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Ethnicity and Party Systems in Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa

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Ethnicity and Party Systems in Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa

Matthias Basedau and Alexander Stroh

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Ethnicity and Party Systems in Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa

Abstract

Despite earlier assumptions that ethnicity is a central feature of African party systems, there is little substantial evidence for this claim. The few studies with an empirical foundation rarely rely on individual data and are biased in favor of Anglophone Africa. This paper looks at four Francophone countries, drawing on four representative survey polls in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. Multivariate regression models and bivariate control tools reveal that ethnicity matters as a determinant of party preference, but that its impact is generally rather weak and differs with regard to party systems and individual parties. “Ethnic parties” in the strict sense are almost completely absent, and only the Beninese party system is substantially “ethnicized.” In particular, regional ties between voters and leaders—rather than ethnic affiliation alone—deserve attention in the future study of voting behavior in Africa.

Keywords: political parties, ethnic groups, voting intentions, multivariate logistic regression

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Zusammenfassung

Ethnizität und Parteiensysteme im frankophonen Afrika südlich der Sahara

Die verbreitete Annahme, dass Ethnizität ein zentrales Charakteristikum afrikanischer Parteiensysteme sei, konnte bisher nicht überzeugend belegt werden. Die wenigen verfügbaren Studien mit empirischer Grundlage können nur selten Individualdaten nutzen. Zudem wird das frankophone Afrika kaum berücksichtigt. Der vorliegende Beitrag antwortet auf beide Defizite mit einer vergleichenden Analyse repräsentativer Meinungsumfragen aus den vier frankophonen Ländern Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali und Niger. Multivariate Regressionsmodelle und bivariate Kontrollinstrumente zeigen, dass Ethnizität die Wahlabsicht im Allgemeinen nur schwach und nach Untersuchungsfällen variabel beeinflusst. „Ethnische Parteien“ in einem engeren Sinne kommen fast gar nicht vor und nur das beninische Parteiensystem ist beträchtlich ethnisiert. Künftige Forschung ist aufgefordert, insbesondere regionalen Wählerbindungen mehr Aufmerksamkeit zu schenken, statt vorwiegend nach ethnischem Wahlverhalten zu suchen.

Ethnicity and Party Systems in Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa

Matthias Basedau and Alexander Stroh

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1 Introduction

Despite a mixed balance sheet in terms of democratic quality, multiparty systems have obviously taken root in sub-Saharan Africa. As of early 2008, many countries had witnessed more than four elections since 1990 and less than a handful of countries had not held at least one multiparty election (see Lindberg 2006).

Yet, relatively little is known about the determinants of party preference in sub-Saharan countries, let alone about how to accurately forecast election day voting behavior. Recent electoral violence in Kenya seemingly confirms the widespread public view—and earlier scientific assumptions—that ethnic affiliation determines party preferences and that political parties tend to be “ethnic.”

The debate, however, has moved beyond these assumptions, and the relatively few empirical studies with a solid empirical foundation of country cases (e.g., Erdmann 2007a; Lindberg/Morrison 2006; Fridy 2007) or comparative perspectives (e.g., Mattes/Norris 2003; Mozaffar/Scarritt 2003) paint a far more nuanced picture. Ethnicity often plays a role, but this role differs across countries and is just one out of a number of factors (e.g., Erdmann 2007b; Mattes/Norris 2003). In any case, the question remains: *To what extent are sub-Saharan Africa's party systems and related individual political preferences determined by ethnicity?*

This paper aims to contribute to a more nuanced debate by looking at Francophone Africa—an area widely neglected by the Anglophone dominated literature (cf. Gazibo 2006)—and draws on the data of four representative survey polls which were conducted between August and December 2006 by the GIGA Institute of African Affairs and African partners¹ in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. The polls were the first nationwide surveys with a particular focus on “political parties” undertaken in these countries and provide data regarding the individual level which are particularly valuable for the analysis of party preference.

The paper starts with a discussion of the theoretical argument regarding ethnicity as a determinant of party preference in (Francophone) Africa and summarizes the rather sketchy empirical evidence on the topic thus far. We then outline our empirical strategy, which comprises two major approaches: First we employ a multivariate quantitative approach (logistic regressions) in order to determine the general significance of ethnicity in explaining party preference. Second, we have a closer look at the major individual political parties in the four countries and assess whether and to what extent their support base is indeed “ethnic.” Finally, we discuss the relative weight of ethnicity in the four party systems under investigation and draw conclusions for theory and future research.

2 State of the Art

In the general debate on ethnicity in Africa, an essentialist or primordial notion of ethnicity has been widely abandoned in favor of a rather constructivist understanding. Ethnic identities may be subject to change and manipulation and are finally—as Lemarchand pointed out more than 30 years ago (Lemarchand 1972: 69)—a matter of external and self ascription (see also Kasfir 1976: 77).² Adopting this definition, however, does not mean that ethnic identity

¹ We owe a lot to our partners: Institut de recherche empirique en économie politique (IREEP, Benin), Centre pour la gouvernance démocratique (CGD, Burkina Faso), Groupe de recherche en économie appliquée et technique (GREAT, Mali), Institut National de la Statistique (INS, Niger), and Laboratoire d'études et de recherches sur les dynamiques sociales et le développement local (LASDEL, Niger). We are particularly grateful to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation) for funding our research.

