

# AFRO BAROMETER

*Working Paper No. 92*

**ETHNICALLY DOMINATED  
PARTY SYSTEMS AND THE  
QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY:  
EVIDENCE FROM SUB-  
SAHARAN AFRICA**

by Robert A. Dowd and  
Michael Driessen

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attitude surveys on democracy, markets  
and civil society in Africa.**



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**January 2008**

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## AFROBAROMETER WORKING PAPERS

Editors: Michael Bratton, E. Gyimah-Boadi, and Robert Mattes

Managing Editor: Carolyn Logan

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## **Ethnically Dominated Party Systems and the Quality of Democracy: Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa<sup>1</sup>**

### *Abstract*

This paper is devoted to assessing whether and how the extent to which party systems are ethnically dominated affects the quality of democracy. Using Afrobarometer survey data, we devise a new index for measuring levels of ethnic voting (CVELI) and statistically test its relationship to measures of the quality of democracy. From sub-Saharan Africa, we find evidence to suggest that the extent to which party systems are ethnically dominated does negatively affect certain measures of the quality of democracy. Where all or most political parties are ethnically based parties, there is less respect for civil liberties, elections are perceived to be less free and fair, people are less satisfied with the delivery of public goods and report a greater degree of corruption in government. We conclude that, all else being equal, the quality of democracy may be enhanced by implementing integrative electoral systems and promoting economic and social conditions that are likely to decrease the supply of, in addition to the demand for, ethnically based parties.

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<sup>1</sup> The authors would like to thank Michael Bratton, Michael Coppedge, Frances Hagopian and Guillermo O'Donnell for helpful comments, and Dan Hougendobler for research assistance.

## INTRODUCTION

Since the (re)introduction of multiparty elections during the early 1990s, ethnically dominated party systems have been the norm in sub-Saharan Africa. In other words, political parties have been distinguished from each other largely based on *who* they represent rather than by *what* they represent. Political parties have been essentially indistinguishable from each other in terms of the programs and policies that they espouse. In other words, political parties have been associated with particular ethnic groups and that association is central to what distinguishes one party from another (Chabal and Daloz 1999; Posner 2005; Lindberg 2006).

Nonetheless, there is evidence to suggest that there is significant variation across sub-Saharan African countries in terms of how ethnically dominated party systems have remained since the (re)introduction of competitive party politics during the early 1990s. In some countries, non-ethnic parties and ethnically-blind programs emerged. Whether it is because of reasons of supply [i.e., the incentives provided by the different political institutions that make ethnically based parties less effective vehicles for politicians who want to win political power] or demand [i.e., advances in human development, especially education or urbanization and the growing salience of class and occupational cleavages that prompts voters to reject ethnically based parties] party systems in some sub-Saharan African countries have become less ethnically dominated than in others. In Tanzania, for example, despite a similar number of regionally concentrated ethnic groups as its neighbor, Kenya, political discourse and action revolves much less around ethnicity (Miguel 2004).

This paper is devoted to assessing whether and how the extent to which party systems are ethnically dominated affects the quality of democracy. While many theorists argue that the quality of democracy is likely to suffer where there are ethnically dominated party systems (Horowitz 1991; 1985), others suggest that the extent to which party systems are ethnically dominated is unlikely to affect the quality of democracy (Chandra 2004, 2006), or might even improve democratic quality (Birnir 2007). Still others argue that it is naïve to think that ethno-political groupings can be easily integrated and, therefore, to enhance the quality of democracy in the most deeply divided societies is to recognize and institutionalize ethnic differences through proportional representation, soft partition or strong federal system (Lijphart 1977). Despite the competing claims, there have been few systematic attempts to discern the effects of ethnically dominated party systems on the quality of democracy. As a result, models intended to explain the effects of ethnically dominated party systems on the quality of democracy are underspecified. Those who propose that countries with ethnically dominated party systems are likely to have a lower quality of democracy than countries that do not fail to adequately specify whether all or only some measures of the quality of democracy are negatively affected by the extent to which a party system is ethnically dominated.

The evidence we report indicates that the extent to which party systems are ethnically dominated does negatively affect certain measures of the quality of democracy. After devising a method to measure the extent to which party systems are ethnically dominated, we run multivariate regressions on different measures of the quality of democracy. The most ethnically dominated party systems generally receive lower scores on standard democracy measures; citizens of these countries are less satisfied with democracy; more pessimistic about its future; perceive elections to be less free and fair; are less satisfied with the delivery of public goods; and report a greater degree of corruption in government. We conclude that, all else being equal, the quality of democracy may be enhanced by implementing integrative electoral systems and promoting economic and social conditions that are likely to decrease the supply of, in addition to the demand for, ethnically based parties.

### Defining Key Terms

We define ethnically dominated party systems as party systems in which all or most of the major political parties are ethnically based. Like Chandra (2004: 3), we define an ethnically based party as “a party

[which] portrays itself as the champion of a particular ethnic group or category to the exclusion of others and makes such a strategy central to its strategy to mobilize voters.” In ethnically dominated party systems, parties are not distinguished from each other based on *what* they represent but rather *who* they represent. There are few if any policy differences between parties or, if there are policy differences, few people could tell what these differences are (Gunther and Diamond 2003). Some suggest that ethnically dominated party systems are largely the result of supply, which is to say, the result of decisions made by elite politicians to play the ethnic card in reaction to institutional incentives that make appeals to ethnicity more effective when trying to win political power (Horowitz 1985; Gunther and Diamond 2003; Posner 2004; Norris 2004). Others suggest that ethnically dominated party systems are largely the result of the importance of ethnic identity in people’s lives and citizen demand that may be affected by changes in poverty, inequality and urbanization (Bates 1974; Ndegwa 1997).<sup>2</sup>

Quality of democracy, as we define it, has both procedural and substantive dimensions and may be measured in both relatively objective and/or subjective ways. Procedurally, quality of democracy refers to (1) regular free and fair national elections, (2) respect for political rights, such as the right to vote, to form political parties and to compete in elections, and (3) respect for civil liberties, such as the freedom of expression and association (Dahl 1971; Huntington 1991). Substantively, quality of democracy refers to (4) the extent to which government is accountable, responsive, transparent and respectful of the rule of law (O’Donnell 2004; Diamond and Morlino 2005). In a democracy of the highest quality, there are not only regularly conducted free and fair elections, freedom of speech and freedom of association, but government delivers what most people expect from government between elections, such as security, education and basic healthcare, without discrimination.

