Contests for State Power: An Examination of the Consequences of Variations in Electoral Systems in Contemporary Africa

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The choice of electoral system determines how the entire electoral process will be run. It can affect not only the size of electoral districts and the ballot structures but also who can vote and how their votes can be counted (Reynolds, 2009; Reynolds, Reilly, & Ellis, 2008). Conflicts are more likely to arise if an electoral system is perceived as a system of “pick and choose”. Some electoral systems may be less prone to post-election conflicts than others; and to some extent such electoral systems may also be more helpful in promoting democracy than others. In addition, studies have shown that many African countries that hold elections inherited their political systems from their former European colonial powers (Reynolds, 2009; Blanton, Mason, & Athow, 2001; Young, 1986). Such systems are less likely to work on African terrains. Therefore, designing an electoral system that can help minimize frequent occurrences of political conflict requires not only an in-depth knowledge of party systems in Africa but also a deep understanding of electoral rules of the game. This paper covers two interrelated topics: African models of electoral systems with a particular emphasis on electoral rules and democracy promotion, and elections and party systems.

Keywords: elections, electoral systems, electoral rules, ballot structures, electoral conflicts, democracy, Africa

Electoral Systems in Democratizing Countries: Examining African Models

The electoral system, or how the votes cast are actually translated into seats, has a huge impact not just on inclusion and exclusion but also on the tone of the entire political system. The system will also craft the space for corruption and vote rigging—it will not eliminate the space for malfeasance, but it can limit it. For these reasons, the crafting of appropriate electoral systems is one of the key factors shaping democratization and political conflict on the continent (Reynolds, 2009).

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In this section, the author discusses the main electoral rules and formulas used in allocating elected seats in African countries. The author also identifies and discusses potential effects of electoral systems: plurality/majority, block vote, list proportional representation, and mixed-member majoritarian and mixed-member proportional systems.

Electoral Rules and Democracy Promotion

An electoral rule determines how many representatives or members of parliament (MPs) are elected from one electoral district or constituency. If only one MP is elected to a parliament from a district, that district will be called a single-member district. However, if more than one MP is elected to a parliament from a district, the district will be referred to as a multi-member district.¹ The plurality/majority systems use single-member districts. These systems are the plurality single-member district or the First Past The Post (FPTP), the majority single-member district or the Two-Round System (TRS), and Block Vote (BV). The multi-member districts are used by both the proportional representation systems (LIST-PR) and mixed systems (MMP and MMM). In Africa, the variations in electoral systems indicate that there are also variations in electoral rules that are used to translate votes into elected seats and, therefore, into policy preferences. Table 1 summarizes the variation in electoral rules used in contemporary Africa.

Table 1

Variation in Electoral Rules in Contemporary African States

FPTP	TRS	BV	List-PR	MMP	MMM
Botswana, Ethiopia, Gambia, Gabon (1996-2010), Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar*, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe	Central African Republic, Comoros, Congo Republic, Egypt, Gabon (1990), Mali, Mauritania, and Togo	Mauritius	Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar (1993), Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger (2010), Rwanda, Sao Tome Principe, South Africa, Tunisia,	Djibouti, Lesotho	Cameroon, Chad, DRC, Egypt, Guinea, Madagascar (1998 and 2002), Niger*, Senegal, Seychelles, and Sudan

Sources: IDEA, African Elections Database, Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

An analysis of Table 1 reveals that 15 African states, including Botswana, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Gabon (1996-2010), Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe use FPTP and that most of these countries were once colonized by the United Kingdom, the founding country of FPTP systems (Reynolds, Reilly, & Ellis, 2008). While only one African state (Mauritius) uses BV systems, eight countries including Central African Republic, Comoros, Congo Republic, Egypt, Gabon (1990), Mali, Mauritania, and Togo use TRS. Contrary to FPTP systems, which are mostly used by former British colonies, TRS systems have been adopted by overwhelming majority of former French colonies in Africa.

Table 1 also suggests that apart from Niger, which recently switched from MMM systems in 2010 to List-PR, and Madagascar, which used List-PR in 1993 before switching to MMM in 1998 and 2002 and to

¹ For a detailed discussion on single-member district and multi-member district see Reynolds, Reilly, & Ellis, 2008 and Farrell, 2011.

FPTP in subsequent legislative elections, 15 other African states such as Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Sao Tome Principe, South Africa and Tunisia, used List-PR systems between 1990 and 2010. Among the 10 African countries that steadily use mixed electoral systems, eight of them—Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Egypt, Guinea, Senegal, Seychelles, and Sudan—use MMM systems, and only two of them (Djibouti and Lesotho) use MMP systems.

Another important point to note is that between 1990 and 2010, while Liberia switched from FPTP to List-PR in 1997 and back to FPTP since 2005, other African countries switched to a “more proportional system” as a result of post-conflict agreements (Reynolds, 2009). For instance, Lesotho switched from FPTP to MMP in 2002, Rwanda from FPTP to List-PR after the 1994 Rwandan genocide (African Elections Database 2011), and South Africa and Sierra Leone from FPTP to List-PR in 1994 and 1996, respectively (African Elections Database, 2012); Reynolds, 2009). MMP systems tend to be more proportional than MMM systems. In general, each electoral rule has its advantages and disadvantages.

Effects of Electoral Systems in Contemporary Africa

Effects of Plurality/Majority Systems. According to Reynolds, Reilly, & Ellis (2008), “First Past The Post is the simplest form of plurality/majority electoral system. The winning candidate is the one who gains more votes than any other candidates, even if this is not an absolute majority of valid votes” (p. 35). Because FPTP is simple and easy to understand by political actors in general and voters in particular, it is often recommended to less developed countries where, in most cases, illiteracy rate remains high. Such a recommendation fails to take into account the existence of multiple sociopolitical cleavages in these developing countries given that FPTP favors only strong parties or minority groups that are located in a concentrated geographical area.

