, single party dominance is the prevailing

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[3] The former refers to the numbers of parties (electoral and parliamentary) while the latter refers to the fact that most party systems are of the dominant/predominant variety. On the effective number of parties, see Laakso and Taagepera (1979). On why electoral institutions do not work in Africa as they do in the advanced electoral democracies, see Golder and Wantchekon (2004) and Mozaffar (2003).

[4] The values for the PR nations were 4.05 and 2.93 and, for the SMD Plurality nations, 2.49 and 1.96 respectively for the Effective Number of Electoral Parties and the Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties.

[5] Comoros was also an outlier for countries employing SMD Plurality rules with an ENEP of 14.9 and an ENPP of 5.28. This outlier was not included in our calculations.

[6] These results concur with the data presented and conclusions offered in Golder and Wantchekon (2004).

pattern is these countries, and this is true regardless of whether single-party dominance is measured in terms of vote or seat shares. There are exceptions to be sure,[7] but what makes this pattern interesting is that it exists in spite of the fact that the nations of Africa employed different electoral formulas.

While there is a debate about the order of causality between electoral rules and party systems, it is generally agreed that SMD plurality rules are associated with two large parties while rules that involve some version of PR tend toward multiple electoral and parliamentary parties. For the nations that employ SMD plurality rules in Table **1**, we notice that many do tend toward two parties when measured as the Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties. Nigeria and Zimbabwe most closely approximate this pattern, but a closer examination of the data reveals that this measure is misleading because both of these countries have large, dominant parties that obtained over 50% of the votes and controlled over 60% of the seats in recent elections. This is even more true of Botswana, which has one very strong dominant party and deviated from the pattern of having two effective parties. The other two SMD plurality countries, Malawi and Zambia, tended to have two large vote getters and, as a result, had somewhat weaker dominant party systems, but they also deviated from the pattern of their legislative elections producing two effective parties.

Similarly confounding results characterize outcomes in countries that employed some form of PR, either singularly or in a mixed system format. While PR rules are generally kinder to smaller parties, the four countries in the table that employed somemm

[7] Perhaps the most notable is the 2001 election in Zambia where the largest party, the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy, received only 28% of the vote but 46% of the seats. While the vote share is lower than we typically associate with a dominant party system, the seat share is comparable to what we witness in the predominant party, minority government systems of Scandinavia.

form of PR, Burkina Faso, Namibia, Senegal, and Lesotho in 2002 all had single-party dominant systems. This is particularly true of Namibia which has been dominated by the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) and Senegal which was dominated by the SOPI Coalition in 2001 and the Socialist Party prior to that. In both cases, these dominant parties controlled over 70% of parliamentary seats. There have been some changes as the Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP) in Burkina Faso lost a substantial amount of support between the 1997 and 2002 legislative elections, but the CDP still remains that country's dominant political party. Moreover, while the mixed system in Lesotho represented a change of rules, the Lesotho Congress for Democracy still remained the nation's dominant party.

The question these results raise is how different electoral rules produce relatively similar patterns of single party dominance in the nations of Africa. To be sure, many African nations had authoritarian pasts, and it is well known that authoritarian politics is often associated with the political dominance of a single political party. In contrast to this, there are also a few African nations—Botswana, Gambia, and Mauritius in particular—that have practiced democracy for some time,[8] but their legislative elections have nonetheless produced single-party dominant systems, similar to what we in those African third-wave democracies which had more authoritarian pasts.[9] A number of scholars have attempted to answer this question and have focused on a variety of factors, historic, cultural, and institutional. We address this issue in this paper, but deal with this important question in a way that has not been done in the past.

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[8] These three nations have conducted generally democratic elections since 1965. Some like Golder and Wantchekon (2004) do not agree that Botswana and Gambia are democracies. This is because their definition requires the election to produce an alternation in power. By this definition, long-standing democracies like Japan would no longer qualify as such for long period of time.

[9] For a discussion of third-wave democracies, see Huntington (1991).