² For Kasfir “ethnicity contains objective characteristics associated with common ancestry, such as language, territory, cultural practices and the like. These are perceived by both insiders and outsiders as important indicators of identity, so that they can become the bases for mobilizing social solidarity and which in certain situations result in political activity” (Kasfir 1976: 77).

changes on a daily or arbitrary basis. If ethnicity is a structural variable that explains relatively stable phenomena such as party preference and the shape of party systems, a principal change in self- or externally ascribed ethnic identity must be limited. Moreover, if we conceptualize ethnicity as a group phenomenon which means more than a residential neighborhood, we must not equate region and ethnic affiliation. The regional concentration of ethnic groups is a feature of certain areas, but is so far less often than assumed and is apparently a declining feature (see e.g., Bierschenk 2006).

How, then, is ethnicity related to political parties and the party system in Africa? In almost all classical theoretical approaches to determinants of voting behavior, ethnicity can be easily integrated (Erdmann 2007a: 7-11) since social affiliation is a crucial element of all these approaches. The micro-sociological approach argues that “a person thinks politically as he is socially” (Lazarsfeld et al. 1968: 27), and this is consistent with ethnic voting. The same holds true for the macro-sociological cleavage approach (Lipset and Rokkan 1967, Erdmann 2004) or a sociopsychological approach which conceptualizes party identification—and, thus, voting preferences—as a product of social ties (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000: 20-21). Even rational choice is compatible with ethnic voting, since voting for a candidate with the same ethnic affiliation may be expected to best serve the voter’s interests.

Research on African party systems virtually vanished during the 1980s and 1990s, and ethnicity was discussed mainly in connection to violent conflict during this period. Horowitz’s seminal work on ethnic groups in conflict (Horowitz 1985) also had a large impact on the discussion of ethnic parties in Africa since it strongly suggested conceptualizing African parties as “ethnic parties.” According to Horowitz, an ethnic party should draw at least 85 percent of its support from one single ethnic group. Obviously, the cut-off point appears somewhat arbitrary. While a comparative approach can hardly avoid this methodological problem (cf. Peters 1998: 96), it has invited other scholars to set different thresholds (e.g., Scarritt 2006).

When party research reemerged in the late 1990s, a number of studies—not in strict operational terms but relying conceptually on Horowitz—named ethnic parties and ethnic party systems as a typical feature of African (party) politics (Widner 1997, van de Walle and Butler 1999, Ottaway 1999). The assumption that party systems were a mere function of ethnic demography, however, could hardly be reconciled with the mushrooming of dominant parties in many highly ethnically heterogeneous countries (Erdmann 2004). Dominant parties often won vast absolute majorities which were in sharp contrast with the respective ethnic composition of the countries.

Consequently, Fomunyoh distinguishes—for Francophone Africa—between government parties which mobilize broad-based support throughout society and opposition parties which tend to rely heavily on ethnic or regional bases of support (Fomunyoh 2001: 48). This distinction suggests two conclusions. First, there is a need to question how common ethnic parties really are if ruling parties, provided that they hold the majority of votes, are different. Second, parties and party systems are different phenomena. An “ethnicized” or “ethni-

cally dominated” party system certainly consists of “ethnicized” parties.³ Yet, the role of ethnicity can only be assessed by evaluating the extent of ethnicization of individual parties. An “ethnicized party system” implies that the whole system is at least considerably structured by ethnicity, and this, in turn, suggests an ethnically determined cleavage which mirrors a mutually exclusive “them against us.”

Individual Party Typologies

The universal typology of political parties by Gunther and Diamond includes two types of political parties based principally on ethnic support: the “ethnic party,” which draws supports from one single ethnic group, and an “ethnic congress party,” which tries to build a winning coalition of ethnic electorates (Gunther and Diamond 2003: 183-185). In contrast to ethnic parties—or perhaps more precisely “monoethnic” parties—ethnic congress parties rely on ethnic alliances but still divide into ethnically disjointed alliances. In other words, one coalition, C1, of ethnic groups largely supports one party, P1, and a disjoint coalition, C2, of other ethnic groups largely supports another party, P2. By consequence, dominance on the part of such parties leads to ethnicized party systems.

Using the above typology, Marcus and Ratsimbaharison find—on the basis of Afrobarometer survey data—that, in addition to regionalism and neopatrimonialism, ethnicity shapes the Malagasy party system. However, they do not use the type “ethnic parties” but prefer instead types such as “catch-all” or “elite-personalistic” to describe Madagascar’s principal political parties (Marcus and Ratsimbaharison 2005). This may perhaps be due to the fact that the concept of “ethnic congress parties” remains opaque in terms of exact operationalization. According to Gunther and Diamond (2003: 184), such congress parties “may take the form of a single, unified party structure”; this leaves unanswered the questions of how we know precisely when a party is an ethnic congress party and why we need to distinguish such parties from other forms of dominant or even unitary parties.