In a country where FPTP method or other single-member district systems are used, candidates are the focus of voters, who cast their ballots for them instead of voting for political parties. The FPTP system is often believed to strengthen the relationship that must exist between representatives and their constituents. Because these representatives are directly elected by voters, the latter can hold them accountable for any decisions they made by either re-electing them or voting them out in future elections. This is what Strom (2000) refers to as “accountability for candidates”. This accountability can be discussed at two levels. First, under single-member district systems, MPs are required to maintain permanent communication or contact with people they represent. Second, because of the existence of strong party discipline under FPTP and other single-member district systems, MPs must demonstrate strong support for their parties’ policies and platforms to earn re-nomination in subsequent elections. But under multi-member district systems, such as List-PR, MMM and MMP, voters cannot hold candidates accountable. Instead, political parties are often punished for their actions.

Specific to TRS is that a legislative/parliamentary election is run in two rounds if no candidate wins the majority of vote (i.e. over 50%) in the first round. Generally, only two candidates with the highest vote in the first round are allowed to compete in the second round. In that case, the system is called “majority run-off TRS” (Reynolds et al., 2008, p. 52). The majority run-off TRS is commonly used in many states that use majoritarian electoral systems in contemporary Africa. As illustrated by Table 2, these countries include Central African Republic, Comoros, Congo Republic, and Mali.

Table 2

Variations in Electoral Formula in Contemporary African States

Single-Member district plurality	Two-round plurality-majority	Two-round majority runoff	Party block vote	Hare quota
Botswana, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe	Gabon, Swaziland, Togo	Central African Republic, Comoros, Congo Republic, Mali	Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, Senegal, Tunisia	Madagascar (2007)
Hare Quota (HQ) with Largest Remainders or HQ with Highest Average	Remainders	Block Vote	Droop Largest Remainders	Droop Largest Remainders
Algeria, Benin (1991), Burkina Faso, Egypt, Madagascar (1993)	Madagascar (1998, 2002), Niger (2004, 2009), Benin 1995, 1996, 2003, 2007, Madagascar (1998, 2002)	Mauritius	South Africa	Angola, Burundi, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Sao Tome Principe

Sources: African Elections Database, IDEA, and IPU.

However, it is also important to point out a variation in TRS method as it is used in France and other places around the globe (Reynolds et al., 2008). While the United Kingdom is known for creating FPTP method, France is always referenced when it comes to the use of TRS method. Rather than using a majority run-off TRS method, France sets a magic number of 12.5% of the vote as a minimum quota that any candidates must win in the first round of a legislative in order to contest the second round if no one wins a majority of vote in the first round (Reynolds, et al., 2008). In doing so, the system allows more than two candidates in the second round of a legislative election. Such a system is simply called “majority-plurality TRS” (Reynolds et al., 2008, p. 52). In contemporary Africa, this system is used by countries such as Gabon, Swaziland, and Togo.

Without distinguishing the type of TRS, the TRS method is often praised not only for allowing voters a second chance to select their representatives, but also for minimizing vote-splitting by allowing coalition formation among candidates who have similar policy agendas but are in the competition to win over the same electorate. However, there is a high likelihood for party systems to be more fragmented in countries where TRS has been used than in countries where other single-member district systems are used.

Talking of party systems, Erdmann and Basedau (2008) note “Party system stability and competitiveness are positively associated with democracy in Africa” (p. 242) (Kuenzi & Lambright, 2001). For example, since 1992, Ghana, which has been using the FPTP method to translate votes into elected seats, is currently cited as a model of Africa’s democracy. Compared to its neighboring state, Togo, which not only uses TRS, but it is also classified as a country with restricted democratic practices by Freedom House, Ghana’s democratic status can be credited to the stability of its party system as a result of its reliance on FPTP system for votes allocation of the country’s parliamentary elections.

Effects of Block Vote Systems. Party fragmentation and vote-buying are usually associated with the use of BV systems in legislative elections (Nabki, 2012; UNAMI, 2008; Reynolds et al., 2008). By definition,

Block vote is a plurality/majority system used in multi-member districts. Electors have as many votes as there are candidates to be elected. The candidates with the highest vote totals win the seats. Usually voters vote for candidates rather than parties and in most systems may use as many, or as few, of their votes as they wish. (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance [International IDEA], 2013)

Because voters can cast as many votes as there are seats to be directly elected, in countries where BV systems are used, candidates of the same political party are allowed to compete against one another (Reynolds et al., 2008). In addition, as Reynolds et al. (2008) note it, the system allows voters to vote in many parties within their electoral district. This situation may result not only in massive corruption but also in internal party fragmentation and/or the fragmentation of the entire political system of countries where BV systems are used.

As identified by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance [International IDEA] (2012), in the world, there are 10 countries that use BV systems for the legislative/parliamentary elections. These countries include Cayman Islands with 15 elected seats in the national assembly, Falkland Islands or Malvinas (eight seats), Guernsey (45 seats), Kuwait (50 seats), Lao People's Democratic Republic (132 seats), Lebanon (128 seats), Mauritius (62 seats), Montserrat (nine seats), Syrian Arab Republic (250 seats), and Tuvalu (15 seats) (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance [International IDEA], 2012). Apart from Syrian Arab Republic, Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Lebanon, an analysis of the total number of seats directly elected to the legislatures in these countries shows that BV systems are usually adopted in countries that choose to have a small number of seats.

Because the BV systems are basically plurality/majority systems in multi-member constituencies, an absolute majority of seats is more likely to be won by bigger parties at the expense of smaller parties and minority groups. For instance, since 1990 in Mauritius, the only country in contemporary Africa that uses the Block Vote system for translating votes into seats, despite its reliance on what Reynolds et al. call "best loser" seats², suffered a problem of representation of minorities and smaller parties in the legislature.