Specifically, we show that different political and institutional conditions require different strategies on the part of dominant political elites in order to maintain their exalted electoral statuses in legislative elections.[10] This means that the bases of dominant party support should vary depending on the political and institutional conditions that prevail in that country, and we explore these potential differences using available data in the Afro Barometer surveys.[11] To accomplish this, we first review explanations for dominant party politics in Africa, revealing how they inadequately address the possibility that the sources of single party dominance may be different across the nations of the continent. We also use the existing literature to generate a set of hypotheses about how different electoral rules and political conditions lead us to expect the support bases for Africa's dominant parties to be different. After this, we then begin to map how the sources of single party dominance are indeed different across the different nations. This mapping will begin with the extent to which voters in the countries we examine are supporters of a political party, after which we then categorize nations by electoral institutions and politically relevant groups. We then map the different bases of dominant-party support to determine if party support patterns across each nation's regions, ethno-linguistic groups, and other socio-economic divisions correspond to our expectations.

Single Party Dominance in Africa: Explanations

[10] By political conditions, we are referring to the characteristics of groups in the country that render them politically salient, and, by institutional conditions, we are referring to the type of electoral rules used for legislative elections.

[11] The surveys we use in this paper are as follows: Botswana (1999), Cape Verde (2002), Ghana (1999 and 2002), Lesotho (2000), Malawi (2000), Mali (2001), Mozambique (2002), Namibia (2000 and 2001), Nigeria (2000 and 2001), Tanzania (2001), Uganda (2000 and 2002), Zambia (1999), and Zimbabwe (1999). We are grateful to those who made these data available and note that all interpretations of the data are our own.

Most analyses of electoral politics in Africa have proceeded from the notion that a certain set of factors led to single-party dominance in the nations of that continent. In earlier analyses of single-party dominance,[12] the emphasis was on cultural and historical factors, especially as they relate to the level of a nation's political development,[13] while, in the more recent multi-party elections period, the emphasis has been on political and institutional factors. Specifically, recent treatments have focused on how electoral institutions and ethno-linguistic and other socio-economic divisions within in a country are exploited by the ruling government elites to maintain their dominant electoral statuses. Moreover, in recent analyses, scholars have typically explored the operation of political and institutional factors in two different ways. They have either looked at such factors through case work, that is, by examining the results of single elections in specific countries,[14] or they have defined measures of these factors, constructing large-N aggregate data sets and then estimated the impact of the factors they deemed important.[15]

To be sure, we have learned much from these two types of studies, but there are certain limitations with existing work that behooves us to proceed in a different direction. In the single-election, single-country studies, we have learned about why election outcomes turned out the way they did in selected cases. For example, we learned that it was the manner in which Lesotho's SMD plurality system advantaged the Lesotho Congress of Democrats (LCD) that led it to obtaining 79 of 80 available legislative seats. Indeed, compared to the parties of the opposition, the LCD possessed a generally large

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[12] The reference here is to the early post- independence years.
[13] See e.g., Almond and Coleman (1960) and LaPalombara and Weiner (1966).
[14] See e.g., Southall and Fox (1999) on the 1998 legislative election in Lesotho, and the essays in Cowen and Laakso (2002). See Mozaffar (1997) for a comparative discussion of election system choice in Senegal.
[15] The best examples of this kind of study is found in Mozaffar (2002) and Mozaffar, Scaritt, and Galaich (2003).

support base across the all of the nation's regions, allowing it to win against a fragmented opposition in virtually of the nation's single-member districts.[16] In the case of the 1995 legislative election in Tanzania, we see a different set of factors operating. Specifically, the overwhelming victory for the ruling CCM Party (Chama Cha Mapinduzi) was explained by the advantages that party enjoyed by virtue of its having been in the governing position going into the election.[17]

While these explanations are well done and offer insight into why the results of these two contests turned out the way they did, they are not generalizable across the entire set of elections that we need to understand if we are to explain why elections in Africa produce single-party dominance. This is not a criticism of the work provided by the authors of these and similar studies, because they were not intended to show how the results of a specific election explain the phenomenon of single-party dominance across the African cases in which it exists. This may suggest that the large-N, aggregate data analysis of Mozaffar et. al. (2003) offers a better, more general explanation for single-party dominance in Africa. To be sure, the Mozaffar et. al. (2003) analysis is general and offers many insights—insights that will guide the analyses we offer below, but it alone does not adequately answer the question of whether or not dominant party politics is the same across the nations of the African continent.