Variance along the procedural dimension of the quality of democracy has been classically measured in a relatively objective way by observers who assess the freeness and fairness of elections and the extent to which citizens enjoy freedom of speech and association. However, this dimension may also be measured subjectively through consideration of how citizens themselves assess the freeness of elections and the extent to which they enjoy basic freedoms of speech and association. The substantive dimension of the quality of democracy, on the other hand, whether government is delivering what most people want, lends itself much more readily to being assessed using subjective measures of the quality of democracy. In many African countries democracy is considered superficial and/or fragile (van de Walle 2001, Diamond 2002, Bratton and van de Walle 1997). In the comparison of these cases, in order to distinguish between different kinds of democracies, it is particularly important to reach beyond the “objective” indicators of procedural democracy to discover how citizens themselves assess governmental performance and the quality of democracy.

### **Theoretical Background**

While much effort has gone into explaining how and why ethnic identity is politicized (Posner 2004; Fearon 2003; Horowitz 1985) and how and why ethnically based parties “succeed” (Chandra 2004), less effort has been devoted to actually assessing the effects of ethnically dominated party systems on the quality of democracy. Some scholars focus the debate on the effects of ethno-linguistic fractionalization, per se, on economic development and democracy, whether or not these ethno-linguistic groups are highly politicized. Alesina et al. (2003) and Easterly and Levine (1997), for example, argue that ethno-linguistic fractionalization (ELF) itself is responsible for a series of adverse political effects, including corruption, propensity to conflict, stunted democratization and mismanaged economies. When measuring political stability, propensity to civil war or economic well-being, these scholars will, therefore, typically use ethnic fragmentation as a simple control variable. The argument assumes that the more diverse, plural and

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<sup>2</sup> Ndegwa (1997) proposes that in many sub-Saharan African countries, people have two types of citizenship; one that is broadly national and the other that is ethnic and communal. In ethnically dominated party systems, the ethnic and communal citizenship wins out (Kymlicka 2001; Patten 2001).

fragmented a society, the more likely a society is to be conflict-ridden. Others, however, dispute this crude use of the ELF indicator (Posner 2004) and argue that the political expression of ethnicity is the more important variable at issue.

Those theorists who do focus their claims around the relationship between politicized ethnicity and democracy can be thought of as falling into one of two camps. The first group of scholars argue that ethnic identities are qualitatively different and more exclusive than other social identities, especially class identities: when politicized, ethnicity is ultimately more destructive than class (Ndegwa 2003; Omolo 2002; Horowitz 1985). When and where major parties are distinguished from each other largely based on the ethnic groups they represent, these theorists expect the quality of democracy to be lower than where major parties are distinguished based on other identities. Others suggest that the politicization of ethnicity is not necessarily more detrimental to democracy than the politicization of other social identities, including class (Chandra 2004; Birnir 2007; Collier and Hoeffler 2004).

With respect to the first of these two claims, Fearon and Laitin (1996) and Varshney (2002) argue that ethnic identity's propensity to affect politics negatively depends on the interaction between the degree to which ethnicity is politicized and the depth of democratic norms historically constructed in any given society. These authors conceptualize ethnicity and race as less-than-fluid identities which are stickier than other social identities, such as class, region and, in some societies, religion. More so than these other categories of identity, ethnicity and race are based on more fast and objective classifications, like rules of descent, physical features and names (Fearon 2003). In many societies, people can more easily move up and down the class spectrum, migrate from one region to another or from rural areas to urban areas, or even switch churches or religions than they can change their ethnic and racial identities<sup>3</sup>. Rabushka and Sheplse (1972) and Horowitz (1985) propose that when most major ethnic groups have their own political parties, ethnic minorities fear permanent domination, and ethnic majorities are thus continually focused on devising ways to co-opt or exclude rival ethnic groups. When and where ethnicity and race are politicized and that politicization is institutionalized in the party system, the political landscape becomes frozen along the ethnic dimension. Ethnic minorities fear permanent exclusion and, within parties, elites compete for leadership by outdoing one another in proving their loyalty to their respective ethnic groups and stoking fears of government dominated by rival ethnic groups (Rabushka and Sheplse 1972). Consequently, the likelihood of violent conflict increases and the prospects for good governance are lowered where the party system is ethnically dominated.

Along similar lines, Sisk (1996) argues that ethnically dominated party systems lower the quality of democracy because they limit citizens' electoral choices to members of their own ethnic groups. Those who suggest that it may be wise to vote for a candidate supported by a party other than the one claiming to represent their own ethnic group are accused of being traitors or harassed. This might be especially true where region and ethnicity overlap, as they do in many deeply divided societies. There are also those who suggest that the quality of democracy is lower where there are ethnically dominated party systems because politicians are focused more on the interests of their respective ethnic groups than on the needs of the country as a whole. Posner (2004) notes that when ethnic identities are indeed politicized, elites are expected to win the maximum rights and privileges for their ethnic groups. Where there are ethnically dominated party systems, one's ethnic group is either in or out of power. If there is more than one established ethnic party, other ethnic groups are themselves compelled to mobilize along ethnic lines in the hopes of gaining some influence in national politics, thereby fueling an ethnic crowding out effect (Wantchekon 2003). In developing country settings, gaining access to the state becomes more pressing for survival and ethnicity becomes an ever more indispensable political instrument. Politically

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<sup>3</sup> Religion as an identity becomes particularly troublesome when it coincides with a history of descent and the costs of converting are high, such as the case between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland (Fearon 2003).

institutionalized competition for the rights to these resources increases the likelihood of political instability, violent conflict, and the demise of democracy.

While politicians may claim that they are responding to natural demands for community and group representation, once ethnicity becomes thus politicized, the electoral choices with which citizens are presented are essentially limited to the ethnic plane. What appears to be multiparty democracy at the national level, we argue, could really be thought of as a collection of illiberal one-party ethnic states at the sub-national level. Even though there may be several national political parties, where there is an ethnically dominated party system and ethnic groups are geographically concentrated, parties essentially do not compete with each other for support at the local level. Each party has its ethno-regional bailiwick. There may be no legal constraints that prevent the formation of new parties that are less ethnically based, but politicians, once in power, control access to scarce and valuable resources and use these resources to prevent other politicians from appealing to anything but ethnicity. Further, politicians who have built successful political careers by appealing to ethnicity may collude to prevent other politicians from appealing to anything but ethnicity. Individual political identity is thereby reduced to ethnic identity as citizens essentially delegate their vote to entrenched ethnic elites. If this argument is correct, citizens where there are many political parties that are ethnically based are subject to the narrow choices and abuses of power that characterized previous single-party authoritarian regimes.