According to African Elections Database (2012), in the 1991 Legislative Assembly elections, the ruling coalition called the Mauritian Militant Movement-Mauritian Socialist Movement (MMM-MSM) won 59 seats against three seats for its political opposition coalition, the Mauritian Labor Party-Mauritian Social-Democratic Party (MLP-PMSD), which was compensated with four best loser seats. The BV system allowed the ruling coalition to continue winning an absolute majority of seats (60 seats) in the 1995 National Assembly elections versus two seats for the opposition, and in the 2000 legislative elections, it won 54 seats against eight seats for the coalition of the opposition parties. Although the number of the best loser seats was increased from four to eight in the country's subsequent legislative elections, it did not help smaller parties, such as the Organization of the People of Rodrigues (OPR) and the Rodrigues Movement (RM) to play any significant role in the country's National Assembly since the Third Wave of Democratization.

In spite of their inefficacy in ensuring that smaller political parties and minority groups are fairly represented in parliaments, voter turnouts seem to be very high in countries where the BV systems are used with the exception of Lebanon and Syrian Arab Republic (International Institute for Democracy and Assistance [International IDEA], 2011). Table 3 shows voter turnouts in legislative/parliamentary elections in BV countries in the world during the last two decades. It also highlights whether voting is compulsory in each of these countries. A critical analysis of Table 3 reveals that compulsory voting has no effect on voters' decisions to turn out to vote. Political instability may have contributed to the low voter turnout in Lebanon and Syrian Arab Republic. As discussed earlier, a higher voter turnout indicates a high degree of political participation. Additionally, the lack of opportunity to participate in the political process has significant effects in the occurrences of post-election conflicts in contemporary Africa. According to African Elections Database,

² The best loser seats, according to Reynolds, et al. (2008), are seats that are guaranteed for the candidates who were front-runners in the exit poll but failed to gather enough vote to win seats in the actual legislative election.

Mauritius is one of the rare democratic countries in Africa with a political rights score of 1 and a civil liberties score of 2. These democratic scores indicate that Mauritius is less prone to socio-political conflicts in general and electoral conflict in particular.

Table 3

Voter Turnouts and Compulsory Voting in BV Countries in the World

Cayman Islands		
Year	Voter turnouts	Compulsory voting
2005	80.25%	No
Lao People's Democratic Republic		
2006	99.69%	No
2002	99.90%	No
1997	99.37%	No
1992	99.26%	No
Lebanon		
2009	53.98%	Yes
2005	46.47%	Yes
2000	44.97%	Yes
1996	43.14%	Yes
1992	30.35%	Yes
Mauritius		
2010	77.82%	No
2005	81.25%	No
1995	79.69%	No
1991	84.08%	No
Montserrat		
2009	66.75%	No
2006	74.63%	No
2001	77.48%	No
Syrian Arab Republic		
2007	56.00%	No
2003	63.45%	No
1998	82.22%	No
1994	61.17%	No
Tuvalu		
2002	79.99	No

Source: Retrieved from <http://www.idea.int/esd/type.cfm?electoralSystem=BV>

Effects of List Proportional Representation (List-PR). In a proportional representation system, “all groups influence a decision in proportion to their numerical strength” (Steiner, 1971, p. 63; Lijphart, 1977, p. 39). This system is just a complete opposite of the majority/plurality electoral system where only stronger parties dictate their decisions to smaller parties. To allow parties to be represented in the legislature, countries can choose between closed List-PR systems and open List-PR systems (Reynolds et al., 2008). Under a closed List-PR system, voters have no choice than to vote for candidates at the top of their parties’ lists or simply vote for the parties. In contrast, under an open List-PR system, “voters can influence the order of the candidates by making individual preferences (Reynolds et al., 2008, p. 60). In contemporary Africa, countries that have used PR systems adopted closed List-PR (African Elections Database, 2011; Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2013a). This may have unintended consequences on the political representation of women and minority groups or parties in parliaments or national assemblies if candidates of these groups do not make the top of the ballot lists.

Table 1 provides a comprehensive list of African countries that have used closed List-PR systems. In many of these countries, voters have not been given any incentives to select their representatives. They only vote political parties. In South Africa, for example, the PR system has opposite effect of what it is initially aimed for. Because of its vivid memories of apartheid, the majority black population has been mandating the African National Congress (ANC) to rule the country since 1994. This situation has resulted in one-party domination of the South Africa's Parliament. As an illustration, the ANC alone won 252 seats out of 400 seats in 1994, 266 seats in 1999, 279 seats in 2004, and 264 seats in 2009. This observation shows that PR systems may not always eliminate the winner-take-all or the majority rule over the minority groups. Despite an anomaly observed with the use of a PR system in South Africa, the system generally reduces disproportionality between percentages of votes and the actual percentages of seats won by parties.

As members of minority groups, women are often denied opportunities to fully participate in politics in many countries in the world. According to the United Nations, Politics has traditionally been a male domain that many women have found unwelcoming or even hostile. Societies in which traditional or patriarchal values remain strong may frown on women entering politics. In addition to dealing with unfavorable cultural predilections, women are often more likely than men to face practical barriers to entering politics, including a paucity of financial resources, lower levels of education, less access to information, greater family responsibilities, and a deprivation of rights that has left them with fewer opportunities to acquire political experience. With the exception of the close relatives of male politicians, women generally lack the political networks necessary for electoral success.

In many African countries, the use of closed List-PR systems has helped women to break down some of these barriers that have prevented them from entering politics. Therefore, the closed List-PR system has been praised for allowing a high degree of representation of women in the National Assemblies or Parliaments if female candidates are placed at the top on the winning party lists (Reynolds et al., 2008). For instance, South Africa has 42.25% of women serving as MPs since 2009 (IPU, 2014). In the recent legislative elections in Rwanda, 63.75% (that is 51 out of 80 seats won by women) of women were elected to the *Chambre des Députés* or Chamber of Deputies (IPU, 2014).

The next section presents and discusses Africa's mixed-member electoral systems and how the use of such systems affects voters and other political actors.

Effects of Mixed-Member Majoritarian (MMM) and Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) Systems.