There are essentially two reasons for this, and the first, to be completely fair, concerns the fact that this research was not designed to address the question as we have posed it here, that is, whether or not the sources of single party dominance are the same across the nations of Africa. Mozaffar et. al. (2003) use aggregate data which tell us

[16] Again, see Southall and Fox (1999).
[17] See e.g., van Cranenburgh (1996).

about the political, institutional, and social characteristics of the nations they examine, but to determine if variation in these factors is related to different electoral strategies on the part of dominant parties requires additional data. Specifically, since different strategies should manifest themselves in different patterns of support across politically relevant groups, it is necessary that the aggregate data of the kind used in Mozaffar et. al. (2003) be combined with individual-level data like those found in the Afro Barometer surveys.

Another problem with the Mozaffar et. al. (2003) analysis concerns the dependent variable, the effective number of parties—both electoral and parliamentary. While the effective number of parties has become the standard way to calibrate the number of relevant political parties in a political system, it is not well suited to capturing single-party dominance in Africa. Consider the data presented in Table **1** and the discussion we provided above about the phenomenon of single-party dominance in Africa. While the Effective Number of Parties measure indicates the presence of a dominant party in some countries, it does not in others.[18] For example, the dominant party of Botswana (BDP) increased its seat share between the 1999 and 2002 legislative elections, but the ENPP measure suggested that the party system in Botswana moved closer to a two-party format.

Overall, these issues suggest that, to answer the question whether or not single-party dominance occurs similarly across the nations of Africa, we need to combine individual-level and aggregate data. This is because only with both levels of data will we be able to determine whether or not the bases of single-party dominance are the same or different across the party systems of Africa. A first step involves examining each

[18] See especially Bogaards (2004) for an in-depth discussion of this issue and alternative measures of single-party dominance.

country's electoral institutions to assess how they are related to the politically relevant groups in that country that are then used by dominant parties to maintain their electoral status. Mozaffar et. al. (2003) has argued that, for most African nations, support from no single group alone is sufficient to guarantee the electoral success of a dominant party. This means that group fragmentation alone "has no significant effect on the structure of party systems in Africa's emerging democracies,"[19] and that, to understand why dominant parties exist, we must also examine how countries are divided regionally and how electoral institutions aggregate politically relevant divisions.

In light of this, the persistence of dominant party systems in Africa can be understood only as the result of the individual and joint action of two variables, namely politically relevant groups and the country's electoral institutions. With respect to the former, what is important is not simply how large and fragmented groups are but also whether or not they exist in some concentrated form in a country. These characteristics will help dictate what a ruling party has to do to capture a level of support sufficient to allow it to maintain its status as dominant party. Consequently, these conditions are necessarily connected to how votes are aggregated and translated into seats through a nation's electoral institutions, and, in his discussion of the origin of the electoral rules used by the nations of Africa, Mozaffar (2004) has isolated five institutional patterns.[20]

The first two institutional patterns include countries that employ SMD plurality and those that employ some form of majority runoff. The second two institutional patterns include different versions of proportional representation, while the final institutional pattern includes countries with mixed systems. The important question for

[19] Mozaffar, et. al., (2003) p. 384.
[20] The discussion that follows is taken from Mozaffar (2004), pp. 420-426. See especially Table 24.1.

our purposes here is why these different institutional patterns exist. Specifically the question centers on the political significance of these five different institutional patterns, and the answer concerns the manner in which a country's politically relevant groups are defined and distributed. To achieve a majority of votes and seats sufficient to dominate a country's legislature, a party will devise an electoral strategy that depends on the size, fragmentation, and concentration characteristics of its country's politically relevant groups. It will also choose electoral institutions that best assist it in achieving a level of support among groups that helps it achieve and maintain its status as a country's dominant party.

The fact that the nations of Africa have employed a variety of electoral rules that can be defined in the five institutional patterns offered by Mozaffer (2004) tells us that each was put in place to deal with a specific set of characteristics that defined each country's politically relevant groups. In light of this, our expectation is not only that group characteristics should be similar for the countries that define the major patterns of electoral institutions that countries employ but also that the bases of support for dominant parties should also be different. We turn to this question first by mapping the countries of Africa in terms of basic party support patterns and then seeing if these basic patterns differ by type of election system in operation.