Also based on Afrobarometer survey data, a classification of 41 parties from 13 countries—including only two Francophone countries—underlines the fact that the number of “ethnic parties” in Africa is limited to eight parties if we employ Horowitz’s definition, which stipulates an 85 percent threshold (Cheeseman and Ford 2007). Still, a majority of the 41 parties’ support bases seem to be dominated by one ethnic group which accounts for more than 50 percent of the party’s voters. Certainly, this may point to a strong dependence by one party on the support of one specific ethnic group. However, is this enough to declare a party “ethnic” or “multiethnic” as Horowitz does? In fact, it remains unclear whether such an ethnic support base expresses an ethnic cleavage in society or is simply a reflection of society’s average com-

³ We define “ethnicization” as a less radical concept that acknowledges ethnicity as one feature among others shaping a party system. According to our understanding, the term “ethnic party” implies that a party is ethnic, while a party may be “ethnicized” to different degrees.

position. The total number of Botswana's parties, for instance, accounts for three of the eight so-called "ethnic parties" in the study. This is hardly surprising, since all of these parties draw their main support from Botswana's 85 percent majority group, the Batswana. Unless we control for society's overall ethnic composition, these shares have limited meaning.

Party-system Approaches

It was not until the beginning of the new century that studies which were based on a more solid empirical foundation emerged. Their results have raised doubts about earlier assumptions regarding the central role of ethnicity in African party systems. On a national aggregate level, Mozaffar, Scarritt, and Galaich distinguish between regionalism and ethnicity by including the geographic concentration of ethnic groups in their macroanalysis of African party systems. They find that the interaction of ethnic fragmentation, geographic concentration, and electoral district magnitude is key to explaining party-system fragmentation (Mozaffar et al. 2003).⁴ The results are certainly most interesting in terms of the structure of party systems, but they tell us little about the question of to what extent the respective parties are really "ethnic" in nature and, hence, whether we were right to speak of "ethnic party systems." Another study—on the basis of Afrobarometer data—tests for the degree of uneven distributions in cross-tabulations of ethnic affiliation and party preferences in order to measure the ethnicization of the party system (Dowd and Driessen 2007). However, it does not control for the importance of ethnicity at the level of individual parties.

The only cross-national study based on individual data known to the authors which explicitly focuses on the relation of specific ethnic groups and specific political parties is that of Norris and Mattes (2003). According to them, ethnic voting takes place and proves significant in more than two-thirds of the twelve cases under consideration. However, ethnicity is just one among several other significant determinants and just one Francophone country is included. Moreover, Norris and Mattes draw only cautious conclusions since their study is merely based on an analysis of the biggest ethnic group in relation to the respective country's biggest ruling party.

Single-country Studies

The limitations of the database are a common problem in the study of party systems in Africa, particularly in terms of cross-national studies. A number of studies hence focus on country cases in which more detailed data is available. However, these recent studies cover an astonishingly narrow selection of examples. Ghana and Zambia seem to be the best ex-

⁴ Very recently, their findings have been contested on the statistical macrolevel. In particular, the common idea of "African exceptionalism" could not be upheld in an enlarged multivariate testing (Brambor et al. 2007).

plored party systems on the continent. In contrast to these two Anglophone cases, most other countries, especially Francophone countries, remain virtually ignored.

Country studies differ with regard to their use of data. Most follow an ethnoregional approach and, hence, base their analysis on (aggregate) constituency-level election results. Assumptions about the ethnic affiliation of parties are usually drawn from the origin of party leaders, the range of party activity,⁵ and—less frequently—campaign rhetoric (e.g., Mayrargue 2004). Moreover, many studies draw more or less systematically on election results to investigate the assumed connection between a party and “its” ethnic voters. Beyond the risk of the “ecological fallacy” of aggregate electoral data, ethnoregional approaches are much easier for researchers to employ in pluralist electoral systems with single-member constituencies (first past the post). If a particular party wins most or all constituencies in one region, these studies conclude that this party must have an ethnic support base—presuming that this region’s population is mainly composed of one particular ethnic group. In contrast, electoral data from proportional representation systems with larger constituencies is far more difficult to interpret, since a mixed ethnic electorate is much more likely.

The analytic advantages of pluralist systems may have fostered the abundance of studies on Ghana and Zambia. However, results from these two cases are anything but undisputed (cf. Erdmann 2007b). Drawing on comparably limited survey data for Ghana, one can obviously either conclude that “clientelistic and ethnic predisposed voting are minor features” (Lindberg and Morrison 2008: 34, cf. also Osei 2006) or that “ethnicity is an extremely significant although not deciding factor in Ghanaian elections” (Fridy 2007: 302).

Studies on Zambia may have yielded results more consistent with ethnic voting. Nevertheless, conclusions vary between strong support for the ethnicity-party nexus and more cautious statements. Findings oscillate between a reinforcement of the tradition of “multiethnic parties based on shifting ethnopolitical coalitions” since 1990 (Scarritt 2006: 253) and a moderate decrease in ethnic voting since the change from one-party to multiparty elections (Posner 2007: 1309-16). While country experts generally agree on the general appeal to ethnic cleavages of Zambia’s political parties, it is rather difficult to support the qualitative impression with the help of hard survey data (Erdmann 2007a). Erdmann finally concedes, “Ethnicity is clearly not a sufficient explicator for election outcomes but it plays its role” (ibid: 29).