By definition a mixed-member electoral system is a mixture of a single-member plurality (SMP) system and a PR system. Consequently, if a country uses a mixed-member electoral system, it has to provide two types of elections: SMP and PR elections (Farrell, 2011). These elections can be either dependent (MMP) or independent (MMM). Because of their linkage in MMP elections, the List-PR seats help to reduce the disproportionality of the SMP seats. Because of the results MMP elections produce, Massicotte and Blais (1999) call MMP systems the "corrective" systems while Farrell (2011) describes them as the systems that "provided the ideal compromise between the proportional virtues of the list electoral system and the district-orientation of SMP" (p. 117) (Kostadinova, 2002). According to Massicotte and Blais (1999), the MMP systems are called differently in different countries. For example, in Japan they are referred to as "superposition", "correction" in Germany, "coexistence" or "fusion" in France, and "conditional" in Italy (p. 341).

Between 1990 and 2010, in Djibouti, where an MMP system had been used in legislative elections, no opposition candidates had been elected to serve in the National Assembly despite the fact that the country

embraced a multi-party system since 1992 (African Elections Database, 2011; IPU, 2013b). The 1992 Constitutional Referendum in Djibouti limited the number of political parties to four, including the Democratic Renewal Party (PRD) and National Democratic Party (PND), the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD), and the People's Rally for Progress (PRP), the sole political party legally recognized by the state since the country's independence from France in 1977 (African Elections Database, 2011; CIA World Factbook, 2014).

The Union for a Democratic Alternative (UDA) is a coalition of two opposition political parties (Democratic Renewal Party (PRD) and National Democratic Party (PND)). Because of the UDA, which won no seat in the 2003 legislative elections and boycotted the legislative elections in 2008, the Union for a Presidential Majority (UPM), which is a coalition of the ruling PRP and the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD), had maintained its monopoly of the country's national Assembly by winning all the 65 elected seats. The question one has to ask is that if the MMP system is praised for offering the best of both the SMP and PR systems (Shugart & Wattenberg, 2001), why had Djibouti's political system been monopolized by a single party over the last two decades? As it becomes a routine for the opposition to boycott the elections in Djibouti, it will be extremely difficult for scholars and researchers in the field of comparative study of electoral systems to really evaluate the impact of the MMP system on the allocation of votes and seats in the country's National Assembly. One can simply argue that the use of the MMP system in Djibouti has produced unintended consequences given that the country's legislative elections held since 1992 produced results that would be similar to election results under the winner-take-all systems or majority/plurality systems.

Unlike Djibouti, where political parties and their candidates not only fight for legislative seats but also to win over the presidency, Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy, where only members of the National Assembly are elected by voters. Therefore, the focus of each political party has always been on how to win a majority of seats in the National Assembly and thereby nominate the leader of the party as the country's Prime Minister. Following the military coup in 1986, a military regime was established in Lesotho from 1986 to 1993. In the first democratic legislative elections held in March 1993, the ruling Basutoland Congress Party (BCP), with only 74.78% of the vote, won 100% of seats or 65 seats against none for more than 10 political opposition parties and independents. In May 1998, the ruling party—at this time under the umbrella of Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD)—won 79 out of 80 seats with 60.72% of the vote. Its immediate challenger, the Basotho National Party (BNP), won only one seat with 24.47% of the vote (African Elections Database, 2012).

Both the 1993 and 1998 National Assembly elections were held under the FPTP system. The frustration of opposition parties, especially the BNP, for not being represented in the parliament after the 1993 elections, carried over the 1998 National Assembly election results that they qualified as fraudulent. Elklit (2008) wrote,

A discrepancy of this kind should not come as a surprise—it had happened before—but it was followed by the losing parties, especially the main opposition party, the Basotho National Party (BNP), crying “Foul”. This was also nothing new, but it was a sad surprise that the accusations about the overall correctness of the 1998 election results (which were never seriously challenged) sometime after they were published, incensed the public to such a degree that they started rioting in the streets of the capital, Maseru, setting fire to and demolishing public as well as private buildings. (p. 92)

The turmoil created in the aftermath of the publication of the 1998 election results was met with the intervention of the South African troops in Lesotho in the name of maintaining regional peace and security, protecting the interests of South Africa (Neethling, 1999), and “[creating] a safe environment in which Lesotho's problems could be negotiated” (Sutton-Pryce, Baudin, & Allie, 1998, p. 26; Neethling, 2000, p. 5;

Neethling, 1999). According to Kent and Malan (2003), “on 22 September 1998, a 600-strong South African military task force entered Lesotho to assist the government in restoring law and order following election-related unrest” (p. 3). The decision to adopt an MMP system in Lesotho was not something that came in a vacuum. It was a fruit of a series of negotiations between the opposition parties and the government under the auspices of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (Elklit, 2008; Santho, 2000).

The outcome of SADC’s mediation of good offices between the protagonists of the 1998 Lesotho’s post-election conflict was the creation of an Interim Political Authority (IPA) (Elklit, 2008; UN Peacemaker 1999; EISA, n. d.). The IPA, whose main duties and responsibilities were “to review the constitution, the IEC, the Lesotho electoral system and the Electoral Code of Conduct and to make appropriate recommendations to the relevant public institutions on its structures and functions with a view to making it more democratic and representative of the people of Lesotho” (EISA, n.d.), was composed of 12 political parties that equally represented with two representative each (UN Peacemaker, 1999).

The IPA was able to reach a political compromise with the government, which accepted an MMP electoral system with 80 SMP seats and 40 PR seats. This MMP system helped ease the political tension that prevailed in the aftermath of the 1998 National Assembly elections in Lesotho. Although the LCD was able to win 77 SMP seats in the May 2002 elections with 54.89% of the votes and the two vacant seats in the October 2002 elections, the opposition parties came out stronger than ever before by taking not only all the 40 PR seats but also the one remaining SMP seat, thanks to the MMP system used to translate votes into elected seats in the 2002 National Assembly elections in Lesotho (African Election Database, 2012).