Party Support, Electoral Institutions, Opposition Strength

The data in Table **2** are taken from Afro Barometer surveys that were available for secondary analysis as of August, 2005. As seen from the table, these include surveys for seventeen elections in thirteen countries. The data reveal much diversity of party support

rates among the nations for which Afro Barometer surveys were available with the average party support rate in the seventeen surveys being 57%. The lowest party support rate was found in the 2000 Uganda election where only 24% of those polled indicated that they had a party they supported, while the highest was found in Malawi, where those supporting a party comprised nearly 81% of the sample. These are dramatic differences, and we wanted to see if they were related to the type of election system that was employed by the country.

While party support is a complicated phenomenon that is explained by a number of individual and institutional factors, our expectation is that party support rates should be generally higher in countries that employ some form of proportional representation rule.[21] Dividing the sample into nations that employ majority/plurality rules and those that use some form of PR and recalculating mean party support rates confirmed this. Average party support rates for the PR systems was nearly ten percentage points higher than those nations that used plurality/majority rules.[22] Moreover, as expected, for those countries where support rates were below 45%, none employed a proportional representation rule. On the other hand, a number of countries where support rates were high employed plurality/majority rules. This tells us that while party support is certainly connected to election institutions, it is also related to something else, namely the characteristics of politically relevant groups in the society.

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[21] This is because under PR rules, small electoral parties have a higher chance of achieving parliamentary representation than in SMD plurality systems, keeping supporters from abandoning their first choice as readily as they would.

[22] The average support rate for the PR countries was 64% while the average party support rate in the Plurality/Majority countries was 55%., but a difference of means test showed that the difference was not statistically significant. This was most likely due to the small number of cases (N=4) for the PR systems in the sample. When the difference of means test is recalculated using the same parameters but with a larger number of cases in simulated data, the difference is statistically significant.

In addition to differences in rates of party support, the nations in the table can also be distinguished in terms of the electoral strength of the political parties that oppose those that are in the governing position. To capture this difference, we calculated how much larger the governing party's support level was compared to its largest challenger.[23] These calculations produced three categories of countries with the first defining countries where opposition parties were fairly strong relative to their governing counterparts. This group includes Ghana where the governing party was 1.5 times larger than its largest challenger, Malawi where the ruling party was 1.9 times larger, and Botswana where the governing party is 2.0 times larger than the strongest challenger. On the other extreme, there were several countries where the governing party was substantially stronger than its largest challenger. These include Mozambique where the governing party had 17.8 times more support than its largest challenger, and Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia where governing parties enjoyed nearly ten times more support than their largest challengers.

With these data we can construct a classification of African countries that distinguishes them based on their overall levels of party support and the electoral strength of the largest opposition party. This classification scheme is presented in Figure **1**, and it includes only those countries where differences on the two dimensions were clearly different. In the upper left quadrant are Ghana, Malawi, and Botswana, countries where party support levels are high and the largest opposition party is strong relative to each nation's governing party. In the lower right quadrant are Uganda and Zambia, countries where party support levels are rather low and opposition strength relative to each nation's governing party is weak. On the off diagonal are three other countries. In the lower-left quadrant of the figure is Nigeria where party support is low but where the opposition is

[23] These calculations were made using data from the Afro Barometers.

relatively strong. In the upper-right quadrant are Tanzania and Mozambique where party support levels are relatively high but opposition strength is rather low.

With the exception of Mozambique, all countries in Figure **1** use SMD plurality rules in their respective legislative elections. This is important with respect to the strategies political parties follow to achieve electoral dominance. In SMD Plurality systems, for a political party to achieve electoral dominance it is necessary that it receive votes sufficient to have its respective candidates with a majority of districts. In a PR system, on the other hand, a political party must be sure that it is not only the largest vote getter but also that it support rate is sufficient to give it sufficient seats to be the dominant parliamentary party. While these differences in election institutions encourage somewhat different strategies to achieve electoral dominance, exactly what these differences are will depend on the electoral strength of the opposition and how politically relevant groups are characterized and distributed throughout a country.

