

Staffan I. Lindberg

Institutionalization of Party Systems? Stability and Fluidity among Legislative Parties in Africa's Democracies

Political parties created democracy, and a modern democracy without parties is inconceivable.¹

MODERN REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY MEANS PARTY DEMOCRACY AND when political parties are created in new democracies and start interacting they create party systems. Using Sartori's and Mainwaring and Scully's work on consolidation and institutionalization of party systems as touchstones,² this article analyses the evolution of party systems with regards to stability and fluidity of legislative party configurations in Africa's democratic states. It examines the key issue of whether there is any stabilization of party systems in Africa today, and if so, under what circumstances such stabilization occurs. Conversely, it also looks at cases of continued fluid party systems and/or countries transitioning from stability to volatility. In short, are we seeing the formation and institutionalization of party systems in Africa in terms of structured interaction between a set of parties?

The study of the interaction of political parties in terms of systems is important since parties can only satisfactorily fulfil many of their presumed democratic functions – such as recruitment of future leaders, aggregation of interests and accountability – if the configuration of parties remains relatively stable. The institutionalization-*cum*-stabilization of a party system is thus an important aspect of making democracy work. While previous work on Africa in this area has focused on whether party systems in

¹ Elmer E. Schattschneider, *Party Government*, New York, Farrar and Rinehart, 1942.

² Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework of Analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976; Scott P. Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, 'Party Systems in Latin America', in Scott P. Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully (eds), *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995.

Africa can be at all conceptualized in line with the comparative literature;³ the characteristics of party systems;⁴ dominant party systems;⁵ or the effects of various features of party systems on democratization,⁶ the present paper questions these studies, arguing that we have not yet sufficiently answered the question of whether party systems as stable interactions exist in Africa. By providing a more detailed analysis over a longer series of elections in Africa's established and emerging democracies, this study reduces the level of uncertainty of the conclusions induced in other studies by their restricted or ambiguous inclusion of cases. By making a distinction between democratic and undemocratic countries, this study also allows for more valid conclusions about party systems, thereby improving on earlier studies.

Using several indicators of party system stability, this article finds that Africa's 21 electoral democracies can be classified as fluid (eight countries), de-stabilized (two countries), or stable party systems (11 countries), and that eight out of 11 stable systems are one-party dominant. A key finding is that institutionalization of these party systems has *not* occurred over an extended period as the comparative literature would suggest and seems largely unrelated to the electoral system. Rather, institutionalized party system configurations have been stable from the onset of multiparty elections. Conversely, the other large group of countries with non-institutionalized party systems seem to be perpetually fluid systems, despite in many cases having four or five successive multiparty elections as in Madagascar and Sao Tome and Principe.

³ Carrie Manning, 'Assessing African Party Systems After the Third Wave', *Party Politics*, 11: 6 (2005), pp. 707–27.

⁴ Shaheen Mozaffar and James R. Scarritt, 'The Puzzle of African Party Systems', *Party Politics*, 11: 4 (2005), pp. 399–421.

⁵ Matthijs Bogaards, 'Counting Parties and Identifying Dominant Party Systems in Africa', *European Journal of Political Research*, 43 (2004), pp. 173–97; and Nicholas van de Walle and K. S. Butler, 'Political Parties and Party Systems in Africa's Illiberal Democracies', *Cambridge Review of International Studies*, 13: 1 (1999), pp. 14–28.

⁶ Michelle Kuenzi and Gina Lambright, 'Party Institutionalization in 30 African Countries', *Party Politics*, 7: 4 (2001), pp. 438–68; and Michelle Kuenzi and Gina Lambright, 'Party Systems and Democratic Consolidation in Africa's Electoral Regimes', *Party Politics*, 11: 4 (2005), pp. 423–46.

PARTY AND PARTY SYSTEM FORMATION

In earlier publications, I have argued that repetitive elections in Africa's third wave of democratization tended to be self-reinforcing leading to successively more democratic elections. This has also had positive impacts on gender representation; on opposition parties' learning and adaptation to electoral politics; as well as enhancing and deepening de facto civil liberties in society, opening up new understandings of the role of elections as a causal variable in democratization.⁷ One aspect of democratization not captured in these publications is the question of party and party-system formation. Party system requires political parties; the creation of which have been given various explanations in the study of established democracies. This article is not about the reasons for party formation, be they social cleavages, the inability of existing parties to be responsive, the strategic interaction of organized groups facing distinct electoral institutions, or a configuration of voters' preferences.⁸ Regardless of

⁷ On the self-reinforcing power of elections, see Staffan I. Lindberg, 'The Democratic Quality of Multiparty Elections: Participation, Competition and Legitimacy in Africa', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Studies*, 42: 1 (2004), pp. 61–104; on the effects on gender representation, see Staffan I. Lindberg, 'Democratization and Women's Empowerment: The Effects of Electoral Systems, Participation and Repetition in Africa', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 39: 1 (2004), pp. 28–53; on the adaptation and learning of opposition parties, see Staffan I. Lindberg, 'Tragic Protest: Why Do Opposition Parties Boycott Elections?', in Andreas Schedler (ed.), *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*, Boulder, CO, Lynne Rienner, 2006, pp. 209–30; and on democratization and the enhancing of civil liberties, see Staffan I. Lindberg, *Democracy and Elections in Africa*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006, and Staffan I. Lindberg, 'The Surprising Significance of African Elections', *Journal of Democracy*, 17: 1 (2006), pp. 139–51.

⁸ On social cleavages, see Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan, 'Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction', in Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan (eds), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross National Perspectives*, New York, The Free Press, 1967; on the inability of existing parties to be responsive, see Charles Hauss and David Rayside, 'The Development of New Parties in Western Democracies Since 1945', in Louis Maisel and Joseph Cooper (eds), *Political Parties: Development and Decay*, Beverly Hills, Sage Publications, 1978; and Elmer E. Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America*, Hinsdale, Dryden Press, 1960; on the strategic interaction of organized groups, see Maurice Duverger, *Les Partis Politiques*, Paris, Colin, 1954; and on configuration of voters' preferences, see Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, New York, Harper & Row, 1957.

their origin, parties in a democracy are not only supposed to participate in the quest for political office, they are expected to aggregate preferences, channel demands from voters, recruit leaders, represent constituents and mobilize citizens on political issues; by doing so, they are supposed to be the link between citizens and political elites in a democratic system.