Findings from further cases such as South Africa, where ethnic cleavages should be neither ignored nor overemphasized (McLaughlin 2007); or the former Zaire,⁶ where a confrontation between two large regional groups—interpreted as ethnic regionalism—leads to significant correlation with the support for opposition parties (Emizet 1999); or prewar Côte d’Ivoire, where

⁵ This attitudinal approach usually refers to an understanding of “ethnic parties” used by Chandra in the Indian context (Chandra 2004).

⁶ Emizet’s collection took place in 1991-92, i.e., well before the country was renamed “Democratic Republic of Congo.”

the debate on Ivorian nationality politicized and deepened ethnic divisions (Crook 1997), affirm that Africa is obviously not very homogenous when it comes to ethnic voting.⁷

Contrary to studies based on individual survey data, those studies driven less by empirical data still tend to make the ethnic argument stronger (Marty 2002, Mustapha 2004, Scarritt 2006, cf. also Manning 2005, Carey 2002). On the other hand, some of the rare studies on parties in Francophone Africa manage to treat the topic without referring once to ethnicity (Baudais and Chauzal 2006, Buijtenhuijs 1994, Santiso and Loada 2003).

Summarizing the review of relevant research findings, we may say that the number of studies on ethnicity as a determinant of party preference in Africa is still very limited and that this holds particularly true for studies using survey data on the individual level. The few studies in existence usually face two challenges: First, they find that ethnicity is only one factor amongst others, but they fail to determine the exact weight of ethnicity in the respective party systems. Second, the rather sketchy knowledge thus far is deeply biased in favor of Anglophone Africa since Francophone countries have hardly been scrutinized.

3 Empirical Strategy

Data on the individual level are best-suited to explore the link between ethnicity and party preference, and our study can draw on the results of the survey polls mentioned at the beginning of the paper. In order to integrate the different approaches discussed in the previous section, we have decided to employ a multistep analysis combining multivariate regression models and bivariate descriptive statistics.

The Surveys and the Database

The four representative survey polls in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger each comprise samples of at least 1,000 respondents of voting age, all of whom were selected according to a two-step procedure. On the basis of national census data, the relative number of regions and urban vs. rural population were stratified. Every second respondent had to be female. Beyond this stratification respondents were selected at the regional, household, and individual level according to strictly randomized procedures.

The questionnaires consisted of some 50 questions, including several items intended to measure the independent variables. As regards ethnicity, respondents were asked to name their ethnic affiliation,⁸ which captures the aspect of self-ascription fairly well. All involved scholars from Africa and Europe agreed that this survey question is not offensive. However,

⁷ Only McLaughlin uses representative Afrobarometer survey data. Emizet drew his data from a limited sample (N=377) of randomized and standardized interviews at two selected locations (Kinshasa in the West, Butembo in the East) and Crook relied on constituency-level electoral results.

⁸ The survey question read, "Quel est votre groupe ethnique?"

we employed a control question asking for the language spoken most regularly in daily life.⁹ Answers to both questions correlate strongly.¹⁰

We also asked respondents about their identification with a party and which party they intended to vote for if there were elections soon. Other questions covered pertinent sociocultural and demographic characteristics, such as age or education, as well as attitudes vis-à-vis the political system, such as satisfaction with the incumbent government, which can capture rational behavior.

In order to allow for meaningful statistical analysis, the number of individual political parties had to be limited to those with at least 50 respondents claiming their intention to vote for them. This resulted in two to four parties for each country case, and a total of 13 political parties to come under investigation.¹¹ In any case, the selected parties represent at least two-thirds of those respondents intending to vote (abstention excluded).

A Multistep Analysis

Theoretically, a party system can be characterized as strongly ethnicized when two conditions are met. First, ethnicity has to be a major determinant of party preference at the party-system level, even when important social and attitudinal characteristics are controlled for. For this analysis we employ a multivariate approach (multinomial and binary logistic regressions) using the survey data. Second, an ethnic party system should comprise a majority of individual parties that are—or come close to—what the debate has called “ethnic parties” (Horowitz 1985; Cheeseman and Ford 2007). The ideal “ethnic party” is a party whose electorate is entirely or at least overwhelmingly composed by one out of several ethnic groups and whose electorate significantly differs from the country’s (heterogeneous) ethnic composition. In order to determine the exact degree of ethnicization of individual parties, we identify the percentage shares of ethnic groups among the supporters of the individual parties and systematically assess their deviation from the general ethnic composition of the society. Moreover, we calculate the likelihood that a member of the dominant ethnic support group intends to vote for the respective party rather than for any other one. Taking these three indicators together, we assess the overall level of ethnicization of the party in question. Fi-

⁹ Although this question may appear more neutral, it is prone to systematic distortions for educated people (using French) and traders (using larger African business languages). An investigation into the strength of an individual’s ethnic identity compared to other identities, which we tried to do, turned out to be much more problematic. The results were possibly biased to the disadvantage of ethnicity and, anyhow, not statistically exploitable due to small frequencies in pertinent categories. Downplaying the importance of ethnic identities seems to be socially desirable (see Basedau and Stroh 2008).