Concerning the former, when an opposition is strong and represents a realistic governing alternative, the dominant party must maintain all the support it can get which means that it can ill afford to alienate large numbers of politically relevant groups, especially if they are well represented in the nation's population. This is a particularly acute problem when elections are held under SMD Plurality rules where electoral institutions encourage opposition groups to amalgamate into large unified opposition parties to avoid the Duvergerian problem and challenge large governing parties. With such cooperation, strong opposition candidates can become direct challengers to candidates from the dominant party, which makes it imperative that dominant parties go to great lengths not to alienate many politically relevant groups. Naturally, this problem

is directly proportional to the electoral strength and unification of the opposition. Electorally weaker opposition parties allow dominant parties to be somewhat more exclusive in their respective strategies in the sense that the loss of some small number politically relevant groups is not as problematic than when the opposition is electorally strong. While an electorally strong and unified opposition is a concern even when PR rules are used, it is somewhat less of a concern that in SMD Plurality systems. This is because, being kinder to smaller parties, PR systems can often keep oppositions more fragmented by encouraging smaller to keep putting up their own party lists and eschew electoral cooperation.

Given that the nations in Figure **1** are different on these party support and opposition strength characteristics, we would also expect that they will be different in terms of the nature of group support for their respective dominant parties. While the nations under consideration are not uniform in terms of how politically relevant groups are defined and distributed,[24] we still have certain expectations about how the above-defined differences will influence patterns of dominant party support. In nations with high levels of overall party support and strong oppositions, we would expect dominant party support to be more uniform across politically relevant groups, while as opposition strength and overall levels of party support decline, we will see stronger patterns with respect to the groups basis of support. Using data from the available Afro Barometer surveys mentioned above, we turn to this mapping in the next section. The Afro Barometer surveys allow us to produce such a dominant party support mapping because they all contain questions that allow us to divide respondents into groups distinguished by

[24] See e.g., Scarritt and Mozafer (1999) and Mozaffer, Scarritt, and Galaich (2003).

region or district of the country in which they live, ethno-linguistic characteristics, and party support.[25]

Dominant Party Support: Ethno-linguistic and Regional Characteristics

Our mapping of dominant party support in Africa begins with those countries where overall levels of party support were high and support for the opposition was also high, Botswana, Ghana and Malawi.[26] We see from the data in Table **3** that these three countries are different in terms of the level support each's dominant party received in the Afro Barometer samples we examined. Botswana's and Malawi's parties each were about ten percentage points stronger than was Ghana's which tells us that the electoral strategy followed by the former two was superior to that followed by Ghana. To distinguish the strategy followed by each party, we analyze more closely how the support characteristics of each can be distinguished in terms of the groups that support each country's dominant party and the regional/district distribution of governing party support.

We first examined the extent to which ethno-linguistic and regional differences explained support levels for each country's dominant party. This was accomplished by crosstabulating the regional and ethno-linguistic variables with the party support variable and then producing correlations and tests of statistical significance. Given that the ethno-linguistic and regional differences are essentially categorical variables, the lambda coefficient was used as the correlation coefficient while the chi square was used to

[25] There are certainly other ways to categorize respondents into politically relevant groups. Such categorizations include most notably religion, occupation, and gender. Because of their strong relationship to each other, this study focuses on ethno-linguistic divisions and regional or district differences.
[26] The average percentage of party supporters across the three countries was 71%. We defined an opposition as being electorally strong as long as the dominant party possessed no more than two times as many supporters in the Afro Barometer surveys.

determine statistical significance. In the third column of Table **3**, we see that region and ethno-linguistic group are statistically significant explanations for differences in support for dominant parties but that the level of association with respect to these categorical variables in generally weak. This is true for all three countries, but it was least true for Malawi where the lambda coefficients were highest.

While these measures tell us something about how these three countries are different with respect to the ethno-linguistic and regional basis of support for each's dominant party, they do not tell us if the dominant party in each country followed a different electoral strategy. To make this determination, different measures are necessary, and these are contained in the last two columns of the table. The first measure is what we refer to as the average deviation measure, which was created by subtracting the national support rate for each country's dominant party from the rate at which various ethno-linguistic and regional groups supported the dominant party. We see that Botswana and Ghana are similar in that there is more variation across regional groups than there is across each country's ethno-linguistic groups. Malawi, on the other hand, is different in that there was much substantial variation across both regional and ethno-linguistic groups.

These differences are interesting but they still do not tell us enough about the different electoral strategies dominant parties pursued. To determine just how different electoral strategies were, we need another measure. This measure is found in the last column of the table and involves determining whether the dominant parties under consideration here focused on a few regional or ethno-linguistic groups or sought electoral support more broadly. To develop such a measure, we first had to determine

whether a group's dominant party support rate was above or below the national support rate. Groups that were above the dominant party's national support rate were classified supporters and those below that rate were classified as non-supporters. We then took all support groups and non-support groups and calculated their average size in the sample. In other words, we averaged the sample proportions of all support and non-support groups, and produced these averages for both ethno-linguistic and regional groups. The results show that dominant parties in each of our three countries followed different electoral strategies.