The degree of representativeness of the opposition parties increased in both the 2007 and 2012 National Assembly elections when these opposition parties tried to close the disproportionality gap with the LCD by winning 58 seats in 2007, and took over the National Assembly with 94 out of 120 seats. With this extraordinary change in the political landscape in Lesotho, one can argue that the adoption of an MMP system helped facilitate the democratization process in the country. Therefore, since 2002, Lesotho has been propelled to the democratic status with a Freedom House political rights score of 3, and civil liberties score of 3 (African Elections Database, 2012).

Unlike the MMP systems, where the SMP election and PR elections are linked, under the MMM electoral systems, SMP and PR elections are independently held. The independence of these SMP and PR elections means that under the MMM systems, there are no compensatory seats. Because of the lack of connection between the two systems (SMP and PR) in MMM systems, MMM systems tend to be less proportional than MMP systems. In contemporary Africa, countries that have consistently used the MMM systems include Cameroon, Chad, DRC, Egypt, Guinea, Senegal, and Seychelles (see Table 1).

Elections and Party Systems

The literature on party systems in Africa not only started late (Erdmann & Basedau, 2008; Manning, 2005; Erdmann, 2004; 1999), but also is still at its early stages (Van de Walle, 2003; Scarritt & Mozaffar, 1999). However, Erdmann and Basedau (2008) argue that “While systematic research on political parties as organizations is still lacking, there has been increasing focus on the new emerging party systems and their relation to democratic consolidation” (p. 241). As successful and repetitive free and fair elections may give rise to democratic consolidation (Powell, 2000), party systems also remain one of the drivers of democratic survival and sustainability.

By sustainable democracy, I mean a democratic polity that it is able not only to address the needs and concerns of its current populations, but also to address such needs without compromising the needs of future generations. So far in contemporary Africa, countries such as Benin, Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Mauritius, Namibia, Sao Tomé Principe, and South Africa can be cited as African states that are moving in the direction of sustainable democracy because of their continuous efforts to strengthen their democratic institutions.

By contrast, Mali was a palpable example of what a sustainable democracy may not look like. Indeed, between 1992 and 2012, Mali was hailed as a model of Africa's democracy for its relatively peaceful elections that established two different democratic regimes (one under President Alpha Oumar Conaré, and the other one under President Amadou Toumani Touré) (African Elections Database, 2012). However, the country was not able to address many underlying grievances including, but not limited to, "poor governance, the corrosive impact of drug trafficking and other illicit commerce, military fragmentation and collapse, limited implementation of previous peace accords with Tuareg rebel groups" (Arieff, 2013, p. 6). The failure by the Malian government to seriously tackle those issues may have contributed to the public support for the military coup that ousted President Touré and led to a near collapse of the state of Mali in 2012.

How do party systems help sustain Africa's democratic regimes? A simple answer, according to Lindberg (2007), is that democratic sustainability requires both "stability and fluidity among legislative parties in Africa's democracies" (p. 215). When a political party is able to ensure its continuity not only by increasing its membership with vibrant members, but also by providing policy options that respond to the needs and interests of its constituents, such a party can be referred to as a stable and fluid party (Lindberg, 2007). In addition, Lindberg (2007) joins his predecessors Sartori (1976), Mainwaring and Scully (1995) when he stresses the importance of institutionalization of political parties as a prerequisite of democratic consolidation.³

Indeed, to find out whether institutionalization of party systems occurs in Africa, Lindberg (2007) conducts an interesting study on 21 African countries that he refers to at the time as either electoral democracies or emerging electoral democracies based on their Freedom House score of political rights and civil liberties of (4, 4) or below after "at least two successful elections" (p. 228). These countries include Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Djibouti, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Sao Tomé Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zambia. As expected, he finds that in these countries, party systems had not been institutionalized. Rather, they were either fluid (Benin, Burkina Faso, Madagascar, Mali, Sao Tomé Principe, Seychelles, and Zambia) or de-stabilized (Kenya and Senegal) or stable (Botswana, Cape Verde, Djibouti, Ghana, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, and Tanzania) (Lindberg, 2007, pp. 231-233).

Equally important, the period of Lindberg's study covered only 14 years that stretch "from 1989 to June 2003" (p. 230), and was published in 2007. Erdmann and Basedau (2008) use a stricter criterion than Lindberg by including in their analysis of African party systems countries that held "at least three consecutive elections"

³ According to Lindberg, "stability" and "interaction" are key elements of institutionalization of party systems. The author identifies eight indicators of institutionalization as follows: The number of parties in the legislature, the number of new parties in the legislature, the share of new parties in the legislature, the number of parties voted out of the legislature, the share of parties voted out as compared to the total number of parties that compete in the election, the share of seats in the legislature held by the largest party, and the share of seats held by the runner-up. The higher the number on these indicators over time, the more fluid the party systems. The party systems become stable if parties that contest elections and winning seats are almost the same during every election. One talks of de-stabilized party systems if the dominant parties lost power. See Lindberg, S. I. (2007). *Institutionalization of Party Systems? Stability and Fluidity among Legislative Parties in Africa's Democracy. Government and opposition*, 42(2), pp. 215-241, for a detailed discussion of measuring institutionalization of party systems.

(p. 244). The rationale behind the “three consecutive elections” criterion is to determine how consistent interactions among legislative parties in these countries are. Like Lindberg (2007), these authors are not only inspired by Sartori’s (1976) work on the classification of party systems in terms of “‘dominant’ and ‘predominant’ party” (Erdmann & Basedau, 2008, p. 242), but they also build on the work of scholars, such as Hartmann (2007), Mozaffar and Scarritt (2005), Lindberg (2005), Bogaards (2004), Mozaffar, Scarritt and Galaich (2003), Nohlen, Krennerich and Thibaut (1999), Scarritt and Mozaffar (1999), Van de Walle and Buttler (1999), who have tremendous expertise in the study of African party systems.