¹⁰ An 80.3 percent congruence of ethnic groups and their expected native languages increases to 94.4 percent when the most important interethnic trade languages are accepted (Jula in Burkina Faso, Bambara in Mali, and Hausa in Niger), as well as French, as “right” answers for all ethnic affiliations. Only a minor variance across countries occurs.

¹¹ We use the parties’ acronyms in the main text. Full names are listed in Table A1 (Annex).

nally, the results of all individual parties are aggregated and evaluated at the country party system and cross-national level.

4 The Role of Ethnicity in Multivariate Regressions

Multivariate regression models allow for the detection of the most important variables for party preference, which we measure as voting intention.¹² In order to avoid the risk of overestimating the role of ethnicity, we control for a set of eight possible determinants: geographic region, ethnic affiliation, rural vs. urban habitat, formal education, satisfaction with one's personal economic situation, satisfaction with the government in general, democratic attitude, and identity group.¹³ Chi square statistics of multinomial logistic regressions point to those variables that are particularly unequally distributed with regard to the respective party system (not the individual parties).¹⁴ Ethnicity is one of the most important variables, being significant at the 5 percent level in all countries except Burkina Faso. The variable "region," however, produces even more convincing results, being significant at the 1 percent level in all countries. Several other variables seem to play a remarkable role in one or two countries.¹⁵

The variables detected through this first multinomial approach deserve our special attention. However, these findings still tell us little about the question of how strongly they contribute to the explanation of voting intentions. Since it is evidently impossible to measure party preference, ethnic affiliations, and regions on an ordinal scale, we use multiple binary logistic regression models to assess the determinants of voting intentions for each political party.¹⁶

These regression models—shown in Table 1—allow two main observations with regard to the role of ethnicity. First, the explanatory power of the models varies across parties and countries. We find seven acceptable ($\text{Pseudo-R}^2 > .2$) and good ($\text{Pseudo-R}^2 > .4$) models, while the voting intentions for six parties cannot be satisfactorily explained ($\text{Pseudo-R}^2 < .2$). Satis-

¹² Thus, our dependent variable is operationalized by the classic question, "Which political party would you vote for if there were to be parliamentary elections today?" We had to abandon a robustness test with party identification ("Do you feel close to a party? Which one?") due to insufficient frequencies. However, 87.1 percent of party identifications are identically equal to the respondents' voting intentions.

¹³ Region indicates the first subnational administrative level. Formal education is clustered into "none," "primary," and "secondary+" (high school or more) labels. Satisfaction variables are dichotomized (rather satisfied or rather unsatisfied). Democratic attitudes are measured by an index including six survey questions on basic democratic values. Identity group indicates the social group besides his nationality with which the respondent most identified (alternatives: ethnic group, religious community, social class, or sex; interrelating an ethnic identity with the respondent's specific group produces frequencies that are too low for further mathematical analysis). Details are available from the authors upon request.

¹⁴ In order to condense the number of variables, earlier tests resulted in an *ex ante* exclusion of "religion," "gender," and "age," all of which proved completely insignificant for voting behavior in all four countries (see Basedau and Stroh 2007). In other words, all variables included here have proven some relevance already.

¹⁵ These are habitat and democratic attitudes in Burkina Faso and Mali, identity in Benin and Niger, and finally formal education in Burkina Faso; all significant at the 5 percent level in chi square statistics.

¹⁶ We prefer this statistical approach because it allows for forward tracking models which further reduce the number of influential variables to a best model with a minimum number of variables, and because the interpretation of results is more fruitful (for details cf. Cohen et al. 2003: 520).