Being this link gives political parties a unique role and function in any political system. Parties are both the principal actors in top-level decision-making processes and at the same time they are typically present among the population in some form of local-level organization. However, in order to fulfil their democratic functions to provide accountability, policy preference predictability and aggregation of interests in society, the configuration of political parties must be more durable and institutionalized rather than fluid electoral vehicles of power-seeking entrepreneurs. Even the electoral logic of vertical accountability depends largely on a persistence of political parties.⁹ It is impossible, for example, to 'throw the rascals out' if they cease to exist and equally impossible for voters to perform any kind of retrospective evaluation of parties if the political scene is continuously refabricated. This is also partly the reason why Sartori in his seminal work emphasized the need for a distinction between structured and unstructured party systems, the latter being in flux, presenting unclear and untested alternatives to voters.¹⁰ Along these lines it has been argued recently by Manning that political parties in Africa – as opposed from those in established democracies – were formed as elite enterprises and vehicles of competition and control over the masses.¹¹ Similarly, Hyden argues that what looks like political parties in Africa today are really either dominant movements or a multitude of personalized organizations with little root in society.¹² If, as argued by both Manning and Hyden, political parties have not 'matured' or 'transformed' to be 'real' political parties in the sense

⁹ Scott P. Mainwaring and Marino Torcal, 'Party System Institutionalization and Party System Theory After the Third Wave of Democratization', in Richard S. Katz and William Crotty (eds), *Handbook of Political Parties*, London, Sage Publications, 2006, pp. 204–5.

¹⁰ Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*.

¹¹ Manning, 'Assessing African Party Systems'.

¹² Goran Hyden, 'Barriers to Party Systems in Africa: The Movement Legacy', paper presented at the African Studies Association 48th Annual Conference, Washington, DC, 17–20 November 2005.

assumed by democratic theory, then they are less likely to fulfil their democratic functions. The conclusion of both authors is that analysing the regularization of party competition in Africa using mainstream comparative concepts is misleading and amounts to conceptual stretching.

While Sartori also argued that a special typology of party systems was necessary for Africa's 'fluid' polities,¹³ other scholars take a different approach. Students of party systems in Latin America, Asia, the post-Communist region and Africa have uncritically assumed the importance of using general categorizations.¹⁴ In this vein, Mozaffar and Scarritt sought to explain a 'puzzle of African party systems' that, according to the authors, consists of a combination of low party-system fragmentation and high electoral and legislative volatility. However, I agree with Bogaards that this puzzle does not require any explanation as it does not exist.¹⁵ First, the authors' analysis suffers from the ecological fallacy inherent in making deductions about the party systems of individual countries from aggregate data on continental averages, or for that matter, averages of elections in groups of countries such as 'established' and 'third wave democracies'.¹⁶ Continental, or group, averages cannot be used to make conclusions about individual countries' party systems. For example, a continental pattern of relatively few parties (low

¹³ Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*.

¹⁴ On Latin America, see Michael Coppedge, 'The Dynamic Diversity of Latin American Party Systems', *Party Politics*, 4: 4 (1998), pp. 547–68; Mainwaring and Scully, 'Party Systems in Latin America'; Scott P. Mainwaring, *Rethinking Party Systems in the Third Wave of Democratization*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1999; and Andreas Schedler, 'Under- and Overinstitutionalization: Some Ideal Typical Propositions Concerning New and Old Party Systems', Working Paper No. 213, University of Notre Dame, Kellogg Institute for International Studies, 1995; on Asia, see Hans Stockton, 'Political Parties, Party Systems, and Democracy in East Asia: Lessons From Latin America', *Comparative Political Studies*, 34: 1 (2001), pp. 94–119; on the post-Communist region, see Peter Mair (ed.), *The West European Party System*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997; Robert Moser, 'Electoral Systems and the Number of Parties in Post-Communist States', *World Politics*, 51: 3 (1999), pp. 359–84; Richard Rose and Neil Munro, *Elections and Parties in New European Democracies*, Washington, DC, CQ Press, 2003; and on Africa, see Kuenzi and Lambright, 'Party Institutionalization in 30 African Countries'.

¹⁵ Matthijs Bogaards, 'Dominant Party Systems and Electoral Volatility in Africa: A Comment on Mozaffar and Scarritt', *Party Politics*, 13: 6 (2007).

¹⁶ Mozaffar and Scarritt, 'The Puzzle of African Party Systems', p. 403.

party-system fragmentation) in combination with high volatility may well be the result of one group of countries displaying extremely low fragmentation and low-to-moderate volatility while another group has moderate-to-high levels of fragmentation and extremely high volatility. When individual countries' party systems are scrutinized, Mozaffar and Scarritt's 'puzzle' ceases to exist as Table 2 and the following analysis makes clear. Secondly, the authors base much of their analysis on calculations of the effective number of electoral and legislative parties, which Bogaards has shown to be unreliable in classifying party systems in Africa.¹⁷ Thirdly, and perhaps as damaging, the data-set and Mozaffar and Scarritt's use of the data is questionable. The data-set is only fleetingly referred to but includes 36 countries and 101 legislative elections. Without controlling for regime type or the free and fairness of elections, data on authoritarian countries like Togo with manufactured election results are mixed uncritically with results from democratic countries such as Botswana and the Seychelles. Twenty-four elections (24 per cent) in 13 countries (36 per cent) of the sample occurred in clearly authoritarian systems, making both the reliability and the validity of their findings questionable. In addition, the reader is left to wonder if we can really talk of party 'systems' when one-time elections are included, such as the Angolan and Cameroonian elections of 1992, and Republic of Congo's in 1993, which were followed by coups and/or civil wars. Elections of this kind with no relation to party systems as strategic, repeated interactions, took place in six out of the 36 countries (17 per cent) in Mozaffar and Scarritt's analysis. For these reasons, the authors' analysis fails to detail sufficiently what characterizes party systems in Africa.

Bogaards's contribution, though more sophisticated in controlling for regime type using Sartori's classification, is still of limited use to us here because of its focus on the identification of dominant party systems rather than the institutionalization of different types of party system, our main concern here.¹⁸ Measuring party system institutionalization and the impact of institutionalization on democratic consolidation, Kuenzi and Lambright concluded that although the level of institutionalization in Africa is generally low, stable party systems

¹⁷ Bogaards, 'Counting Parties and Identifying Dominant Party Systems'.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*; Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*.

show a positive relationship to the level of democracy.¹⁹ Taking an approach to measuring institutionalization similar to that of Mainwaring and colleagues,²⁰ Kuenzi and Lambright's first publication suffers from the fact that most countries included in their analysis had held only two elections, making it difficult to deduce much about a possible 'system' being institutionalized, but more importantly, they included manipulated election results from authoritarian regimes just as Mozaffar and Scarritt did, as discussed above, with the same implications for validity. Kuenzi and Lambright's main finding, that party-system institutionalization is determined to a significant degree by the number of years a country has experienced democracy, results in a circular argument since their measure of institutionalization is weighted heavily by the age of parties, which in turn is determined by the introduction of multiparty politics. I also remain sceptical of their final index of institutionalization, where Ghana's party system, for example, is classified as 'inchoate'. This is mainly a consequence of their inclusion of party age as one of the three components of their measure of institutionalization. While the political parties in Ghana are relatively new in name, dating from the inception of the last period of multipartyism in 1992, they represent stable and recurring political alignments among voters as well as elites in Ghana's political history of 22 competitive elections;²¹ many other countries have similar stories.

In conclusion, there are drawbacks both to the argument that Africa is fundamentally different and requires special concepts, but also to approaching African politics simply assuming that mainstream categorizations apply. Many African political parties are not mass-movements but rather the creations of personal or elite rule, but that does not necessarily mean that they cannot develop into more broad-based, deep-rooted parties. After all, many parties in established

¹⁹ Kuenzi and Lambright, 'Party Institutionalization in 30 African Countries'; and Kuenzi and Lambright, 'Party Systems and Democratic Consolidation'.