The most notable contrast rests between Botswana and Ghana. In the case of the former, we see that dominant party supporters in that country tended to come from the more populous politically relevant groups. This is true for the country's ethno-linguistic groups, but it was even more notable for the country's regional groups. Specifically, while the Botswana Democratic Party tended to rely on somewhat larger ethno-linguistic groups, it was much stronger in the regions of the country that are more populous.[27] Data for Ghana, on the other hand, revealed a dominant party following a very different strategy. Specifically, the dominant party there tended to have the support of ethno-linguistic and regional groups that were smaller than those that support the opposition.[28] Non-supporter regional groups tended to be about twice a large as supporter groups, but non-supporter ethno-linguistic groups were more than seven times larger. These observations leave us with the conclusion that the strategy followed by the Botswana Democratic Party, one that relies on groups that are more populous in the country overall, is more electorally effective.

[27] An electoral strategy that relies on fewer but larger groups is referred to as a size strategy.
[28] An electoral strategy that relies on more but smaller groups is referred to as a quantity strategy.

What is interesting about Malawi, on the other hand, is that it is different from both Botswana and Ghana. It is different from Botswana in that the regional groups are nearly identical in terms of party supporters and non-supporters while, in terms of ethno-linguistic groups, supporters were far more represented in the country's larger groups. This is what we would expect because, in Malawi, the Chewa group is more than seven times larger than any other ethno-linguistic group, and it would be difficult to be a dominant party without support from a significant proportion of members of this group. In this sense, the United Democratic Front of Malawi followed a limited size strategy.

The remaining country in the lower portion of Table **3** is Nigeria which is different from the previous three countries because party support levels there are lower overall. This is witnessed in the fact that the nation's dominant party, the People's Democratic Party, received support from less than 25% of the survey's respondents, but it is also different in that, while Nigeria's opposition is categorized as being strong, it is the weakest of the four dominant parties in the two left quadrants of Figure **1**.[29] This suggests to us that the dominant party of Nigeria is under less pressure to build a strategy of electoral dominance than its counterparts in Botswana, Ghana, and Malawi. The data in the Table **3** indicate that ethno-linguistic and regional groups are statistically significant factors explaining party support, but they also tell us that these groups are only weakly correlated with differences in dominant party support levels. On the other measures that we created to map electoral strategies, we see in the data that there is less deviation in terms of dominant party support levels across Nigeria's ethno-linguistic and regional groups. This is also reflected in the fact that differences in the size of groups that dominant party supporters and non-supporters rely on are fairly close.

[29] The People's Democratic Party is nearly three times as large as the next largest opposition party.

These patterns lead us to conclude that perhaps lower overall party support levels and a somewhat weaker opposition mean that dominant parties can rest more solidly on such differences. In other words, lower levels of party support overall and a weaker opposition means that the dominant party has some advantages that do not require it to be as concerned as dominant parties in the other countries that we examined above to build a winning strategy. However, to examine this idea more thoroughly, we turn next to dominant parties in countries in countries where the opposition is clearly weak, and the data for this analysis are presented in Table **4**. This analysis begins with the two countries in the lower right hand quadrant of Figure **1**, namely countries with low levels of party support overall and weak oppositions.

Data on these two countries, Tanzania and Mozambique, are contained in the upper portion of Table **4** and reveal immediate differences and similarities with the countries already examined. Concerning the former, we notice that support for Tanzania's and Mozambique's dominant parties are the highest of any in our analysis. Support for the dominant party of Tanzania is nearly 2/3 of the sample and, for the Frelimo of Mozambique, nearly 60%. In spite of this dramatic difference, we notice that the relationship between ethno-linguistic and regional groups and support for these two countries' dominant parties is similar to that found in the other countries that have already been examined. Specifically, while ethno-linguistic and regional groups are related to differences in support for dominant parties in these two countries, the relationship is weak when measured in terms of correlation coefficients. As in the previous cases, the principal reason for this is the fact that both countries are highly fragmented in terms of politically relevant ethno-linguistic and regional groups.