In their investigation, Erdmann and Basedau (2008) find that countries such as Botswana, Burkina Faso (1992-1997 and 2002), Cameroon, Chad (1997 and 2002), Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Lesotho (1993-1998, and 2002), Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Seychelles, Sierra Leone (2002), South Africa, Tanzania, and Togo have dominant party systems; Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, and Senegal have two-party systems; Central African Republic, Comoros, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Niger, Sao Tomé Principe, Sierra Leone (1996), and Zambia have moderate pluralism party systems; and Benin (1991, 1995-2003) and Republic of Congo have extreme pluralism party systems (p. 248).

With regard to the relationship between electoral systems and party systems in Africa, Erdmann and Basedau (2008) find that 50% of one-party dominance can be found in countries (i.e. Djibouti and Mauritius) that use plurality systems in multi-member constituencies (MMCs); 58% in countries [Botswana, Cote d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho (1993-1998), Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe] where plurality systems in single-member constituencies (SMCs) have been used; 56% in countries [Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad (1997), Comoros, Gabon, Mali, Mauritania, and Togo] where absolute majority in SMC or MMC have been used; 57% in MMM and MMP countries [Chad (2002), Guinea, Lesotho (2002), Madagascar, Niger, Senegal, Seychelles]; 25% in PR countries [Benin (1995-2003), Burkina Faso (1992-1997), Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau with small MMC; 80% in PR countries [Benin (1991), Burkina Faso (2002), Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique, and Sierra Leone (2002)] with medium and large MMC; and 67% of one-party dominance in pure PR countries [Namibia, Sierra Leone (1996) and South Africa] (p. 248). An analysis of these findings demonstrates that despite the existence of highly fractionalized ethnic cleavages in many African states (Mozaffar & Vengroff, 2002; Vengroff, 1994, 1993), and in spite of the variations in African electoral systems, the continent is still experiencing the preponderance of dominant party systems (Erdmann & Basedau, 2008).

Building on previous literature on African party systems and Erdmann and Basedau’s (2008) theoretical contributions to the study of electoral systems and party systems, this paper looks beyond 2003, expands the discussion on elections and party systems in Africa, and provides a comprehensive overview of how such party systems affect the promotion of democracy across the continent during the time span of 1990 and 2010. The effects of the variations of party systems coupled with the impact of the variations of electoral systems on the democratization process in contemporary Africa are summarized in Table 4 (see Appendix). In future studies, the author will provide a detailed account on the roles of the political institutions, the civil society, and the traditional authorities in shaping the democratization processes in these six African states: Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal and Togo, in comparative perspective. The selection of these cases is based on two critically intervening variables, including the level of electoral conflict and types of electoral rules used by each of these countries.

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Appendix

Table 4

African Models of Electoral Systems and Party Systems

Countries	Years of legislative elections	Electoral systems	# of Parties/ coalitions at the polls	# of parties in the legislature	Names of party with most or coalition	# of Majority Seats	Party systems	Democratic/ freedom status
Algeria	1997 2002 2007	PR PR PR	10 pro-governme nt parties & indpts 9 & indpts 24 & indpts	10 & 11 indpts 9 & 30 indpts 23	RND FLN FLN	156/380 199/381 136	Dominant (Dom.) Moderate (M) Pluralism (pl.)	Not free Not free
Angola	1992 2008	PR PR	18 14	12 6	MPLA MPLA	129/220 191/220	Dominant. Dominant	Not Free Not free
Benin	1991 1995 1999 2003 2007	PR PR PR PR PR	14 18 16 12 12	12 18 16 12 12	UTRD PRB RB MP* FCBE	12/64 21/83 27/83 52/83 35/83	Extreme pluralism (E, pl.) E. pl. E. pl. E. pl. M. pl.	Free Free Free Free Free
Botswana	1994 1999 2004 2009	MA MA MA MA	5 & others 5 & indpts 7 & indpts 7 & indpts	2 3 3 5	BDP BDP BDP BDP	27/40 33/40 44/57 45/57	Dom. Dom. Dom. Dom.	Free Free Free Free
Burkina Faso	1992 1997 2002 2007	PR PR PR PR	10 4 & others 13 13	10 4 13 13	ODP-MT CDP CDP CDP	78/107 101/111 57/111 73/111	Dom. Dom. Dom. Dom.	Not free Not free Not free Not free
Burundi	1993 2005 2010	PR PR PR	7 7 4	2 5 3	FRODEBU CNDD-FDD	65/81 59/100 80/100	Dom. Dom. Dom.	Not free Partly free Partly free
Cameroon	1992 1997 2002 2007	MMM MMM MMM MMM	4 8 5 5	4 8 5 5	RDPC RDPC RDPC RDPC	88/180 109/180 149/180 153/180	Dom. Dom. Dom. Dom.	Not free Not free Not free Not free
Cape Verde	1991 1995 2001 2006	PR PR PR PR	2 5 5 5	2 3 3 3	MpD MpD MpD MpD	56/79 50/72 40/72 41/72	Two-party	Free Free Free Free
Central African Rep.	1993 1998 2005	MA/TRS MA/TRS MA/TRS	13 13 9	13 13 9	MLPC UFAP KNK	34/85 55/109 42/105	M. pl. *Two-party E. pl.	Partly free Partly free Partlyfree
Chad	1997 2002	MMM MMM	10 15	10 15	MPS MPS	65/125 113/155	Dom. Dom.	Not free Not free
Comoros	1992 1993 1996 2004 2009	MA/TRS MA/TRS MA/TRS MA/TRS MA/TRS	6 & others 9 2 & indpts 2 3	7 9 2 & indpts 2 3	UDD RDR RND CdIA Baobab Movement	7/42 28/42 36/43 12/18 17/24	E. pl. M. pl. M. pl. Dom. Dom.	Not free Not free Not free Partly free Partly free
Congo Rep.	1992 1993 2002 2007	TRS TRS TRS TRS	19 & indpts 14 & 1 indpt 6 18 & indpts	19 & indpts 14 & 1 indpt 6 18	UPADS UPADS PCT PCT	39/125 47/125 53/137 46/137	E. pl. M. pl. M.pl. E. pl	P. free P. free Not free Not free

(table 4 continued)