²⁰ Mainwaring and Scully, 'Party Systems in Latin America'; Mainwaring, *Rethinking Party*; and Mainwaring and Torcal, 'Party System Institutionalization and Party System Theory'.

²¹ Minion K. C. Morrison, 'Political Parties in Ghana through Four Republics: A Path to Democratic Consolidation', *Comparative Politics*, 36: 4 (2004), pp. 421–42; see also Staffan I. Lindberg and Minion K. C. Morrison, 'Exploring Voter Alignments in Africa: Core and Swing Voters in Ghana', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 43: 4 (2005), pp. 1–22.

democracies (especially liberal and conservative parties) historically emerged as elite groupings within legislatures with essentially no outside membership.²² Geographically, linguistic, and one-issue based parties with more shallow 'roots' are still found in established democracies, from Berlusconi's Forza Italia in Italy, to Basque separatists in Spain, Christian and agriculturalist parties in several European countries, to the new feminist party in Sweden. African parties may be different but arguably they can still fulfil various democratic functions to some degree and hence it remains relevant to study the formation of party systems in Africa. Yet, it also seems premature to simply assume that institutionalized party systems exist on the continent and that those can be studied fruitfully using mainstream concepts and measures. In finding a balance, I suggest that we first establish the extent to which party systems – as repetitive strategic interaction between lasting parties – have been established in African countries holding democratic elections. Only after that can we move on to explore how useful standard concepts and categorizations are.

Measuring Institutionalization as Stability of Party Configuration

Sartori treated party systems as conceptually dichotomous in terms of 'consolidated' and 'non-systems'. Like Mainwaring and Torcal, I find this unsatisfactory because it makes it impossible to study variation of the *levels* of institutionalization (what Sartori refers to as 'consolidation'), meaning the 'process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability'.²³ The purpose of this paper is to study this variation over time: the process of moving from 'less' to 'more' institutionalized-*cum*-stable party systems, and possibly from more institutionalized to less-*cum*-more fluid party systems. Thus, the most important aspect of party-system institutionalization is stability and interaction among the political parties,²⁴ which can be measured

²² Duverger, *Les Partis Politiques*.

²³ On the distinction between consolidated party systems and non-systems, see Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, pp. 244–8; and Mainwaring and Torcal, 'Party System Institutionalization and Party System Theory', p. 206; for the definition of institutionalization, see Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1968, p. 12.

²⁴ Adam Przeworski, 'Institutionalization of Voting Patterns, or is Mobilization the Source of Decay?', *American Political Science Review*, 69: 1 (1975), pp. 49–67.

using eight different indicators. It should be noted at the outset that none of these indicators, discussed below, can tell us *on their own* whether a party system is fluid or becoming institutionalized but rather we must compare several in order to get a fair sense of what is going on.

(1) *The number of parties in the legislature* offers basic information on the composition of the party configuration but has to be examined in the context of the other indicators as well as over time. While the number at any given time does not say much about the type of party system any country has – since one or several small ‘irrelevant’ parties is conversant with a two-party system or even with a one-party dominant system – this is not a concern here. My primary purpose is not to classify party systems into such types as two-party, multiparty or fragmented systems, but to distinguish between institutionalized party systems, de-institutionalized and fluid party systems that are still in flux, configuration and/or change. If the number of parties in the legislatures changes significantly upward or downward over a series of elections, that is an indication that the party system is still fluid. One, two or even three more or fewer political parties in the legislature may not necessarily indicate a major lack of stability whereas more changes usually does.

(2) *The number of new parties* in the legislature is an additional indicator of stability versus fluidity in the party system. ‘New’ is defined in this study as a party that did not have legislative representation after the previous elections.²⁵ Stable party systems can accommodate one or two new parties entering the legislature every now and then, but if a larger number of parties are repeatedly winning seats, this indicates a certain amount of fluidity. Some party systems consist of only two or three parties while others have as many as 10 or even 20 parties in the legislature. Because the addition of one new party is

²⁵ In a slight deviation from Mainwaring and Torcal I treat splinter parties, when a party splits into two or more parties from one election to the next, as new parties because they presumably present new choices to voters. Similarly, when two or more parties merged and created a new organization but they had competed in the previous election as separate parties, I treat the new merger or alliance as a new party because it also presents voters with a new choice. When a party changed its name but had an obvious continuity with a previous party, I count it as being the same organization. I also treat independents as a category because of a shortage of the data needed for comparing individuals’ results from one election to the next. Cf. Mainwaring and Torcal, ‘Party System’.

more significant in a two-party legislature than, for example, in one with 10 or more parties, we also need to calculate and use as an indicator (3) *the share (%) of new parties* in the legislature. The percentage of new parties is calculated from the total number of parties in the legislature after the election.

(4) *The number of parties voted out* of the legislature is an important supplementary indicator since a situation of changing party configuration would typically also be characterized by at least one party being voted out of the legislature. Again, the total number of parties in legislature is crucial in determining the significance of new and outgoing parties. For example, Sao Tome and Principe have had three legislative parties over five successive elections with a party thrown out and another voted in at almost every election. This represents more fluidity than the exit of a party in a legislature with five political parties such as in Mauritius's 1991 legislative elections. Therefore, (5) *the share (%) of parties voted out* due to losing in legislative elections is used as a supplementary indicator, calculated as the percentage of parties voted out is computed based on the number of parties before the election.

Another set of important indicators of stability is (6) *the share (%) of seats in the legislature occupied by the largest party* and (7) *the share (%) of seats in the legislature held by the runner-up*. Ignored by Mozaffar and Scarritt but recognized by Bogaards among others, these two make no sense as indicators of party systems if they do not show *which* party each figure represents.²⁶ Returning to the example of Sao Tome and Principe, if we look at the two last elections, as Kuenzi and Lambright did,²⁷ and identify that the number of legislative parties was constantly three in number, and the largest party's share of the seats varied little from 43.6 per cent to 41.8 per cent, we might think this is a stable system. However, as displayed in Table 2, one party left the legislature as another won seats for the first time, making it a *new* party, which also got the largest share of the seats, showing a significant degree of party system fluidity.

In order to make it possible to make these distinctions as in the example with Sao Tome and Principe, the figures in Table 2 showing

²⁶ Mozaffar and Scarritt, 'The Puzzle of African Party Systems'; Matthijs Bogaards, 'Electoral Choices for Divided Societies: Multi-Ethnic Parties and Constituency Polling in Africa', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 41: 3 (2004), pp. 59–80.

²⁷ Kuenzi and Lambright, 'Party Institutionalization in 30 African Countries'; and Kuenzi and Lambright, 'Party Systems and Democratic Consolidation'.

the largest party's share of legislative seats are underlined when the present party is different from that in the previous parliament, but **underlined and in bold** when the party was entirely new as a legislative party. The numbers for the runner-up parties that supplement the figures on the largest party's share are recorded according to the same rule. In addition to giving us an idea about how dominant the largest party is, the runner-up measure also further indicates the level of fluidity within the system. Stability is indicated if neither of the two represent different or new parties; if the runner-up but not the winner was new it indicates a moderate to low level of fluidity; if the winning party was new but the runner-up was not it indicates a moderate to higher level of fluidity; and if both the winner and the runner-up were new it tells us that the level of fluidity is very high as measured by these indicators.