These two countries are quite similar in terms of the extent to which regional groups vary from their respective national dominant party support rates, but they are quite different in terms of this variation across ethno-linguistic groups. Such ethno-linguistic group variation is much higher in Mozambique than it is in Tanzania. Moreover, the dominant parties of these two countries seem to have followed slightly different strategies in order to maintain their respective levels of electoral dominance. In Mozambique, the dominant party relies overall on ethno-linguistic and regional groups that are on average larger than those on which their opponents rely. Having said this, it is important to note that, while larger, support groups for Mozambique's dominant party are not substantially larger than groups which support the opposition, but this is not threatening to the governing party of Mozambique because it is significantly larger than the largest opposition challenger. The same is true for the dominant party of Tanzania, which is nearly ten times larger than its most significant challenger. Consequently, it is for these reasons that the party is not threatened by relying on generally smaller ethno-linguistic groups than its challengers.

Finally, what is immediately noticeable about the remaining two parties in the table is that, while dominant party systems, they are supported by much lower proportions of respondents in the available samples we have used here. Despite this difference, we see that ethno-linguistic and regional groups are statistically significant factors explaining differences dominant party support rates, but, like the other countries that have been examined, the correlations between groups and dominant party support are weak. We also notice from the data in Table **4** that group support rates for dominant parties vary much less from national support rates than the other countries examined thus

far. We also see that, for Uganda which has the lowest dominant party support rate of any country examined herein, the differences in average group size between dominant party supporters and non-supporters are negligible. This is not unexpected given the fact that the ruling party has nearly ten times more support than its largest challenger. In the case of Zambia, the situation is somewhat different given that the ethno-linguistic groups that support the dominant Movement for Multi-party Democracy are larger than those that support the opposition but that the regional groups supporting the dominant party are smaller than those that support the opposition. Again, given the dominance that the ruling party has over its largest challenger, this is not unexpected.

This paper has shown that ruling parties in Africa rely on different strategies to achieve their electoral dominance and that certain factors like electoral institutions and the characteristics of groups in the country help explain these differences. While this kind of mapping has not been provided in the existing literature, there are still a number of questions remain unanswered. These include the connection of other groups, like occupational and religious, to dominant party support which were not assessed in this paper. Also, a deeper explanation for why different countries rely on different groups for their electoral dominance is necessary as is an evaluation of the effectiveness of the different group strategies. While this paper's use of Afro Barometer data has provided an initial cut into these questions, much more remains to be done.

Table 1

Party Systems and Election Systems in Selected African Countries (Recent Elections)

Country/ Election Year	Election System	ENEP	ENPP	Dominant Party	Vote/Seat %
Botswana					
1999	FPTP, Plurality	2.7	1.4	Botswana Dem. Pty.	54%/68%
2002	FPTP, Plurality	2.8	1.6	Botswana Dem. Pty.	52%/77%
Burkina Faso					
1997	List, PR	3.6	1.8	CDP[1]	69%/87%
2002	List, PR	3.8	3.3	CDP[1]	50%/52%
Cameroon					
1997	MMD/Plurality	2.9	2.6	CPDM[2]	—/61%
2002	MMD/Plurality	3.3	2.2	CPDM[2]	___/83%
Lesotho					
1998	FPTP, Plurality	2.2	1.0	Lesotho Cong. Dem.	61%/98%
2002	MMP, PR	2.6	2.2	Lesotho Cong. Dem.	55%/65%
Malawi					
1994	SMD, Plurality	2.7	2.7	United Dem. Front	/48%
1999	SMD, Plurality	2.8	2.7	United Dem. Front	47%/48%
Mali					
1997	Majority	2.4	1.3		/87%
2002	Majority				/49%
Namibia					
1994	List, PR	1.7	1.7	SWAPO[3]	74%/74%
1999	List, PR	1.7	1.7	SWAPO[3]	76%/76%

Nigeria					
1999	SMD, Plurality	2.3	2.3	People's Dem. Pty.	56%/59%
2003	SMD, Plurality	2.6	2.2	People's Dem. Pty.	55%/62%
Senegal					
1998	Mixed	2.4	1.8	Socialist Party	50%/66%
2001	Mixed	3.2	2.1	SOPI Coalition	50%/74%
Tanzania					
1995	SMD, Plurality	2.2	1.5	CCU[4]	60%/81%
2000	SMD, Plurality			CCU[4]	___/91%
Zambia					
1996	SMD, Plurality	2.4	1.3	MMPD[5]	49%/52%
2001	SMD, Plurality	5.6	3.0	MMPD[5]	28%/46%
Zimbabwe					
2000	SMD, Plurality	2.2	2.0	ZANU-PF[6]	49%/52%
2005	SMD, Plurality	2.0	1.9	ZANU-PF[6]	60%/65%