Table 1: Best Multiple Binary Logistic Regression Models on Voting Intentions

Country	Benin				Burkina Faso			Mali		Niger			
Variables	FCBE	RB	PRD	PSD	ADF/ RDA	CDP	UNIR/ MS	ADEMA	RPM	ANDP	CDS	MNSD	PNDS
Region	Atakora	Collines	Littoral	Couffo	Centre- Nord	Est		Bamako	Gao	Dosso	Maradi	Tillabéri	Tahoua
	3.812** (45.245)	-20.088 (.000)	1.452** (4.272)	4.910** (135.575)	1.220** (3.387)	2.506** (12.256)		-1.182** (.307)	.944* (2.571)	3.224** (25.119)	.724* (2.063)	.750** (2.117)	1.088** (2.969)
	Donga	Couffo	Ouémé	Mono	Nord	Sahel		Gao	Kayes	Maradi	Tillabéri		Zinder
	2.181** (8.856)	-2.604* (.074)	2.240** (9.395)	2.360** (10.594)	1.380** (3.973)	-1.195** (.303)		-1.356** (.307)	-.853* (.426)	2.063** (7.866)	-1.171* (.310)		-.657** (.518)
	Mono	Donga	Zou					Kayes	Ségou		Zinder		
	1.715** (5.559)	-19.399 (.000)	-19.237 (.000)					.629** (1.876)	.553* (1.738)		1.210** (3.352)		
	Plateau	Ouémé						Ségou					
	1.925** (6.853)	-2.828** (.059)						-.524* (.592)					
	Zou	Plateau											
	.975** (2.650)	-19.978 (.000)											
Ethnic Group	Bariba	Adja	Fon			Gour- mantché		Malinke	Malinke	Songai- Djerma	Hausa	Hausa	Songai- Djerma
	-1.806* (.164)	3.145** (23.212)	.935** (2.546)			-1.674* (.187)		-.671* (.511)	.922** (2.513)	1.645** (5.183)	.781** (2.184)	-.820** (.440)	-1.103** (.332)
	Ditamari & Yom	Fon						Peul				Tuareg	
	-1.184* (.306)	4.202** (66.797)						-.609* (.544)				-.761** (.467)	
		Yoruba											
		2.194 (8.973)											
Urban Residence		.577* (1.782)				-.830** (.436)			.909** (2.482)				
Most of life in...						Village .543* (1.721)	Village -1.286** (.276)	Town -1.743** (.475)					Town .687** (1.987)
Satisfaction with the Government		.842** (2.321)				-.820** (.440)	1.104** (3.017)	-.858** (.424)		-.609** (.544)		.906** (2.474)	
Formal Education						Second- ary+ -1.186** (.306)	Second- ary+ 1.559** (4.756)		None -1.656** (.519)				
Identity Preference		Class -.601* (.548)	Religion .579* (1.784)	Class .916* (2.500)							Sex 1.648** (5.195)		
Constant	-2.626** (2.321)	-4.561** (.010)	-3.042** (.048)	-3.920** (.020)	-2.725** (.066)	.384 (1.468)	-2.136** (.118)	-.117 (.889)	-1.410** (.244)	-4.908** (.007)	-2.621** (.073)	-.658** (.518)	-1.230** (.292)
Observations (N)	554	554	554	554	763	763	763	793	793	824	824	824	824
Pseudo-R² (Nagelkerke)	.268	.424	.344	.482	.074	.300	.261	.124	.139	.420	.180	.128	.145

Note: Levels of significance: ** 1%, * 5%.

Chart represents B coefficients and Exp(B) in parantheses (e.g., living in Couffo (Benin) increases the likelihood of intending to vote PSD by the factor 135.6; highly negative B's with Exp(B) = .000 indicate a statistically salient (near) absence of voters in the respective category).

Source: Authors' compilation.

factory results are returned for all parties in Benin, for two out of three parties in Burkina Faso, and just one party, the ANDP, in Niger. Although ethnic variables prove significant in ten models, only five of these generate statistically satisfactory pseudo- R^2 values. This lowers the overall explanatory value of ethnicity. Although ethnic variables contribute significantly to virtually all models in Benin, Mali, and Niger, ethnicity predicts voting intentions considerably better in Benin than in Mali and Niger. In any case, there is no evidence that ethnicity is a structuring factor in Burkina Faso.

Second, regional residence is superior to any other variable in predicting voting intentions throughout the cases. The danger of statistical interference with ethnic affiliations is low since in most cases the most geographically concentrated 80 percent of one ethnic group is spread over three or four regional units. Yet, ethnic affiliation and regional affiliation apparently each have an independent influence. Region—even with the inclusion of other structural and attitudinal variables—does not suffice to produce statistically satisfactory results everywhere. While the multivariate models for Benin and Burkina Faso are of good quality, the overall explanatory power of the models for Malian and Nigerien parties is fairly weak (Nagelkerke's Pseudo R^2 remains below .2 in most of these models).

5 Ethnicization of Support Bases

The fact that ethnicity significantly contributes to predicting voting intentions for several parties does not necessarily mean that the whole party system is mainly structured by ethnic cleavages. Multivariate statistics help to determine the general significance of ethnicity (or other variables) but they tell us little about the scope of impact, particularly the following research questions: Are there parties that meet the criteria of an “ethnic” or an “ethnic congress party”? To what extent are party systems composed by such parties, and where do we then deal with “ethnicized party systems”? This section aims to answer these questions by controlling for probabilistic statistical evidence at the level of individual parties.

For instance, it is correct in statistical terms that Malinke intend significantly less to vote for ADEMA, and significantly prefer RPM (see Table 1). However, this does not automatically mean that RPM is an ethnic Malinke party; nor does it indicate that the Malian party system is structured mainly along ethnic lines. Hence, we employ three analytic tools on the basis of absolute frequency distributions in the support bases of the parties under investigation, which are particularly easy to interpret.

First, following Horowitz and others, we examine the ethnic composition of the respective group of survey respondents who intended to vote for the party (subsequently referred to as “supporters”). In other words, we detect the largest ethnic group among the party's supporters. Second, we take into account the general ethnic composition of the respective society in order to avoid Cheeseman and Ford's “Botswana problem” cited above. Using a measure of proportionality, we may better estimate whether or not the ethnic composition of the sup-

porters mirrors that of the society. Following Gallagher, we calculate a least squares index which theoretically runs from zero to one, where zero would indicate a perfect ethno-demographic proportionality of society and supporters (cf. Gallagher 1991) and a value of .5 would signify a party system perfectly structured along an ethnic cleavage. The logic of the index can be illustrated by an ideal two-party system with an equal share of 50 percent of votes for both parties in a society composed of two numerically equal ethnic groups. If both parties received half of their votes from the two ethnic groups respectively, perfect proportionality would be reached and the index value would be .0 for both parties. In contrast, if both parties received 100 percent of their respective votes from one of the ethnic groups, that is to say if ethnic entity E1 exclusively supported party P1 and group E2 exclusively supported party P2, the value would be .5 for both parties.