(8) *Legislative seat volatility* is the final indicator of stability, measuring the share of seats that changed between parties using Pedersen's computation, which adds net change in percentage of seats gained or lost by each party from one election to the next, and the result is then divided by two.²⁸ Legislative seat volatility is not always the same as party-system fluidity, or weak institutionalization, since two or more established parties can trade substantial amounts of seats from one election to the next without necessarily de-institutionalizing the system. So again, we need the information on the other indicators to judge the extent of volatility that signifies fluidity or stability. When there are more parties in the legislature and/or a significant number of parties are thrown out and one or both of the two largest parties is also new, high volatility further indicates the extent of fluidity in the system.

In different ways these eight indicators tap into the level of stability versus fluidity in each country and thus speak to the extent to which party systems are being institutionalized.²⁹ Do Africa's new democracies exhibit great volatility, indicating that party systems are still in flux and in a process of configuration, or do they show manifested institutionalization, or a combination of the two? Before we can

²⁸ See Mogens N. Pedersen, 'Changing Patterns of Electoral Volatility in European Party Systems: Exploration in Explanation', in Hans Daalder and Peter Mair (eds), *Western European Party Systems: Continuity and Change*, Beverly Hills, Sage Publications, 1983.

²⁹ Mainwaring and Torcal, 'Party System Institutionalization and Party System Theory', p. 207.

proceed with the empirical analysis of this question, the issue of which countries should be included in the analysis needs to be addressed. The few existing studies of Africa have rather indiscriminately combined emerging democracies with various authoritarian systems. I argue that party systems in the sense of strategic interaction between parties seeking political office can only be adequately measured at a minimum level of democracy. Hence, the need first to establish a benchmark for a minimum level and identify the universe of applicable cases.

IDENTIFYING ELECTORAL DEMOCRACIES IN AFRICA

For the purposes of this study, the most fundamental value of representative democracy is self-government – the right of individual citizens to rule themselves through a concerted collective process. Leaving aside the definition of the people it follows that rule by the people requires equality of political participation.³⁰ For a political system to have the potential to be democratic, it has to be able to provide minimum legal provisions for political participation based on equal distribution of sovereignty: to provide equal shares of legal political freedoms for citizens. As Sartori reminds us, the etymological understanding of democracy leaves out the other side of the coin.³¹ Rule of the people is exercised *over* the very same people, yet, in order to be workable any modern form of national democracy must be representative,³² which brings up the second core issue in the translation of rule by the people into rule by representatives: free

³⁰ It is not within the scope of this article to go into this issue in depth, but for a good discussion of the notion of how the ‘people’ can be conceived, see Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1989, ch. 9.

³¹ Giovanni Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*, Chatham, Chatham House, 1987, p. 30.

³² Even ‘participatory’ democracy as a formula for decision-making translates into a representative form as only the few can in practice lead, speak and contribute to mass meetings – or the meetings would be endless – whilst the many are confined to listen, evaluate and vote just as in a representative democracy proper, see Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, p. 277. There are indeed other venues for participatory approaches of inclusion that can feed into a policy process before the decision-point but that renders participatory approaches a supplement, as opposed to an alternative, to representative democracy.

competition. While it can be argued on theoretical grounds that the necessary political competition can be achieved in *de jure* one-party systems this has not been the case in the real world. A minimum requirement for choice is the existence of at least one alternative. While choice in a two-party system is limited, as long as the legal provisions do not prevent more parties from engaging and as long as restrictions or practices like intimidation do not seriously undermine the process, there are *de facto* no constraints on the potential for choice. This choice allows the people to exercise their discretion to rule indirectly via representation.

Democracy as understood in this study descends from Schumpeter's definition used by scholars like Riker and Huntington³³ and extended in Dahl's concept of 'polyarchy'.³⁴ Most contemporary work on democratization conducted by scholars like Bratton and van de Walle, Diamond, Linz and Lipset, and Reilly for example, build on Dahl's definition.³⁵ Which countries are then emerging electoral democracies in Africa according to this standard? To identify eligible cases requires enacting some minimum requirements, I use three criteria. First, there must be legal provisions guaranteeing *de jure* political rights of equality understood as one person, one vote, freedom of speech and opinion, freedom of association and equal eligibility for public office. Secondly, multiparty elections must have been held under those provisions. The initiation of a new regime is defined as the holding of founding *de jure* competitive and participatory elections. Regimes with no elections naturally do not constitute electoral regimes, much less democratic rule. Countries in which multiparty elections have been held but where the electoral cycle

³³ Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 2nd edn, New York, Harper, 1947, p. 269; William H. Riker, *The Art of Political Manipulation*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1986, p. 25; Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1991, p. 29.

³⁴ Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1971, pp. 1–7.

³⁵ Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in a Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997; Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz and Seymour M. Lipset, *Comparing Experiences with Democracy: Democracy in Developing Countries*, Boulder, CO, Lynne Rienner, 1989; and Benjamin Reilly, *Democracy in Divided Societies: Electoral Engineering for Conflict Management*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

(the precondition for democracy and the existence of any kind of party system) has broken down are not included. Breakdown is defined as the abortion of electoral cycles as prescribed by the constitution, typically a consequence of a coup or other military intervention. Thirdly, in order for a country to be classified as an emerging electoral democracy the country must have been given a rating of 4 or better on the Freedom House scale of political rights (PR) by the time of the last election.³⁶ This last criterion is to ensure a minimum level of actually enforced political rights and not just their formal legal existence. The cut-off point of 4 is arguably somewhat arbitrary since the Freedom House scale is an ordinal measure with unknown distances between the categories. A rating of 3 represents the level when countries can be considered as 'free' by Freedom House and 4 then is next-to-free and arguably a reasonable cut-off point since we are operating with a minimum-level, electoral definition of democracy here. The level seems also empirically appropriate, considering that it includes countries like Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania and Zambia, which rated 4 on political rights as of the time of their last election, but excludes countries like Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, Gabon and Mauritania with worse ratings.

Finally, in order to study stability and volatility of parties there must be a record of at least two elections in the country. A more restrictive criterion of three elections would have been preferable to have a longer track record with evidence from each case but I have chosen to err rather on the side of being too inclusive. It does not affect the sample that much since only five out of the 21 democratic countries have only two successive elections on record during the period studied. These five countries have relative stable party systems: Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria and South Africa. Indeed, all of them save Nigeria have held third elections more recently and the party-system configuration was essentially the same after these elections. The empirical analysis in this paper thus includes only countries that meet the criteria above during the period studied and have held at least two successive elections without breaking down.

Table 1 lists all the countries in sub-Saharan Africa in two columns: one for cases that fulfil the criteria above and are included in the analysis, and another for countries that for a variety of reasons do not

³⁶ Since Freedom House scores are given dating back one year I use the rating assigned to the countries at the election year +1.