Other scholars, however, suggest that the politicization of ethnic identities is not necessarily more detrimental to stability or democracy than the politicization of class and other social identities. After all, deep and politicized class divisions have historically been very destabilizing in Europe, Latin America and Asia.<sup>4</sup> As Fearon and Laitin (1996) point out, ethnic cooperation is more the norm than the exception. Although her work is primarily devoted to explaining the electoral success of ethnic-based parties, Chandra (2004) suggests that ethnic identity is more fluid than theorists such as Sisk (1996), Horowitz (1985), and Rabushka and Shepsle (1972) assume. Political elites have a strong incentive to manipulate the definition of ethnic categories and, as such, Chandra reasons that ethnic head counts need not produce predetermined results because the categories that voters use to count are subject to change and manipulation (Ibid: 2). In patronage democracies where the public sector is much larger than the private sector and access to government is the best or only way to obtain resources, Chandra assumes that parties are only useful to the extent that they win power and are capable of influencing government. Therefore, voters will only vote for an ethnic party if, according to the ethnic head count they perform, they think it has a reasonable chance of winning power. If not, voters will throw their support behind another ethnic party that, needing their support to win, claims to represent their ethnic group as well. Alternatively, voters might attempt to “pass” as members of the ethnic group represented by the ethnic party that stands a better chance of winning power.<sup>5</sup>

In a similar vein, both Birnir (2007) and Mozaffar, Scarritt and Galaich (2003) argue that ethnic party systems might be conducive to better democratic politics. Birnir suggests that in the short-run, ethnic parties can help decrease voting volatility by providing voters with clear and differentiated voting cues and short-cuts. This gives other, non-ethnic parties incubation time, so to speak, to develop differentiated platforms in manageable voting blocs throughout a period of relatively stable electoral politics (Birnir 2007). Likewise, Mozaffar, Scarritt and Galaich (2003) find that what they term “dominant multiethnic patterns of ethnopolitical cleavages” aid democratic consolidation by cutting down on potentially excessive party fragmentation.

Both of these arguments recall the earlier work of Lijphart (1977) who thought that the ‘stickiness’ of

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<sup>4</sup> France of the late-eighteenth century, Russia of the early -twentieth century and China of the mid-twentieth century may be considered cases in point.

<sup>5</sup> For a good definition of “passing”, see Horowitz (1985) and Chandra (2004).



ethnic identity is precisely why it is best to recognize and institutionalize ethnic cleavages. If ethnicity is politically salient and there is a history of ethnic conflict, Lijphart argues that it would be best to give each ethnic group a certain degree of autonomy over its own affairs and provide elites representing each ethnic group with equal voice over policymaking at the center of a multi-ethnic state. According to Lijphart, it is naïve to think that ethno-political groupings can be easily integrated and, therefore, the best way to promote peace and enhance the quality of democracy in the most deeply divided societies is to recognize and institutionalize ethnic differences through consociational or federal electoral processes. Where ethnicity is politically salient, the best type of democracy that can be hoped for is one that includes ethnically based parties that meet at the center of the political system and agree to share power.

### **Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa**

In this section we attempt to test the various hypotheses of the previous section using a new index of ethnically dominated party systems in sub-Saharan Africa, which we develop below. We then test (1) whether or not ethnic party politics systematically affect a country's quality of democracy on both procedural and substantive dimensions, and, if so, whether that effect is positive or negative. If ethnic politics are systematically associated with lower democracy scores, we then test (2) whether it is ethno-linguistic fractionalization as an indicator, per se, that negatively affects these scores or whether it is the political expression of ethnicity in ethnic politics that proves to be the more exacting and significant indicator. We also test whether (3) integrative electoral rules, such as plurality or majority electoral systems, substantially decrease the likelihood that ethnically based parties emerge or survive. Finally, we attempt to discern whether ethnic party politics is (4) desired by most citizens, that is to say, sustained by the forces of demand, either out of fear of minority exclusion in a zero-sum political game or simply in order to reflect natural cultural boundaries; or whether (5) ethnic party politics is more of an instrumental ploy used by ethnic elites, that is to say, the outcome of supply forces, in which ethnic individuals' choices, whether they like it or not, are limited to a vote of delegation to an (inefficient) ethnic bloc.

Before attempting to test whether and how ethnically dominated party systems affect the quality of democracy in sub-Saharan Africa, we now turn to the difficult task of determining the extent to which a party system is ethnically dominated, which we do by analyzing cross-national levels of ethnic voting.

There are enormous challenges to accurately measuring ethnic voting, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where objective ethnographic information and electoral data are often scarce or unreliable. Measures of ethnic voting must take into consideration the categories in which states are ethnically fractionalized. Until recently, most measures of ethnic fractionalization were measured based on Cold War era data collected by Soviet ethnographers or national census data where available. Many measures gauge fractionalization by the Herfindahl index, using the probability equation,  $1 - \sum p^2$ , where 'p' is the share of an ethnic group in their country. This index measures the probability that any two people randomly chosen from a country would be likely to speak the same language, be of the same race or share the same religion. Fearon (2003), who creates his own sensitive measure of ethnic fractionalization which includes a weight of cultural distance based on language structures, argues that the best measure of ethnicity would be a randomized survey form that captures respondents' subjective sense of ethnic identity. Thanks to the Afrobarometer survey, this is now possible (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2004). The Afrobarometer provides cross-country indicators of self-identification and public opinion from sub-Saharan African countries based on extensive surveys conducted since 1999. In this paper we focus on the latest iteration of the Afrobarometer, round three, conducted in 2002-2003. This new round adds four new countries for a total of 18 which represent important breadth in variance of sub-Saharan African country types<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> As these surveys are repeated over time, it will be an important and theoretically pressing task to analyze how these levels of ethnic voting change through time.

The variables we use come from Afrobarometer questions about respondents' home language and party identification. Although in many countries fractionalization based on language is not the same as that based on ethnicity, in sub-Saharan Africa they are highly correlated (Alesina et al. 2003, Posner 2004, Fearon 2003) and equating the two for the countries under review for this study can be done without greatly distorting reality. From the answers to the Afrobarometer we look for correlation between respondents' language and their preferred political party choice, thereby allowing us to infer levels of ethnic voting.<sup>7</sup>

Based on the Afrobarometer data, we use a nonparametric measure of association, Cramer's Phi or V, to calculate the probability that a voter will vote for a party based on his or her ethnicity. From the above two Afrobarometer questions we were able to produce a series of cross-tables reporting the percentages of individuals self-identifying themselves with a particular ethnic group and who also reported that they were close to a certain political party. Table 1 illustrates a cross table of ethnic group and party self-identification data from Malawi. Because surveys on ethnicity and party choice are not perfectly fast categories and represent only a sample of a general population, we use the more "forgiving" non-parametric Cramer's V over a more rigorous parametric analysis of variance in order to more robustly capture these macro differences in political party type from individual responses to survey questions on ethnicity and political party choice.