1 Congress for Democracy and Progress
2 Cameroon People's Democratic Movement
3 South West Africa People's Organization
4
5 Movement for Multi-Party Democracy
6

Source: Calculated by the Authors from IFES.

Table 2

Party Supporters and Non-Supporters in Selected African Countries

Country	Survey Year	Percent Affiliated	Percent Not Affiliated
Botswana	1999	73.3%	16.8%
Cape Verde	2002	47.6%	47.8%
Ghana	1999	67.3%	32.7%
	2002	62.3%	32.7%
Lesotho	2000	51.3%	42.1%
Malawi	2000	80.9%	17.8%
Mali	2001	56.1%	42.3%
Mozambique	2002	59.5%	33.5%
Namibia	2000	71.0%	29.0%
	2001	77.3%	22.7%
Nigeria	2000	36.8%	63.2%
	2001	42.4%	53.9%
Tanzania	2001	79.2%	20.8%
Uganda	2000	24.3%	69.5%
	2002	48.0%	51.3%
Zambia	1999	36.4%	62.6%
Zimbabwe	1999	39.6%	55.7%

Source: Complied by the authors from the Afro Barometer Surveys.

Figure 1

Classification of African Party Systems by Party Support and Opposition Strength

		Opposition Strength	
		Strong	Weak
Party Support	High	Ghana Malawi Botswana	Tanzania Mozambique
	Low	Nigeria	Uganda Zambia

Table 3

Dominant Party Support in Countries with Strong Oppositions

	Dominant Party Support Level	Basis of Party Support Lambda	Chi^2	Average Deviation From National Support Rate*	Average Sample Size Political Groups** Supt.	~Supt.
Countries with High Overall Party Support Levels						
Botswana	49.3%					
Group		.031	p<.001	6.1%	15.6%	10.1%
Region		.012	p<.000	13.2%	22.3%	6.1%
Ghana	38.3%					
Group		.039	p<.000	8.4%	4.2%	30.9%
Region		.079	p<.000	13.1%	7.9%	14.5%
Malawi	46.1%					
Group		.116	p<.001	24.6%	26.2%	5.2%
Region		.143	p<.000	27.8%	6.6%	6.7%
Countries with Low Overall Party Support Levels						
Nigeria	23.6%					
Group		.061	p<.000	7.6%	9.6%	11.9%
Region		.029	p<.000	11.6%	2.2%	3.1%

* This is Calculated by subtracting the national support rate for the dominant party from the group or region support rate.

** This is calculated by taking the average size of groups (percentage of respondents in the sample) for those groups who are above and those who are below the national support rates.

Source: Compiled by the Authors from various Afro Barometers.

Table 4

Dominant Party Support in Countries with Weak Oppositions

	Dominant Party Support Level	Basis of Party Support Lambda	Chi^2	Average Deviation From National Support Rate*	Average Sample Size Political Groups** Supt.	~Supt.
Countries with High Overall Party Support Levels						
Tanzania	63.1%					
Group		.001	p<.000	6.1%	5.4%	12.8%
Region		.028	p<.000	8.2%	5.1%	5.2 %
Mozambique	58.8%					
Group		.017	p<.000	12.1%	7.9%	5.3 %
Region		.042	p<.000	8.8%	10.1%	8.5%
Countries with Low Overall Party Support Levels						
Uganda	19.6%					
Group		.020	p<.000	5.7%	7.7%	6.6%
Region		.026	p<.000	10.1%	3.2%	3.8%
Zambia	30.7					
Group		.017	p<.000	3.5%	15.2%	10.5%
Region		.017	p<.000	6.3%	7.9%	11.3%

* This is Calculated by subtracting the national support rate for the dominant party from the group or region support rate.

** This is calculated by taking the average size of groups (percentage of respondents in the sample) for those groups who are above and those who are below the national support rates.

Source: Compiled by the Authors from various Afro Barometers.

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