Countries	Years of legislative elections	Electoral systems	# of Parties/coalitions at the polls	# of Parties in the legislature	Names of party with Most or coalition	# of majority seats	Party systems	Democratic/freedom status
Cote d'Ivoire	1990	FPTP	3 & others & indpts	3 & indpts	PDCI-RDA	163/175	M. pl	Not free
	1995	FPTP	3	3	PDCI-RDA	148/175	M. pl.	Not free
	2000	FPTP	6 & indpts	6 & indpts	FPI	96/225	M. pl.	Not free
Democratic Rep. of Congo	2006	MMM	Over 80 & indpts	Over 80 & indpts	PPRD	111/500	M. pl.	Not free
Djibouti	1992	MMP	2	1	RPP	65/65	Dom.	Not free
	1997	MMP	3	2	RPP	54/65	Dom.	Not free
	2002	MMP	2	1	UMP	65/65	Dom.	Partly free
Egypt								
Equatorial Guinea	1993	PR	83 & others	4	PDGE	68/80	Dom.	Not free
	1999	PR	3 & others	3	PDGE	75/80	Dom.	Not free
	2004	PR	3	3	PDGE	68/100	Dom.	Not free
	2008	PR	3	3	PDGE	89/10	Dom.	Not free
Ethiopia	1994	FPTP	1 & others	1 & others	EPRDF	484/547	Dom.	Not free
	1995	FPTP	1, others & indpts	1, others & indpts	EPRDF	483/548	Dom.	Not free
	2000	FPTP	6, others & indpts	6, others & indpts	EPRDF	481/547	Dom.	Not free
	2005	FPTP	11 & 1 indpt	11 & 1 indpt	EPRDF	327/547	Dom.	Not free
	2010	FPTP			EPRDF	499/547	Dom.	Partly free
Gabon	1990	TRS	8	8	PDG	63/120	M. Pl.	Not free
	1996	FPTP	12 & indpts	12 & indpts	PDG	85/120	Dom.	Not free
	2001	FPTP	10 & indpts	10 & indpts	PDG	86/120	Dom.	Not free
	2006	FPTP	13 & indpts	13 & indpts	PDG	82/120	Dom.	Partly free
Gambia	1992	FPTP	5 & indpts	3 & indpts	PPP	25/36	Dom.	Free
	1997	FPTP	4 & indpts	4 & indpts	APRC	33/45	Dom.	Not free
	2002	FPTP	3	3	APRC	45/48	Dom.	Not free
	2007	FPTP	3 & indpts	3 & 1 indpt	APRC	42/48	Dom.	Partly free
Ghana	1992	FPTP	3 & indpts	3 & indpts	NDC	189/200	Two-party	Free
	1996	FPTP	4	4	NDC	133/200	Two-party	Free
	2000	FPTP	6 & others	6 & others	NPP	99/200	Two-party	Free
	2004	FPTP	4 & indpts	4 & indpts	NPP	128/230	Two-party	Free
	2008	FPTP	4 & indpts	4 & indpts	NDC	114/230		Free
Guinea	1995	MMM	9	9	PUP	41/76	Dom.	Not free
	2002	MMM	9	6	PUP	47/76	Dom.	Not free
Guinea-Bissau	1994	PR	8	6	PAIGC	62/100	M. pl.	Partly free
	1999	PR	8	8	PRS	38/100	M. pl.	Partly free
	2004	PR	15	5	PAIGC	45/100	M. pl.	Not free
	2008	PR	21	5	PAIGC	67/100	M. pl.	Partly free
Kenya	1992	FPTP	7	7	KANU	100/188	Dom.	Not free
	1997	FPTP	10	10	KANU	107/210	Dom.	Not free
	2002	FPTP	10	10	NARC	125/210	Two-party	Partly free
	2007	FPTP	23	23	ODM & Allies			Not free
Lesotho	1993	FPTP	12 & indpts	1	BCP	65/65	Dom.	Partly free
	1998	FPTP	4 & others	2	LCD	78/80	Dom.	Not free
	2002	MMP	15	2	LCP	79/80	Dom.	Partly free
	2007	MMP	12	3	LCP	62/80	Dom.	Partly free
Liberia	1997	FPTP	13	6	NPP	49/64	Dom.	Partly free
	2005	FPTP	21 & indpts	11	CDC	15	M.pl.	Partly free

(table 4 continued)