**Table 1:** Percentages of individuals of an ethnic group in Malawi self-identifying with a national political party

	not close	United Dem	Malawi Co	Alliance	National refused/d.know	Totals	
<b>Tumbuka</b>	4%	2%	2%	3%	0%	0.17%	11.00%
<b>Nkhonde</b>	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0.00%	1.00%
<b>Chewa</b>	18%	22%	11%	0%	1%	1.50%	53.00%
<b>Yao</b>	2%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0.42%	14.00%
<b>Ngoni</b>	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0.25%	2.00%
<b>Lomwe</b>	3%	4%	0%	0%	1%	0.25%	9.00%
<b>Mang'anja</b>	2%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0.50%	5.00%
<b>Sena</b>	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0.00%	3.00%
<b>Chindali</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.00%	1.00%
<b>Senga</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.00%	1.00%
<b>Tonga</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.00%	1.00%
<b>Totals</b>	32%	44%	15%	4%	2%	3.08%	100.00%

Cell values represent the fraction of an ethnic group, A, voting for a party, X, multiplied by the percentage of that ethnic group in country N. The sum of horizontal and vertical cells therefore add up to one. Data from Afrobarometer Round 3.

<sup>7</sup> The Afrobarometer produces its own rank of ethnic voting by calculating a country's rank based on the percentage of the major ethnic group who voted for the winning or losing party (Bratton et al. 2005: 306). This calculation, however, does not take into account whether there was significant ethnic voting present in an opposition party, nor does it consider a country's type of ethnic fractionalization. Tanzania, for instance, received a high ethnic voting rank because 56% of those who identified with the Swahili group, who make up 96% of the population, voted for the winning party in the last election. However, no significant voting block of any other Tanzanian ethnic group voted for an opposition party. This is a qualitatively different type of ethnic voting from that present in Nigeria, which surprisingly received a much lower rank than Tanzania.

Like a chi-square, Cramer's V measures the difference between our null hypothesis, which we could state as, "Party choice cannot be predicted by ethnic identity" and our actual observation of how much an individual's party choice can be predicted by knowing his or her ethnicity. For each country, therefore, Cramer's V calculates an index of correlation, or strength of the degree of association between our two variables, ethnicity and party choice on a scale of 0 to 1. As such, the Cramer's V output can be interpreted as a correlation coefficient and gives us the percentage of the total political party identification predicted by ethnic self-identification. Higher values mean that a greater percentage of political party choice can be explained by ethnicity, as in Kenya where Cramer's V is 0.36 or Malawi where Cramer's V is 0.29, and lower values mean that we can predict almost no percentage of political party choice based off ethnicity. In the case of low prediction probability, either all ethnic groups voted for the same party, as in Botswana with a Cramer's V close to 0, or political party choice is so random with respect to ethnicity that no pattern can be distinguished and ethnicity fails to reliably predict political party choice. Table 2 displays our Cramer's V Ethno-linguistic voting index (CVELI) of countries from both the Second and Third rounds of the Afrobarometer, alongside Posner's (2004) Politically Relevant Ethnic Groups (PREG) ranking and a standard ethno-linguistic fractionalization measure by Alesina et al (2003). The higher a CVELI that a country receives, the more we deem their political party system to be ethnically dominated.

**Table 2** CVELI scores for Rounds 2 and 3 of the Afrobarometer and two measures of Ethnolinguistic fractionalization, by Alesina et al (2003) and Posner (2004)

	<b>CVELI(1)</b>	<b>CVELI(2)</b>	<b>ELF</b>	<b>PREG</b>
<b>Lesotho</b>	0.029	0.027	0.26	0
<b>Cap Verde</b>	0.044		0.42	
<b>Botswana</b>	0.002	0.117	0.41	0
<b>Senegal</b>	0.113		0.69	0.14
<b>Malawi</b>	0.18	0.193	0.69	0.15
<b>Mozambique</b>	0.126	0.132	0.69	0.26
<b>Tanzania</b>	0.202	0.099	0.74	0.29
<b>Ghana</b>	0.209	0.189	0.67	0.44
<b>Madagascar</b>	0.22		0.88	0
<b>South Africa</b>	0.251	0.248	0.75	0.49
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	0.253	0.194	0.59	0.41
<b>Nigeria</b>	0.265	0.318	0.85	0.66
<b>Uganda</b>	0.269	0.313	0.93	0.65
<b>Malawi</b>	0.289	0.614	0.67	0.25
<b>Narriva</b>	0.3	0.252	0.63	0.25
<b>Kenya</b>	0.358	0.313	0.86	0.27
<b>Zambia</b>	0.361	0.289	0.78	0.71
<b>Burkina</b>	0.41		0.79	0.5

CVELI(1): Cramer's V correlation coefficients for Afrobarometer round 3

CVELI(2): Cramer's V correlation coefficients for Afrobarometer round 2

ELF: Ethno-linguistic Fractionalization Scores by Alesina et al (2003)

PREG: Politically Relevant Ethnic Groups Scores by Posner (2004)

It is important to explore whether rankings arrived at through an examination of survey data and statistical methods are supported by descriptive accounts of politics in the countries in question. Measurements based solely on voting patterns may be misleading, and it is hazardous to measure the extent to which a party system is ethnically dominated without knowing much about the politics of a given country. The advantage of using CVELI is that it gives us a statistical snapshot of the extent to which a political party system is ethnically dominated. However, context is important. Just because all or most members of a particular ethnic group support a certain party does not necessarily mean that they are doing so only or

primarily because the party is associated with their ethnic group. Further, we think it is important that any estimate of the extent to which a party system is ethnically dominated be open to change. Ethnic identity has become more or less politically salient over time in most ethnically plural countries.<sup>8</sup> Part of the purpose of this paper is to measure and explain the effects of such change on the quality of democracy. In order to situate these scores in context, we therefore compare our CVELI ranking with Posner's (2004) Politically Relevant Ethnic Groups fractionalization index (PREG) for sub-Saharan Africa. Instead of survey data, Posner (2004) uses works written by country experts and codes countries' fragmentation based on how often ethnicity is mentioned as a basis for party formation or political identity. From the scholarly work, Posner counts the politically relevant population shares of any ethnic group, normalized to one, which are in political competition with one another or mentioned as voting on the basis of their ethnic identity. PREG and the CVELI rankings are significantly correlated with one another at 0.66, lending evidence to the assertion that they are attempting to measure the same phenomenon, ethnically dominated party systems. As will be seen through multi-variate regressions, both do similarly well (and much better than simple ethno-linguistic fractionalization measures) at accounting for cross-national variations in quality of democracy.