Table 1
Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and Reasons for Exclusion of Cases (Categorized as Non-Democracies)

| <i>Included</i> | <i>Excluded</i> | <i>Reason (up till June 2003)</i> |
|---------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Benin | Angola | Civil war after last elections held in 1992 |
| Botswana | Burundi | Civil war after last elections held in 1993 |
| Burkina Faso | Cameroon | PR score not at 4 or better |
| Cape Verde | Central African Rep. | Civil war after last elections held in 1998 |
| Djibouti | Chad | No free and fair elections; PR score not at 4 or better |
| Ghana | Comoros | Coup after last elections held in 1996 |
| Kenya | Democratic Rep. of Congo | No elections held |
| Lesotho | Equatorial Guinea | PR score not at 4 or better |
| Madagascar | Ethiopia | PR score not at 4 or better |
| Malawi | Eritrea | No elections held |
| Mali | Gabon | PR score not at 4 or better |
| Mauritius | Gambia | PR score not at 4 or better |
| Mozambique | Guinea | PR score not at 4 or better |
| Namibia | Guinea Bissau | Only one election held after coup in 1998 |
| Nigeria | Liberia | Civil war after elections held in 1997 |
| Sao Tome & Principe | Mauritania | PR score not at 4 or better |
| Senegal | Niger | Only one election held after coup in 1999 |
| Seychelles | Rep. of Congo | Only one election after civil war 1992-97 |
| South Africa | Rwanda | No elections held |
| Tanzania | Sierra Leone | Only one election held after civil war 1997-2001 |
| Zambia | Somalia | No elections held |
| | Sudan | PR score not at 4 or better |
| | Swaziland | No multiparty elections; PR score not at 4 or better |
| | Togo | PR score not at 4 or better |
| | Uganda | No parties allowed to contest elections |
| | Zimbabwe | PR score not at 4 or better since 1987 |

qualify and are therefore excluded. A separate column lists reasons why they cannot be included, ranging from lack of a sufficient legal framework and holding of elections, insufficient scores on Freedom House's ratings of political rights, to breakdown of the regime due to civil war or coup: all making them less than democratic according to the minimum criteria listed above and therefore rendering an analysis of party system in terms of strategic interaction impossible.

The period studied is mainly from 1989 to June 2003 with one important exception: countries that were already meeting the criteria above at the inception of 1989 have been tracked backwards to include their founding, second and subsequent elections. There are 21 countries and 74 legislative elections in the data-set. The data-set, coder's translation, technical description of the data-set and its indicators, and background data are freely available from the author.³⁷

STABILITY AND FLUIDITY IN AFRICA'S DEMOCRACIES

Table 2 presents an overview of all 21 democratic countries and their elections. Five of these countries have only held two successive elections but the vast majority has held three or more, including five countries that have held five or more successive legislative polls. Table 2 also includes information on electoral system, year of the election, rating on political rights according to Freedom House, free and fairness of the election, as well as the values on each of the eight indicators above. These records should be sufficient to make a reasonable assessment of the institutionalization of party systems. It is important to remember that the conceptualization of party-system institutionalization employed here is one of a graded phenomenon rather than a dichotomy and the indicator measures *levels* of stability and fluidity respectively. This also means that we rarely expect countries to display a complete picture of either stability or fluidity but rather mixed patterns that gravitate towards one of the

³⁷ The data-set is primary drawn from Lindberg, *Democracy and Elections in Africa*, but has been extended using data from Dieter Nohlen, Michael Krennerich and Bernhard Thibaut (eds), *Elections in Africa: A Data Handbook*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, and International Parliamentary Union's series of *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections*, Geneva, International Parliamentary Union, vols 29–37, 1995 to 2004. The data-set can be downloaded from the author's website: <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/lindberg/>

Table 2
African Democracies Classified in Fluid, De-Stabilized, and Stable Party Systems

| Electoral system | Year of election | Election no. | PR rating (t+1) | Indicator Number | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | |
| | | | | # parties in legislature | # new parties in legislature | % new parties in legislature | # parties thrown out | % parties thrown out** | % parties largest party | % seats runner up | % seat volatility | |
| FLUID PARTY SYSTEMS | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Benin | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| PR | 1991 | 1 | 2 | 12 | - | - | - | - | 18.8 | 14.1 | - | |
| "- | 1995 | 2 | 2 | 18 | 9 | 50 | 4 | 33 | 24.1 | 22.9 | 40.0 | |
| "- | 1999 | 3 | 2 | 20 | 4 | 20 | n.a. | n.a. | 32.5 | 13.3 | n.a. | |
| "- | 2003 | 4 | 2 | 13 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | 37.8 | 18.3 | n.a. | |
| Burkina Faso | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| PR | 1992 | 1 | 5 | 10 | - | - | - | - | 72.9 | 11.2 | - | |
| "- | 1997 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 50 | 8 | 80 | 91.0 | 5.4 | 96.4 | |
| "- | 2002 | 3 | 4 | 13 | 10 | 77 | 0 | 0 | 51.4 | 15.3 | 43.2 | |
| Lesotho | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Majoritarian | 1993 | 1 | 3 | 1 | - | - | - | - | 100 | 0 | - | |
| "- | 1998 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 98.8 | 1.25 | 98.75 | |
| Mixed | 2002 | 3 | 2 | 10 | 8 | 80 | 0 | 0 | 64.1 | 17.5 | 34.6 | |
| Madagascar | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Majoritarian | 1983 | 1 | 5 | 4 | - | - | - | - | 85.4 | 5.9 | - | |
| "- | 1989 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 86.8 | 5.1 | 6.9 | |
| PR | 1993 | 3 | 2 | 23 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | 32.6 | 10.9 | n.a. | |
| Mixed | 1998 | 4 | 2 | 9 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | 42.0 | 10.7 | n.a. | |
| "- | 2002 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 57 | 6 | 67 | 63.8 | 14.4 | 79.9 | |
| Mali | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Majoritarian | 1992 | 1 | 2 | 10 | - | - | - | - | 65.5 | 7.8 | - | |
| "- | 1997 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 5 | 62 | 7 | 70 | 87.1 | 5.4 | 31.7*** | |
| "- | 2002 | 3 | 2 | 12 | 9 | 75 | 5 | 62 | 44.9 | 40.1 | 60.5 | |
| Sao Tome | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| PR | 1991 | 1 | 2 | 3 | - | - | - | - | 60.0 | 38.2 | - | |
| "- | 1994 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 33 | 1 | 33 | 49.1 | 25.5 | 36.3 | |
| "- | 1998 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 56.4 | 29.1 | 10.9 | |
| "- | 2002 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 33 | 1 | 33 | 43.6 | 41.8 | 41.9 | |
| "- | 2003 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 33 | 1 | 33 | 41.8 | 41.8 | 43.6 | |
| Seychelles | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mixed | 1993 | 1 | 3 | 3 | - | - | - | - | 81.8 | 15.2 | - | |
| "- | 1998 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 33 | 1 | 33 | 88.0 | 9.0 | 15.2 | |
| "- | 2002 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 100 | 3 | 100 | 67.7 | 32.4 | 100.0 | |