Countries	Years of Legislative Elections	Electoral Systems	# of Parties/ Coalitions at the Polls	# of Parties in the Legislature	Names of Party with Most or Coalition	# of Majority Seats	Party Systems	Democratic/ Freedom Status
Madagascar	1993 1998 2002 2007	PR MMM MMM FPTP	14 & others 9 & others 2 & others	14 & others 9 & others 5, others & indpts 2 & others	CFV AREMA TIM TIM	47/138 63/150 103/160 105/127	M. pl. M. pl. Dom. Dom.	Partly free Partly free Partly free Partly free
Malawi	1994 1999 2004 2009	FPTP FPTP FPTP FPTP	8 & indpts 10 & indpts 9, others & indpts 6 & indpts	3 3 & indpts 9, others & indpts 6 & 33 indpts	UDF UDF MCP DPP	84/177 93/193 57/193 113/193	M. pl. M. pl. M. pl. Ml. Pl.	Free Partly free Partly free Partly free
Mali	1992 1997 2002 2007	TRS TRS TRS TRS	10 8 9 & indpts 16 & indpts	10 8 9 & indpts 16 & 15 indpts	ADEMA ADEMA Espoir 2002* ADP*	76/116 128/147 66 115/147	M. pl. Dom. Two-party Dom.	Free Free Free Free
Mauritania	1992 1996 2001 2006	TRS TRS TRS TRS	3 & indpts 3 & indpts 7 15 & indpts	3 & 10 indpts 3 & 7 indpts 7 15 & 41 indpts	PRDS PRDS PRDS RFD	67/79 70/79 64/81 15/95	Dom. Dom. Dom. E. pl.	Not free Not free Not free Not free
Mauritius	1991 1995 2000 2005	BV BV BV BV	5 6 4 4	5 3 3 3	MMM-MSM* MMM-MSM MMM-MSM AS	59/62 60/62 54/62 38/62	M.pl. M. pl. M. pl. M. pl.	Free Free Free Free
Morocco								
Mozambique	1994 1999 2004 2009	PR PR PR PR	14 12 21 19	3 2 2 3	FRELIMO FRELIMO FRELIMO FRELIMO	129/250 133/250 160/250 191/250	Dom. Dom. Dom. Dom.	Partly free Partly free Partly free Partly free
Namibia	1994 1999 2004 2009	PR PR PR PR	8 8 9 14	5 5 7 9	SWAPO SWAPO SWAPO SWAPO	53/72 55/72 55/72 54/72	Dom. Dom. Dom. Dom.	Free Free Free Free
Niger	1993 1995 1996 1999 2004 2009	M MMM MMM MMM MMM MMM	9 9 9 5 10 & others 7 & indpts	9 9 9 5 10 7 & 10 indpts	AFC* MNSD-Nassara UNIRD MNSD-Nassara MNSD-Nassara MNSD-Nassara	50/83 29/83 56/83 38/83 47/83 76/113	M. pl. M. pl. Dom. M. pl. M. pl. Dom.	Partly free Partly free Not free Partly free Partly free Partly free
Nigeria	1992 1998 1999 2003 2007	FPTP FPTP FPTP FPTP FPTP	2 5 3 7 & others 6	2 5 3 7 5	SDP UNCPC PDP PDP PDP	314/593 229/282 206/360 223/360 263/360	Dom. Dom. Dom. Dom. Dom.	Not free Not free Partly free Partly free Not free
Rwanda	2003 2008	PR PR	8 & indpts 9 & indpts	7 8	FPR-led coalition FPR-led coalition	40/50 42/53	Dom. Dom.	Not free Not free
Sao Tomé & Príncipe	1991 1994 1998 2002 2006 2010	PR PR PR PR PR PR	4 & others 6 4 & others 5 10 10	3 3 3 3 4 4	PCD-GR MLSTP-PSD MLSTP-PSD MLSTP-PSD MLSTP-PSD ADI	33/55 27/55 31/55 24/55 23/55 26/55	M. pl. M. pl. M. pl. M. pl. M. pl. M. pl.	Free Free Free Free Free Free

(table 4 continued)

Countries	Years of Legislative Elections	Electoral Systems	# of Parties/ Coalitions at the Polls	# of Parties in the Legislature	Names of Party with Most or Coalition	# of Majority Seats	Party Systems	Democratic/ Freedom Status
Senegal	1993	MMM	6	6	PS	84/120	Dom.	Not free
	1998	MMM	18	11	PS	93/140	Dom.	Not free
	2001	MMM	10 & others	10	Sopi coalition	89/120	Dom.	Partly free
	2007	MMM	14	13	Sopi 2007 coalition	131/150	Dom.	Partly free
Seychelles	1993	MMM	3	2	SPPF	21/22	Dom.	Partly free
	1998	MMM	3 & 1 indpt	2	SPPF	24/25	Dom.	Partly free
	2002	MMM	4 & indpts	2	SPPF	18/25	Dom.	Partly free
	2007	MMM	2	2	SPPF	18/25	Dom.	Partly free
Sierra Leone	1996	PR	13	6	SLPP	27/68	M. pl.	Not free
	2002	PR	7	3	SLPP	83/112	Dom.	Partly free
	2007	PR	7 & indpts	3	APC	59	M. pl.	Partly free
South Africa	1994	PR	19	7	ANC	252/400	Dom.	Free
	1999	PR	16	13	ANC	266/400	Dom.	Free
	2004	PR	21	12	ANC	279/400	Dom.	Free
	2009	PR	26	13	ANC	264/400	Dom.	Free
Sudan	2000	MMM	1 & indpts	1 & 5 indpts	NCP	355/360	Dom.	Not free
	2010	MMM	8, others & indpts	8, others & 3indpts	NCP	323/450	Dom.	Not free
Swaziland	1993-2010	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	55 Seats are indirectly elected and 10 seats appointed by the King	N/A	Not free
Tanzania	1995	FPTP	13	5	CCM	186/232	Dom.	Not free
	2000	FPTP	13	6	CCM	202/231	Dom.	Not free
	2005	FPTP	18	5	CCM	206/232	Dom.	Partly free
	2010	FPTP	6 & others	6	CCM	186/239	Dom.	Partly free
Togo	1994	TRS	5	5	CAR	36/81	M. pl.	Not free
	1999	TRS	1 & indpts	1 & 2 indpts	RPT	79/81	Dom.	Not free
	2002	TRS	5 & indpts	5 & 1 indpt	RPT	72/81	Dom.	Not free
	2007	TRS	Over 20 & indpts	3	RPT	50/81	Dom.	Not free
Tunisia								
Uganda	2006	FPTP	6 & indpts	6 & 36 indpts	NRM	191/284	Dom.	Partly free
Zambia	1991	FPTP	2	2	MMD	125/150	Dom.	Free
	1996	FPTP	5 & others	5	MMD	131/150	Dom.	Not free
	2001	FPTP	8, others & indpts	7 & 1 indpt	MMD	69/150	M. pl.	Not free
	2006	FPTP	5 & indpts	5 & 2 indpts	MMD	74/150	M. pl.	Partly free
Zimbabwe	1990	FPTP	5 & indpts	3	ZANU-PF	117/120	Dom.	Not free
	1995	FPTP	7 & indpts	2	ZANU-PF	118/120	Dom.	Not free
	2000	FPTP	3 & others	3	ZANU-PF	62/120	Dom.	Not free
	2005	FPTP	5 & indpts	2 & 1 indpt	ZANU-PF	78/120	Dom.	Not free

Sources: African Elections Database, supplemented with IDEA Database, and IPU Database; MPLA = Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola; http://africanelections.tripod.com/electoral_democracies.html