From these fractionalization scores, we can see evidence that all or most political parties in countries like Kenya and Namibia are ethnically based. However, despite similarly high levels of ELF, in countries like Tanzania and Mozambique the dominance of ethnic political parties has been much less marked. For our CVELI measures, we ignored blocs of ethnic voters who stated that they were not close to any party. Although this could reflect the politicization of ethnicity in a non-party form, in our ranking we are interested in how ethnicity is expressed electorally.<sup>9</sup>

We measure the quality of democracy first along its classic procedural dimension, using (1) Freedom House scores, (2) Polity IV estimates and (3) Afrobarometer survey data. While Freedom House and Polity IV scores provide helpful estimates of the extent to which national electoral procedures, political rights and civil liberties are respected, they are based on observations by "experts"; typically not citizens of the countries in question. The Afrobarometer survey data provides measures of the quality of democracy along this first dimension according to citizens in the countries under study. For this first measure we use Afrobarometer survey questions about the extent of democracy, support for democracy and the freeness and fairness of elections. Afrobarometer's survey data also gives us a thicker gauge to measure the second, substantive dimension of the quality of democracy by allowing us to assess how representative, responsive and transparent a democratic government is according to people who experience daily life in the countries in question. We use Afrobarometer questions about satisfaction with democracy and trust in institutions to get at the concept of representativeness; questions about perceived performance in government functions like education, health and the economy to get at the concept of responsiveness; and questions about corruption to get at the concept of transparency.

We use correlations and OLS regression analysis to determine the sign, substance and significance of the effect of ethnically dominated party systems (hypotheses 1) as measured by our indicator of levels of

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<sup>8</sup> As Fearon (2003) and others point out, Somalia, which for years was considered to be ethnically homogeneous, is now widely understood to be deeply fragmented and ethnically divided. Change in Cramer's V scores from the two Afrobarometer rounds confirms this salience variance in other countries as well. The numbers of any given ethnicity speaking a home language and the political meaning and significance of these ethnic values change over time.

<sup>9</sup> By this, we mean that an entire ethnic group might decide not to participate in the political process. This itself would be evidence of politicized ethnic identity. We do not attempt to capture this phenomenon. If respondents did not feel close to any party, we assumed that this indicated a lower probability that they would vote in upcoming elections.

ethnic voting, CVELI, on these indicators of quality of democracy. We run regressions with and without a control of Alesina et al's (2003) standard ELF measure to determine whether it is ethnic fragmentation itself that has a more driving effect on quality of democracy than the political expression of ethnicity (hypothesis 2). To control for the effects of electoral systems (hypothesis 3) we add a dummy variable for majoritarian electoral rules, using data which follows coding set by Persson and Tabellini (2004). Countries with a score of 0 on this indicator have proportional representative voting rules for parliamentary elections.

In order to discern whether ethnic politics are sustained by the forces of demand or supply (hypotheses 4 and 5), we introduce a simple dummy variable in the regressions, *winpar*, which assigns a 1 to any individual who voted for a party that won national elections in or before the year of the survey. It is important to note that Cho and Bratton (2005) and Mohler (2005) have found that how satisfied Africans are with democracy is affected to at least some extent by whether they voted for the government of the day or opposition parties; the 'winners' or the 'losers'. Therefore, although our indicator of ethnic voting shows a negative association with subjective evaluations of democratic quality, it may be the case that it is simply registering the fact that, in ethnically dominated party systems, supporters of ethnic parties that are out of power tend to have negative attitudes towards the performance of a governing party or coalition of parties they do not support. However, the *winpar* dummy variable allows us to determine whether the population as a whole has negative views of democracy in countries that are governed by ethnically based political parties, even as the population votes along ethnic lines. That is to say, once we have controlled for the perception bias of winning or losing an election, if our measure of ethnic voting still has a substantial negative association with the perceived quality of democracy, then even individuals who have voted for a party that has captured access to the resources of a state and promised to distribute them exclusively to their ethnic group perceive a lower quality of democracy than individuals who have voted for a winning party in countries with less ethnically dominated politics. We take this as further evidence that ethnically dominated party systems are less sustained by demand than by supply.<sup>10</sup> When even 'ethnic winners' feel that their government representatives are neither responsive nor accountable, the gains in procedure and substance due to the introduction of multi-party elections seem slight indeed.

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<sup>10</sup> In the most extreme version of the demand-side argument, all politics should be ethnic politics in countries that are fragmented along ethnic lines. Substantial differences between our CVELI and ELF measures show that this is not the case.

**Table 3:** Simple Correlations [Afrobarometer Round 3, at national averages]

Afrobarometer 3 Indicators (2004–2005)	Ethnically Dominated Party System, CVELI	Ethnic Fractionalization, ELF (Alesina et al. 2002)	Politically Relevant Ethnic Groups, PREG (Posner 2004)	Countries N
Polity	-.20	-.13	-.39	17
Freedom House	-.15	-.22	-.49*	17
Support for Democracy	-.25	-.13	-.25	17
Free and Fair Elections	-.38	-.11	-.55*	17
Extent of Democracy	-.24	.14	-.24	17
Satisfaction with Democracy	-.14	.14	.02	17
I trust the President	-.41*	-.09	-.26	17
I trust the Police	-.47*	-.26	-.34	17
I think that most of the President's office is corrupt	.66**	.32	.41	17
I think that most MPs are involved in Corruption	.66**	.35	.37	17
I think that most Police are Corrupt	.63**	.44*	.57*	17
I am satisfied with government's performance in education	.23*	-.29	.21	17
I think that Most National Government Officials are Corrupt	-.21	-.21	-.195	17

CVELI: Cramer's V correlation coefficients for Afrobarometer round 3

ELF: Ethno-linguistic Fractionalization Scores by Alesina et al (2003)

PREG: Politically Relevant Ethnic Groups Scores by Posner (2004)

FH: Inverted Freedom House combined average scores (1989-2003) of "status of freedom"