Table 2
Continued

| Electoral system | Year of election | Election no. | PR rating (t+1) | Indicator Number | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|----|------------------------------|----|-----------------------|---|-------------------------|------|-------------------|------|-------------------|------|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | | | | |
| Zambia | 1991 | 1 | 2 | # parties in legislature | 2 | % new parties in legislature | - | # parties through out | 1 | % parties through out** | 83.3 | % seats runner up | 16.7 | % seat volatility | - |
| | 1996 | 2 | 5 | | 5 | | 60 | | 1 | | 87.7 | | 3.3 | 16.7 | |
| | 2001 | 3 | 4 | | 8 | | 62 | | 3 | | 48.7 | | 28.5 | 50.7 | |
| DE-STABILIZED PARTY | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Kenya | 1992 | 1 | 5 | # parties in legislature | 7 | % new parties in legislature | - | # parties through out | - | % parties through out** | 49.5 | % seats runner up | 15.5 | % seat volatility | - |
| | 1997 | 2 | 6 | | 10 | | 50 | | 2 | | 51.4 | | 18.3 | 30.5 | |
| | 2002 | 3 | 3 | | 7 | | 29 | | 5 | | 59.5 | | 30.5 | 66.3 | |
| Senegal | 1978 | 1 | 4 | # parties in legislature | 2 | % new parties in legislature | - | # parties through out | - | % parties through out** | 82.0 | % seats runner up | 18.0 | % seat volatility | - |
| | 1983 | 2 | 3 | | 3 | | 33 | | 0 | | 92.5 | | 6.7 | 11.3 | |
| | 1988 | 3 | 4 | | 2 | | 0 | | 1 | | 87.8 | | 14.2 | 5.5 | |
| Mixed | 1993 | 4 | 4 | # parties in legislature | 6 | % new parties in legislature | 67 | # parties through out | 0 | % parties through out** | 70.0 | % seats runner up | 22.5 | % seat volatility | 15.0 |
| | 1998 | 5 | 4 | | 11 | | 45 | | 0 | | 66.4 | | 16.4 | 13.4 | |
| | 2001 | 6 | 2 | | 10 | | 40 | | 5 | | 63.9 | | 7.9 | 71.6 | |
| STABLE PARTY | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Botswana | 1969 | 1 | n.a. | # parties in legislature | 4 | % new parties in legislature | - | # parties through out | - | % parties through out** | 77.4 | % seats runner up | 9.7 | % seat volatility | - |
| | 1974 | 2 | 2 | | 4 | | 0 | | 0 | | 84.4 | | 6.3 | 6.9 | |
| | 1979 | 3 | 2 | | 3 | | 0 | | 1 | | 90.6 | | 6.3 | 6.2 | |
| | 1984 | 4 | 2 | | 3 | | 0 | | 0 | | 85.3 | | 11.8 | 5.5 | |
| | 1989 | 5 | 1 | | 2 | | 0 | | 1 | | 91.2 | | 8.8 | 5.9 | |
| | 1994 | 6 | 2 | | 2 | | 0 | | 0 | | 67.5 | | 32.5 | 23.7 | |
| | 1999 | 7 | 2 | | 3 | | 1 | | 0 | | 82.5 | | 15.0 | 17.5 | |
| Cape Verde | 1991 | 1 | 1 | # parties in legislature | 2 | % new parties in legislature | - | # parties through out | - | % parties through out** | 70.9 | % seats runner up | 29.1 | % seat volatility | - |
| | 1995 | 2 | 1 | | 3 | | 33 | | 0 | | 69.4 | | 29.2 | 1.5 | |
| | 2001 | 3 | 1 | | 3 | | 33 | | 1 | | 55.5 | | 41.7 | 29.1 | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|------|---|---|-----|---|--------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| Djibouti | Majoritarian | 1992 | 1 | 6 | 1 | - | - | 100 | 0 | - |
| | " | 1997 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| | " | 2002 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Ghana | Majoritarian | 1992 | 1 | 5 | (3) | - | - | 94.5 | 4.5 | - |
| | " | 1996 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 73**** | 66.5 | <u>30.5</u> | 33.5**** |
| | " | 2000 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 20 | 50.0 | 46.0 | 22.5 |
| Malawi | Majoritarian | 1994 | 1 | 2 | 3 | - | - | 48.0 | 31.6 | - |
| | " | 1999 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 48.2 | 34.2 | 5.3 |
| Mauritius | Majoritarian | 1976 | 1 | 2 | 3 | - | - | 48.6 | 40.0 | - |
| | " | 1982 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 40 | 90.9 | 3.0 | 45.4 |
| | " | 1983 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 40 | <u>65.7</u> | <u>31.4</u> | 63.4 |
| | " | 1987 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 33 | 62.9 | 34.3 | 5.2 |
| | " | 1991 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 60 | 45.5 | 40.9 | 13.7 |
| | " | 1995 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 60 | <u>30.9</u> | 3.0 | 56.6 |
| | " | 2000 | 7 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 17 | <u>82.9</u> | <u>11.4</u> | 47.1 |
| Mozambique | PR | 1994 | 1 | 3 | 3 | - | - | 51.6 | 44.8 | - |
| | " | 1999 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 53.2 | 46.8 | 3.6 |
| Namibia | PR | 1989 | 1 | 2 | 7 | - | - | 56.9 | 29.2 | - |
| | " | 1994 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 40 | 73.6 | 20.8 | 19.5 |
| | " | 1999 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 20 | 76.4 | <u>9.7</u> | 12.5 |
| Nigeria | Majoritarian | 1999 | 1 | 4 | 3 | - | - | 83.1 | 21.3 | - |
| | " | 2003 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 62 | 61.6 | 22.5 | 8.2 |
| South Africa | PR | 1994 | 1 | 1 | 7 | - | - | 63.0 | 20.5 | - |
| | " | 1999 | 2 | 1 | 13 | 6 | 46 | 66.5 | <u>9.5</u> | 17.6 |
| Tanzania | Majoritarian | 1995 | 1 | 5 | 5 | - | - | 77.8 | 10.2 | - |
| | " | 2000 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 20 | 91.0 | 5.6 | 14.4 |

*Underlined = the figure represents a different largest or runner up party than the figure from the last election. **Underlined and bold** = the figure also represents a party that is new in the legislature meaning it did not have any seats during the previous term. These are further indications of significant changes in the party composition in the legislature.

**Percentage of parties thrown out is calculated on the number of parties in the previous legislature to reflect how many of the existing parties were thrown out.

***Mali's second election was boycotted by seven of the opposition parties that figured in the first election, which probably increased the volatility but on the other hand, only two of those boycotting came back and took seats in the following third election so the real impact of the boycott may not have been very large.

****Ghana's first election was boycotted by the main opposition and this high figure largely reflects that.

two poles making it possible to suggest a classification in different groups.