Third, Horowitz reminds us of the double perspective one can take on ethnic voting. From the party perspective, the ethnic composition of the party's supporters may suffice to identify the ethnic character of this individual party. From the perspective of the ethnic group, one has to take a look at the party preferences of the entire ethnic group. It may well be that the support base of a party is overwhelmingly composed by one group, but this ethnic group's members may not exclusively—or not even with a majority—vote for this particular party. We need to know how probable it is that a member of the largest support group prefers the respective party or not.

These three dimensions are used to assess the overall degree of ethnicization of the parties under investigation and are operationalized as follows: (1) If a party's largest ethnic support group accounts for less than 50 percent of all supporters, this will be a first indicator of weak ethnicization, whereas a party with more than two-thirds of support coming from one ethnic group can be reasonably evaluated as strongly ethnicized. This threshold is below Horowitz's 85 percent and, thus, is admittedly rather in favor of the ethnicity argument. A share between 50 percent and 66.7 percent will indicate medium ethnicization. (2) As regards the proportionality index, we believe that a value of more than .25—half of the practically possible maximum value—can be characterized as “strong,” while values below .125 point rather to a weak ethnic support base. Again, values between these thresholds indicate the assessment “medium.” (3) As regards the degree of “likelihood,” it seems reasonable that the ethnic character of the party is weak unless it is at least two times likelier that a member of this ethnic group votes for the party in question than for any other one. Thus, a “likelihood” value below 2.0 is a third indicator of weak ethnicization and a value above 3.0 indicates strong ethnicization, while values in between once again denote a medium degree.

The values of all three measurements are summarized in a simple index (each “weak” = 0, each “medium” = 1, and each “strong” = 2) and again transferred into qualitative assessments (0-1 = weak, 2-4 = medium, and 5-6 = strong ethnicization). A strongly ethnicized party is thus characterized by the following: a support base which is composed to at least two-thirds by one ethnic group, an ethnic composition that strongly deviates from the ethnic demography

of the country, a three times greater probability that a member of this ethnic group is willing to vote for this party rather than for any other one.

Table 2 reveals that seven out of 13 parties—including at least one case from each country—are parties with a weak degree of ethnicization according to our bivariate measurements. Only three parties have a strongly ethnicized support base (PSD/Benin, RB/Benin, and ANDP/Niger). The remaining three parties (PRD/Benin, ADF-RDA/Burkina, and CDS/Niger) demonstrate a medium degree of ethnicization. Values and overall assessments are surprisingly clear-cut. It is only in the case of the PNDS in Niger that some of the indicators and values may come close to a medium degree of ethnicization. However, if we had employed Horowitz's 85 percent threshold, just one party—the RB in Benin—would have met this criterion. Moreover, in the case of Benin's PSD, ethnic variables do not add significant explanatory value in the multivariate model. Thus, the bivariate control assessment should not be overemphasized since it may overrate ethnicity in relation to other factors.

As regards the possible prevalence of "ethnic congress parties," it has to be conceded that our indicators are primarily devised to detect monoethnic parties. However, ethnic congress parties can also be captured. Although ethnic congress parties appeal to more than one ethnic group, their multiparty support base must be exclusive in terms of a number of ethnic groups in order to make sense of the concept. Otherwise it would be hard to distinguish them from nonethnic parties. Consequently, an ethnic congress party will display lower values in "shares" and more moderate values in "proportionality," but "likelihood" should still indicate high values for exclusive ethnic congress parties. However, first, we do not find (otherwise) weakly ethnicized parties with high "likelihoods" and, second, all parties whose ethnic support base is less than "strong" share their largest ethnic group of supporters with other relevant parties. Apparently, the sample does not include ethnic congress parties.

To what extent are *party systems* composed of individual parties with ethnicized support bases? Certainly, a party system is more than just the sum of political parties in a given political system (Bardi and Mair 2008). Party systems are about interparty relations and the relative size of political parties. Consequently, the relative weight of the parties in the respective party systems has to be taken into account. Table 3 sums up the shares of moderately or strongly ethnicized parties ("medium" or "strong") per country and also includes the shares of parties not under investigation due to statistical reasons (labeled "undetermined"). Although we measured rather in favor of the ethnicity hypothesis, the results clearly show that only the party system of Benin tends to be dominated by ethnicized parties and, therefore, has a potentially ethnicized party system. The results for Niger are somewhat more ambiguous, but the party systems of Burkina Faso and Mali are clearly dominated by parties with weak ethnic support bases; their party systems cannot reasonably carry the label "ethnicized."