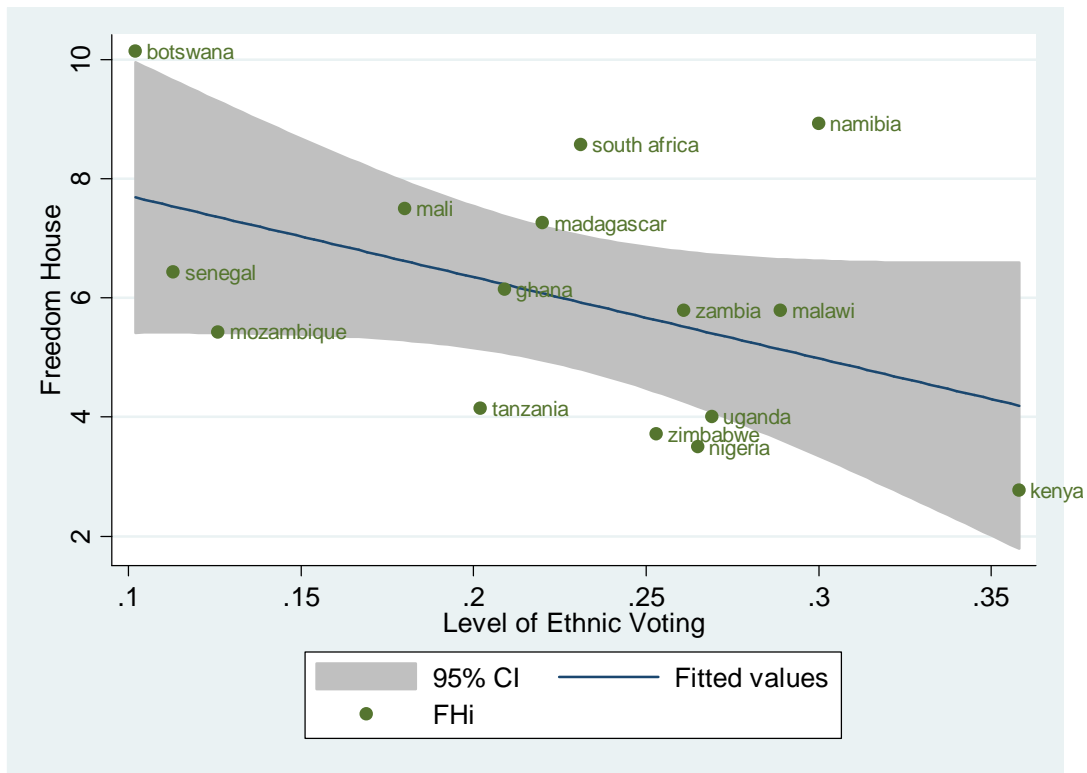
Polity: Polity combined average scores (1989-2003) of "level of democracy"

\*P=.05 level (two-tailed), \*\*P=.01 level (two-tailed), #Excluding Cape Verde

Table three displays simple correlations with associated significance levels between our measure of ethnically dominated party systems using CVELI, Alesina et al's (2003) ELF measure, and Posner's (2004) Politically Relevant Ethnic Group's index (PREG). Posner's (2004) PREG, followed by our CVELI measure, have consistent, negative associations with respect to Polity, Freedom House and Afrobarometer indicators of the procedural dimension of democracy. However, the correlation coefficients between CVELI and average country level perceptions of governance and democracy at the substantive level, without any prior controls, suggest a powerful and significant relationship between the extent to which a party system is ethnically dominated and measures of trust, satisfaction and perceived levels of government corruption. Figure 1 graphically illustrates this association, by representing the

relationship between CVELI and Freedom House scores.

**Figure 1:** Country levels of combined, average Freedom House scores and ethnic voting #



X-axis: Afro3V: Cramer’s V correlation coefficients for Afrobarometer round 3  
 Y-axis: FH: Inverted Freedom House combined average scores (1989-2003) of “status of freedom”  
 #excluding Cape Verde, Lesotho and Benin

The extent to which a party system is ethnically dominated, measured according to CVELI, does predict measures of the quality of democracy included in Table 2 to a remarkable degree, even if we know nothing further about a country. People in countries with ethnically dominated party systems, measured according to CVELI, are much less likely to believe that elections are free and much less likely to be satisfied with the government’s performance in education. They are also more likely to have illegal fees demanded from them for education, and to believe that police and national-level officials are corrupt.

Table three also suggests that ethnic fractionalization itself does not necessarily result in a lower quality of democracy, but that it is the *politicization* of ethnic differences that impede the development of a higher quality of democracy measured according to the Afrobarometer indicators included in the table. The extent to which a party system is ethnically dominated explains a greater degree of the variation in satisfaction with governmental delivery of education, belief that elected officials care and listen to citizens, and perception that agents of the government respect the rule of law than ethnic fractionalization. This in large part supports the claim of Posner (2004) and others that what has impeded development and democracy in sub-Saharan Africa is not ethno- heterogeneity itself but the political expression of ethnic divisions, which in fact may be less likely in the most ethnically heterogeneous settings where political

institutions make it impossible for a party that does not appeal to more than a few ethnic groups to win seats or national office.

Multiple regression analysis of the correlations shown in Table three represents a more systematic analysis of this relationship and indicates that a causal relationship exists between the extent to which a party system is ethnically dominated and certain measures of the quality of democracy. Tables 4-7 report the results of several least-square regressions on important Afrobarometer measures of corruption and quality of democracy.

**Table 4: Procedural Dimension of Democracy**

	Freedom House		Polity		Support for Democracy		Free and Fair Elections		Extent of Democracy	
<b>CVELI</b>	-4.93 **	-5.01**	-7.41**	-10.5**	-.232**	-.202**	-1.03**	-2.25**	-.321**	-1.76**
<b>ELF</b>		.071		2.93**		-.026		1.11**		1.31**
<b>winpar</b>					-.075**	-.075**	.459**	.443**	.406**	.385**
<b>Maj</b>	-.240**	-.229**	.362**	.798**	.030	.026	-.365**	-.199**	-.239**	-.050*
<b>GNI</b>	.001**	.001**	.001**	.001**	.00001**	.00001**	-3e-7	.00004**	1e-5*	.0001**
<b>POP</b>	-4e-8**	-4e-8**	-3e8**	-4e-8**	2e-9**	2e-9	-1e-8**	-1e-8**	-7e-9**	-1e-8**
See	-.020	-.020	-.155***	-.155***	.042***	.042***	.042***	.042***	.045	.010
Age	-.0002**	-.0002***	-.0002	-.0001	-.0001	-.0001	.0002***	.0002***	-.00003	-.00003
Ed	-.110***	-.110***	-.200***	-.266***	-.011***	-.011***	-.060***	-.060***	.00011	-.044***
Comp	.015***	.015***	.024*	.012	-.010***	-.010***	.002***	.002***	.004***	.000***
Urban	6.50	6.43	3.76***	1.98	2.60	2.50	1.43	2.00	3.08***	2.34
R <sup>2</sup>	.34	.34	.40	.41	.01	.01	.17	.18	.12	.15
Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.34	.34	.40	.41	.01	.01	.17	.18	.12	.15
N	24067	24067	23726	23726	21116	21116	22672	22672	20472	20472