A stable party system typically has a relative constant number of parties contesting elections and winning seats in the legislature and these parties are the same over time and we identify such a system in part by low values on the first six indicators in Table 2. But even a relatively stable party system can have one or two parties come and go, so even more importantly a stable party system is also identified by stable largest and runner-up parties in the legislature and hence, often relatively low levels of seat volatility. Cape Verde displays such a pattern with a maximum of one new party being voted in and one old party thrown out; and while there was a turnover after the last election (hence, the underlined figures on indicators 6 and 7), that is a normal and desirable feature and seat volatility stays well below the one-third of total seats that would indicate fluidity. A fluid system is the reverse: higher and not decreasing values on the first six indicators over a series of elections, and new parties becoming the largest party or runner-up leading to high levels of seat volatility. Mali, for example, has seen 60 to 75 per cent of the parties in the legislature come and go during the last two elections. While the largest party has been the same, the second largest party has changed twice and also been an entirely new legislative party both times and seat volatility hit over 60 per cent in the last election. This is clearly a party system that is yet to stabilize. Based on the values on the eight indicators of stability, all 21 countries have been divided into these three main groups: fluid systems, de-stabilized, and stable party systems, the latter indicating a party system that overall seems to have been institutionalized or have come a long way towards institutionalization.

The first group of eight countries with fluid systems display many of the expected characteristics of party systems that are still undergoing significant changes where parties come and go up to as many as nine or 10 at a time, as with Mali's third election in 2002, for example, where an increasing number of parties often are contesting the elections, as the 151 parties that participated in Madagascar's legislative election in 1998. Among these countries, only the Seychelles and Sao Tome and Principe display a lower number of parties contesting and gaining seats in parliament. Accordingly, it is also in these two countries that we find a lower number of new parties gaining seats and old parties being thrown out. In most other

countries, elections have resulted in four to 10 new parties in the legislature after a single election, representing 20 to 80 per cent of the existing parties. The number of parties thrown out of these legislatures is generally smaller, reflecting the fact that the total number of legislative parties has increased in countries with fluid systems.

That in turn leads us to expect the winning parties' share of legislative seats to have decreased, which is exactly what we find. In all of the countries except Benin, the winner's share of seats declined after the first election. The largest party has typically been dominant after first elections, capturing between 60 and 100 per cent of the seats. Again, Benin is the exception where the largest party after the first elections in 1991 (UTR) held less than 20 per cent of the seats. Fluidity, then, is not necessarily bad on a continent where executive and legislative dominance of one group has been seen to be a major problem.³⁸ The decline of legislative dominance is a healthy sign for democratic competition. Political domination is often associated with misuse of state resources, disrespect for minority rights, and authoritarian tendencies. In fluid party system configurations, such tendencies are less likely to develop since the largest party's share of seats has generally declined and by the last election, in five out of the eight countries, the largest party held 51 per cent or less of the seats.

Added to this is the frequent alternation in power in this group of countries with fluid systems as indicated by the underlined figures in Table 2. Even parties gaining legislative seats for the first time often become either the largest party in the legislature, the second largest (figures underlined and in bold), or both, as in the 1997 election in Burkina Faso where a new alliance of parties became the largest party in the legislature. In eight out of the 21 elections (38 per cent, excluding first elections since by definition all parties are then 'new'), a party that won seats in the legislature for the first time also became the largest party. In 11 elections (52 per cent) a new party became the second largest party. These are high figures indeed and reflective of the fluidity and unsettled nature of these countries' party systems. Average legislative volatility is also high in this group as a whole, 51.9 per cent (see Table 3). Thus, in a continent where

³⁸ See for example, Nicholas van de Walle, 'Presidentialism and Clientelism in Africa's Emerging Party Systems', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41: 2 (2003), pp. 297–321.

political power has more often than not been steeped in personalized neo-patrimonial networks, this disbursement of political influence is likely to be greeted with applause by many. It might also raise concerns because, while democratic qualities such as competition and accountability are groomed by openness to new parties when old ones fail, and by alternations in power, there can be too much of the good as well. This fluidity and high incidence of turnover may present well-known obstacles to voters gathering information on relevant issues or personalities, and inhibit parties' incentives to cultivate longer-lasting relationships with citizens, aggregate interests, and train new generations of leaders. Several of the democratic functions that political parties are supposed to fulfil in a democracy, are thus discouraged by high fluidity.

The second group of countries in Table 2 consists of Kenya and Senegal, labelled as de-stabilized systems. Both countries have had a series of elections (admittedly only two in Kenya) with a fairly stable configuration of parties, relatively low levels of electoral volatility, and with the two main parties accounting for two-thirds or more of legislative seats.³⁹ This stability was toppled in the last elections of both countries, the old ruling party was almost eradicated from the scene and there was an alternation in power for the first time. It might be premature to classify them as de-stabilized but they stand out in these ways and it seems unclear in which direction they are moving, which is the rationale for singling them out as a separate group and on the face of it, they seem to have de-stabilized.

The third group in Table 2 consists of countries with institutionalized party systems, or systems in process of institutionalization – referring to the group of five countries with only two elections. It could be argued that the short electoral history in these five cases is the reason for an apparent but not real party-system stabilization. A closer inspection shows that four of these (Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and Tanzania) have stable party configurations with relatively deep roots in society because of civil war, societal mobilization or ideological orientation. Nigeria is a more ambivalent case where institutionalization may be less advanced.

³⁹ In the Senegalese case, the number of parties in the legislature increased over a few elections but it was only by the latest election in 2001 that things changed dramatically.

As a whole, the 11 countries in this group display markedly different characteristics from those in the other two groups. They are arguably institutionalized or are in the process of becoming so. The number of parties contesting elections and those winning legislative seats are generally fewer, while the number of new legislative parties after any one election typically ranges from zero to one, with the exception of Nigeria and South Africa. The number and percentage of parties being thrown out is even more distinct and only Namibia's second election in 1994 (where four parties lost all their previously held seats) of all the 41 elections in these 11 countries stands out in this regard. Another distinguishing feature is that the major two parties tend to be the same over several electoral cycles and together capture from 80 to 90 per cent of the legislative seats or more, with the lion's share going to the largest party. Turnovers are relatively rare and it is unknown for a new party to become the largest party except in Mauritius, which is a special case. In Mauritius, parties of various kinds form alliances in unpredictable ways from one election to the next, so that the alternations and 'new' parties reflected in Table 2 are less new than it seems. These occasions are incidents of new constellations that are less significant than entirely new parties are.

Apart from Mauritius, however, the figures speak clearly about the extreme stability of these party systems. Equally important is that the trend in most countries is towards stronger legislative dominance by the same ruling party. In other words, stable party systems in Africa seem to mean stable one-party dominance rather than – as in the group of countries with fluid systems – a move towards decreasing legislative shares by the largest party. While the group of fluid systems display positive signs in terms of competition and alternation in power at the expense of voter predictability, linkages between citizens and parties, and clear accountability, this group of institutionalized party systems seems to provide an overdose of predictability and stability, inhibiting competitiveness and thus it opens the possibility of minority exclusion, abuse of power, lack of responsiveness and channelling of people's demands from the bottom upwards. The only way the three groups do not differentiate is, perhaps surprisingly, in terms of electoral system. All three groups have roughly equal shares of proportional and majoritarian systems respectively. We can therefore dismiss fears that the reductive effect and disproportional allocation of seats in majoritarian

electoral systems would be an underlying factor creating a spurious relationship.