Ordinary Least Squares Regression Analysis

Regression Coefficients

CVELI: Cramer’s V correlation coefficients for Afrobarometer round 3

ELF: Ethno-linguistic Fractionalization Scores by Alesina et al (2003)

FH: Inverted Freedom House combined average scores (1989-2003) of “status of freedom”

Polity: Polity combined average scores (1989-2003) of “level of democracy”

\*P= .05 level (two-tailed), \*\*P= .01 level (two-tailed)



In general, there is strong evidence from these tables to suggest that ethnically dominated party systems do negatively affect a country's quality of democracy on both procedural-objective dimensions as well as substantive-subjective dimensions (hypotheses 1). With regards the procedural dimension (table 4) higher CVELI scores are significantly associated with lower democracy scores from three different databases in both models, with and without a control for ELF. Of these five indicators of procedural democracy, the regressions of CVELI on Freedom House and Polity indicators have the best test-fit scores.

The relationship is even stronger on the substantive-subjective dimension. CVELI again takes on a significant and consistently negative coefficient, and it usually does so in both models. As illustrated in table 5, individuals in countries with ethnically dominated party systems are much less likely to trust the president and much more likely to report that material electoral incentives are offered to persuade individual's political choices<sup>11</sup>. The most powerful, negative coefficients of all the models, however, are those explaining perceptions on the levels of satisfaction with government performance (table 6) and perceptions of government corruption (table 7). In table 6, CVELI is particularly strong in explaining individuals' level of satisfaction with the government's handling of the economy, although CVELI is also a telling indicator explaining satisfaction with government performance in education and health care. With regards perceptions of government corruption (table 7), CVELI does particularly well as an indicator explaining individual perceptions of corruption among local and national government officials, but also an important indicator of perceptions of presidential and police corruption. The extent to which a party system is ethnically dominated, therefore, proves to be a remarkable explanatory variable for higher levels of perceived corruption, lower levels of satisfaction with government performance, less trust in the capabilities of democracy and lower levels of democracy all around.

**Table 5:** Substantive Dimension of Democracy: Future Evaluation and Trust [Afrobarometer Round 3]

	Satisfaction with Democracy		Future of Democracy		Trust the President		Election incentives are offered	
<b>CVELI</b>	.009	-1.45**	.088	-2.16**	-.177*	-1.72**	1.31**	1.01**
<b>ELF</b>		1.33**				1.39**		.272**
<b>winpar</b>	.529**	.507**	.287	-.041	.679**	.661**	-.205**	-.209**
<b>Maj</b>	-.207	-.015	-.161*	-.631**	-.309**	-.101**	-.063*	-.022
<b>GNI</b>	.00002**	.0001**	.00001*	-.0001*	-.0002*	.00002**	-.0001**	-.00001**
<b>POP</b>	-7e-9**	-1e-8**	-3e-9**	1e-8**	-1e-8**	-1e-8**	2e-9**	1e-9**
<b>Sex</b>	-.036*	-.031*	-.029*	.051	.010	.010	-.027*	-.027*
<b>Age</b>	.001	.001	.002**	.001	.002**	.003**	-.001	-.001
<b>Ed</b>	-.032**	-.032**	.002	-.052*	-.064**	-.062**	.012**	.050**
<b>Emp</b>	.043**	.039**	.024**	-.027	.012**	.007	-.004**	.006
<b>_cons</b>	2.66	1.91	2.80	3.16	2.29	1.48	1.94	1.77
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	.12	.13	.04	.003	.18	0.20	0.09	0.0
<b>Adj R<sup>2</sup></b>	.12	.13	.04	.003	.18	0.20	0.09	0.0
<b>N</b>	20982	20982	18793	18793	24794	24106	23740	23740

Ordinary Least Squares Regression Analysis

Regression Coefficients

CVELI: Cramer's V correlation coefficients for Afrobarometer round 3

ELF: Ethno-linguistic Fractionalization Scores by Alesina et al (2003)

\*P= .05 level (two-tailed), \*\*P=.01 level (two-tailed)

<sup>11</sup> The afrobarometer question used for the variable "Election Incentives Offered" asks individuals, in their opinion, how often politicians offer gifts to voters during election campaigns.

When added as a control variable, Alesina et al's (2003) ELF measure takes on a consistent, opposite and significant sign to that of ethnic voting. This evidence suggests that when ethnic domination of a party system is controlled for, higher ethno-linguistic fractionalization might actually benefit democracy (hypothesis 2), confirming evidence by Reilly (2000) and Mozaffar, Scarritt and Galaich (2003). Ethnic politicization into ethnic party groups is the real variable dragging quality of democracy down, and it tends to occur at relatively lower levels of ELF. As ELF reaches higher levels of ethnic fractionalization, collective action among a plethora of ethnic groups becomes more and more difficult and there is a lesser chance, therefore, that ELF will translate into politicized ethnic parties and harm national prospects for democracy. While less significant, the majoritarian dummy variable takes on a consistent sign to CVELI, adding more evidence that majoritarian systems exacerbate the hurt of being out of power while integrative, proportional representation electoral systems seem to dampen it (hypothesis 3).