The distinctiveness of these three different groups is further evidenced by a comparison of the averages on the eight indicators for each group, displayed in Table 3. While the group of stable party systems display a better quality of democracy as indicated by better political rights scores on the Freedom House indicator and higher score on the free and fairness of elections, they have much lower numbers and shares of parties, new and old, and lower volatility on average. All of these differences are statistically significant. The only two indicators that they do not differ on are the share of seats acquired by the largest party and the runner-up. But, as we have seen, these similar averages conceal two diverging trends; towards smaller shares by the largest party and greater shares of seats held by the runner-up in fluid systems, and the opposite in the institutionalized party systems.

Given the mainstream literature, one would expect party systems in many new democracies to be fluid at first and then acquire a greater sense of stability over time as voters accumulate information about choices and parties build organizational experience and collate political capital and play on the first-mover advantages. The holding of successive elections in the group of fluid systems has *not* led to increasing stabilization in the configuration of political parties, however, at least not yet. Two countries, Madagascar and Sao Tome and Principe, have held five elections, one country (Benin) has a record of four elections while the remaining five countries have held three successive elections. Despite this record of accomplishments, the parties in these countries have not formed a consistent interaction based on a durable constellation of political organizations. It will be interesting to see if future elections in these countries will lead to the institutionalization of one or the other type of party system but what we have seen so far is a constant flux of the political landscape where 'old' parties move out and new move in with every successive election. The other main group of institutionalized party systems exhibits a pattern of party configuration stability from the very start of multiparty politics. These countries tend to further democratic one-party dominant systems at the expense of competition, representation, and accountability. In short, there seems to be a trade-off between party system institutionalization and democratic competition and accountability in Africa's new democracies.

Table 3
Averages on Selected Indicators for Party System

| Party System | FH rating (t+1) | Free and fair?* | Indicator Number | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| | | | # parties in legislature | # new parties in legislature | % new parties in legislature | # parties thrown out | % parties thrown out | % seats largest party | % seats runner up | % seat volatility |
| Fluid | Mean 3.1 | 1.7 | 8.5 | 4.6 | 56.9 | 2.9 | 42.7 | 64.5 | 13.6 | 51.9 |
| | N 24 | 24 | 24 | 14 | 14 | 13 | 13 | 24 | 24 | 13 |
| De-Stabilized | Mean 3.9 | 1.4 | 6.4 | 3.0 | 37.7 | 1.9 | 22.4 | 69.1 | 16.7 | 30.5 |
| | N 9 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 9 | 9 | 7 |
| Stable | Mean 2.4 | 2.1 | 4.0 | 1.2 | 20.4 | 0.7 | 15.6 | 67.6 | 23.8 | 20.6 |
| | N 40 | 41 | 41 | 29 | 28 | 29 | 27 | 41 | 41 | 29 |
| Total | Mean 2.8 | 1.9 | 5.8 | 2.4 | 33.3 | 1.5 | 24.1 | 66.7 | 19.6 | 30.3 |
| | N 73 | 74 | 74 | 50 | 49 | 49 | 47 | 74 | 74 | 49 |
| ANOVA | 6.566 | 7.528 | 9.957 | 11.902 | 15.092 | 6.891 | 5.611 | 0.249 | 5.522 | 7.614 |
| F-value | 0.002 | 0.001 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.002 | 0.007 | 0.780 | 0.006 | 0.001 |

*Free and fair is measured at four levels ranging from 0 (worst) to 3 (best).

CONCLUSION

I agree with Hyden that there are 'still as many questions as there are answers' about the role of the political organizations that we usually think of as parties, in contemporary Africa's political development. As he and many others, including Bogaards and Kuenzi and Lambright, note, the short time we are forced to operate with induces severe limitations on the confidence with which we can speak about our conclusions.⁴⁰ We also need a lot more groundwork to be done in this area particularly on the origin and nature of political parties in Africa, their ideological or programmatic orientations, behaviour both within and outside the legislature, to mention but a few areas.

But to the extent that the stability of party configuration in legislatures does tell us something about the institutionalization of party systems (and as I noted in the introduction, I believe different party systems can be institutionalized although they consist of political parties of various natures), the data on the eight indicators reported in this paper tells us a story of measured optimism. There are many more than two or three party systems in Africa that either are, or are becoming, institutionalized. The downturn of this is that many of these countries seem to become one-party dominant systems with well-known problems for democratic accountability and representation, especially perhaps in Africa where political elites have a long tradition of exploiting dominance for personal and kinship purposes. In any case, there is no puzzle of low fragmentation and high volatility for Mozaffar and Scarritt to solve,⁴¹ rather, high volatility is combined as expected with higher fragmentation in countries with fluid systems. More unexpectedly, this fluidity is *not* reduced with successive elections, as mainstream theory would make us believe but instead accentuates over time. Low volatility is present in countries with low fragmentation and stable party systems that tend not only to solidify but also to become more dominant over time. Increased experience with, and exposure to, electoral practices may give elections increasing democratic quality and infuse society with more civil

⁴⁰ Hyden, 'Barriers to Party Systems in Africa'; Bogaards, 'Counting Parties and Identifying Dominant Party Systems'; Kuenzi and Lambright, 'Party Institutionalization in 30 African Countries'; and Kuenzi and Lambright, 'Party Systems and Democratic Consolidation'.

⁴¹ Mozaffar and Scarritt, 'The Puzzle of African Party Systems'.

liberties⁴² but this article shows that that does not necessarily lead to party-system institutionalization. Nevertheless, stable configurations of parties is part of making democracy work. The fluidity of some African party systems creates more of some democratic qualities such as competitiveness (e.g. lower shares of legislative seats for the largest parties) and participation and representation (e.g. more parties competing for and winning legislative seats). The institutionalized party systems give rise to other democratic qualities such as legitimacy and predictability at the expense of the other values.

Thus, Africa's new and old democracies both conform to standard comparative politics theory and at the same time, challenge it. We find that many of these countries can be understood in terms of traditional strategic interaction between political parties under a democratic dispensation. High volatility is combined with high fragmentation and fluidity, and the reverse. Using a multitude of indicators that generally point in the same direction also confirms that we can and should employ comparative measures in the study of African politics so that it can be fruitfully joined with the study of similar issues in the rest of the world. The challenge comes from what appears to be perpetual fluid party systems on the one hand, and party systems that were institutionalized, or frozen⁴³ if you like, from the very inception of multiparty politics. Institutionalization of party systems has generally been believed to be a process occurring over time going from fluid to stable party systems. This has not been the case in Africa and a closer study of these cases identified here would likely bring lessons to comparative politics in general on the evolution of party systems in new democracies.

⁴² Lindberg, *Democracy and Elections in Africa*.

⁴³ Lipset and Rokkan 'Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments'.