**Table 6:** Substantive Dimension of Democracy: Satisfaction [Afrobarometer Round 3]

	Satisfied with Govt's handling of Economy		Satisfied with Govt's Performance in Ed.		Satisfied with Govt's performance in Health	
<b>CVELI</b>	-2.58**	-5.28**	-.991**	-2.09**	-.188**	-1.73**
<b>ELF</b>		2.44**		.988**		1.40**
<b>winpar</b>	.151**	.118**	.309**	.296**	.233**	.213**
<b>Maj</b>	-.384**	-.017	.061**	.210**	-.027	.183**
<b>GNI</b>	.00001	.0001**	.00003**	.0001**	6e-6	.0001**
<b>POP</b>	-8e-9**	-1e-8**	-7e-9**	-9e-9**	-5e-9**	-9e-9**
<b>Sex</b>	.173**	.173**	.010	.010	.004	.003
<b>Age</b>	.002**	.003**	.0004	.001	-.0004	-.0001
<b>Ed</b>	-.069**	-.066**	.001	.002	.004	.006
<b>Emp</b>	.003	-.006	.003	-.001	.009*	.003
<b>_cons</b>	3.60	2.17	2.85	2.27	2.71	1.89
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	.06	.08	.08	.10	.04	.07
<b>Adj R<sup>2</sup></b>	.06	.08	.08	.10	.04	.07
<b>N</b>	24967	24967	24208	24208	24331	24331

Ordinary Least Squares Regression Analysis

Regression Coefficients

CVELI: Cramer's V correlation coefficients for Afrobarometer round 3

ELF: Ethno-linguistic Fractionalization Scores by Alesina et al (2003)

\*P= .05 level (two-tailed), \*\*P=.01 level (two-tailed)

Population and economic well-being control variables tend to support the scarcity thesis: greater populations with less GNI per capita generally evaluate democratic performance more negatively, (as do, incidentally, more educated individuals).

Finally, *winpar*, as one would expect, is significantly and substantially associated with more positive evaluations of quality of democracy. In every model, however, CVELI still assumes a more significant and substantive coefficient. Whether demand for ethnic politics was the original stimulus leading to ethnic voting at the onset of democratization, once solidified into ethnically dominated party systems, this evidence illustrates that even ethnic party winners are less satisfied with democracy than individuals belonging to winning political parties elsewhere. This lends some evidence to the hypothesis that ethnic parties limit electoral choice. Once trapped in a system of vote delegation to an ethnic bloc, it is ethnic elites who benefit and thus sustain a supply of ethnic politics despite demand to the contrary (hypotheses 4 and 5).

**Table 7:** Substantive Dimension of Democracy: Corruption [Afrobarometer Round 3]

	Most or all Local Officials are Corrupt		Most or all in the office of the president are Corrupt		Most or all National Court Officials are Corrupt		Most or all Police are Corrupt	
CV	1.60***	1.84***	1.53***	2.16***	-4.46***	-4.58***	1.81***	1.76***
AE		2.91***		.59***		.102		.040
Wingspan	.172***	.169***	.175***	.144***	.404***	.408***	.170***	.170***
Major	.000***	.058***	.052**	-.007	-.007***	-.002***	.088***	.104***
ELF	.0001***	.0004***	-.00001**	.00005***	-.00002***	-.00002***	-.0046	-.1046
ELF <sup>2</sup>	0e-911	0e-911	0e-911	8e-911	7e-911	7e-911	7e-9	7e-911
Sex	-.0022	-.0022	-.0012**	-.0012**	.007**	.007**	-.0077**	-.0077**
Age	-.0001***	-.0001***	-.0001***	-.0002***	.0005***	.0005***	-.0001*	-.0001*
Eth	.010***	.010***	.009***	.009***	.004**	.004**	.004**	.004**
Party	.0007	.0001	.0001	.0001	.000	.000	.0001	.0001
_cons	.790	.930	.807	1.19	4.02	4.56	1.01	.080
R <sup>2</sup>	.08	.08	.17	.15	.06	.07	.09	.09
Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.08	.08	.17	.15	.06	.07	.09	.09
F	00017	00017	10419	10419	04007	04007	01677	01677

Ordinary Least Squares Regression Analysis

Regression Coefficients

CVELI: Cramer's V correlation coefficients for Afrobarometer round 3

ELF: Ethno-linguistic Fractionalization Scores by Alesina et al (2003)

\*P=.05 level (two-tailed), \*\*P=.01 level (two-tailed)

## CONCLUSION

The results indicate that the extent to which party systems are ethnically dominated has a substantive effect on certain measures of the quality of democracy. There is reason to believe that where all or most major political parties are ethnically based, citizens believe that elections are not very free and that government is corrupt and delivers education and health services poorly. In ethnically dominated party systems the civil liberties and political rights of citizens also suffer.

The question is, do people vote for ethnic parties because they really prefer ethnic parties or because they believe they have little choice? The results reported in this article suggest it is because they believe they have little choice. Although further study is necessary, there is evidence that citizens in countries where there are ethnically dominated party systems feel that they are trapped in ethnic-party zones and that they lack the freedom to form and choose parties other than the one or two parties who claim to represent their ethnic groups. Rather than a multiparty state, one might argue that in ethnically dominated party systems there are, in essence, several one-party ethnic states within the overarching multi-ethnic state. Individual political identity is reduced to ethnic identity as citizens delegate their vote to entrenched ethnic elites. As such, citizens in these one-party ethnic states are subject to many of the abuses of power that characterized previous authoritarian regimes.

The reports in this data of such a high prevalence of corruption and such poor delivery of education and healthcare in ethnically dominated party systems may be precisely because there is little intra-party or inter-party political competition within ethnic blocks. In this pseudo-[do you mean semi-?]authoritarian environment, citizens who are the victims of corruption have little electoral recourse with which to pressure ethnic elites to improve their performance. Further, the delivery of public services will also be affected by the fact that, in ethnically dominated party systems, people are often appointed to civil service

and government posts because of their ethnic identity rather than their skills, abilities and merit. Rather than breaking the cycle of bloated and corrupt bureaucracies inherited from one-party socialist states, ethnically-based multi-party democracies have helped perpetuate them to some degree.

The intent of this paper is not to offer policy prescriptions. Scholars and practitioners may take heed that majoritarian electoral systems here are associated with negative evaluations of democracy and proportional representative systems with positive ones. However, the degree of ethnic party domination is a more powerful explanatory variable in this model. While a proportional electoral system may offer some counterbalance to the effects of CVELI on perceptions of quality of democracy, to the extent that PR systems institutionalize ethnicity into a party system, this counterbalance may be overwhelmed by the negative effects of CVELI. Ultimately, the lack of satisfaction with democracy that people are likely to experience where party systems are ethnically dominated increases the likelihood of political instability and the chances that nascent democratic institutions will break down.

For future research in depth comparisons of countries with similar ELF but variable CVELI scores could give more insight into this pressing question, even if the answer appears to lie in the less than satisfying explanations of contingent decisions made by differing national leaders and the difficult-to-change histories of ethnic conflict and tension. To end on an optimistic note, while ELF scores change rather slowly at the rate of population births, migration and language evolutions, CVELI scores and thus ethnic voting patterns seem to be more malleable and show signs of short run change over election periods. As more systematic cross-national survey data builds up on sub-Saharan Africa, tracking these changes and analyzing how and why they shift may give us more accurate theories yet on the dynamics of ethnic party systems.

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