Table 2: Level of Ethnicization in Support Bases of Major Political Parties

Party	Share of party's support among all respondents ^a	Largest ethnic group among supporters		Proportionality index ^{b,c}	Likelihood of ethnic support ^{b,d}	Overall degree of ethnicization of support ^b
		Name	Share ^b			
Benin						
FCBE	23.6%	Fon	41.2% (0)	0.10 (0)	0.70 (0)	Weak (0)
RB	18.4%	Fon	86.0% (2)	0.28 (2)	6.13 (2)	Strong (6)
PRD	15.9%	Fon	67.6% (2)	0.14 (1)	2.07 (1)	Medium (4)
PSD	9.7%	Adja	64.7% (1)	0.41 (2)	10.50 (2)	Strong (5)
Burkina Faso						
ADF/RDA	7.1%	Mossi	71.4% (2)	0.14 (1)	2.16 (1)	Medium (4)
CDP	78.3%	Mossi	54.1% (1)	0.02 (0)	1.02 (0)	Weak (1)
UNIR/MS	7.7%	Mossi	50.0% (0)	0.07 (0)	0.86 (0)	Weak (0)
Mali						
ADEMA	44.8%	Bambara	21.7% (0)	0.05 (0)	0.92 (0)	Weak (0)
RPM	19.3%	Bambara	25.2% (0)	0.06 (0)	1.11 (0)	Weak (0)
Niger						
ANDP	7.8%	Songai-Djerma	74.3% (2)	0.44 (2)	10.31 (2)	Strong (6)
CDS	15.7%	Hausa	78.0% (2)	0.21 (1)	2.93 (1)	Medium (4)
MNSD	42.5%	Hausa	44.9% (0)	0.08 (0)	0.67 (0)	Weak (0)
PNDS	24.7%	Hausa	66.1% (1)	0.12 (0)	1.60 (0)	Weak (1)

^a Share of voting intentions among those respondents willing to vote.

^b Index value in parentheses. For operationalization see main text and Table A2 (Annex).

^c Proportionality of ethno-demographic shares among the party support base and among all respondents.

^d Likelihood that a member of the strongest ethnic group among the supporters of the party in question favors this party over all other parties.

Source: Authors' compilation.

Table 3: Degree of Ethnicization at the Party-system Level

Ethnicization ^a	Benin	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger
Medium or strong	44.0%	7.1%	0.0%	23.5%
Undetermined	32.4%	6.9%	35.9%	9.3%
Weak	23.6%	86.0%	64.1%	67.2%

^a The table shows the cumulative shares of parties (per national party system), distinguished by their degree of ethnicization. "Undetermined" is the share of parties which could not be included in statistical tests because of their low number of supporters.

Source: Authors' compilation.

6 Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of both the multivariate regressions as well as the bivariate statistics indicate that ethnicity as a determinant of support for political parties in Francophone Africa matters, but that the scope of impact is generally rather weak and differs with regard to countries' party systems and individual parties. In particular, the degree of ethnicization turns out to be less convincing when we have a closer look at the support bases of the individual parties.

At the level of individual parties, ethnicity proves significant for 10 out of 13 parties in multivariate regressions but only in three cases is there a strong monoethnic support base. Three further parties show a medium degree of ethnicization, while the remaining majority of seven cases are weakly ethnicized at best. Even the most strongly ethnicized parties are not really close to what Horowitz and others have called ethnic parties.

At the party-system level multivariate regressions return significant results for all country cases except for Burkina Faso. However, Pseudo R^2 values are unsatisfactory in the cases of Niger and Mali. Moreover, only in Benin is it convincing that the party system is mainly composed of ethnicized parties. In Niger the evidence is more ambiguous. In Burkina Faso there is just one small party with a moderately ethnicized support base, and in Mali there is not even one.

Generally, we find that bigger parties also tend to be less ethnic than smaller ones. No political party with more than 20 percent support in the surveys comes close to being an ethnic party. This partially confirms Fomunyoh's view that government parties—often bigger ones—are less ethnic than other ones. Yet, we also find parties participating in government that are strongly ethnic (for example, ANDP/Niger) and smaller opposition parties (for example, Burkina's UNIR/MS) that are not ethnic at all. Moreover, there is no evidence of exclusive ethnic congress parties among the larger cases.

The rather weak relevance of ethnicity in the party systems—except in Benin—necessarily implies the question of which other factors determine voting behavior in the countries under investigation. Although a thorough investigation of these factors is clearly beyond the scope of this paper, the multivariate regressions offer a basis for a brief discussion of these factors.

A first related finding refers to the role of factors that are well-known in the debate on voting behavior in Europe and North America. Especially in Burkina Faso, where ethnicity is a weak predictor of voting behavior, differences in (rural or urban) residence and education levels contribute significantly to the models. Rational choice approaches also prove fruitful for six parties. Satisfaction with the government is a significant feature of the support base of the major government parties in Benin, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Dissatisfaction seems important for opposition parties in Burkina Faso and Mali's RPM.

Probably the most important variable other than ethnicity, however, is "region." In the multivariate regressions "region" outperforms "ethnicity," with significance found in 12 out of 13 cases. This confirms that ethnicity and region are not identical—as they are often treated in the debate—but rather exercise an at least partly independent impact. In theoretical terms,

this suggests that ties between voters and parties may not work so much through common ethnic identity as through geographical proximity. Party leaders may rely on personal networks in their region of origin, where they are also able to make efficient use of local languages. These networks will probably include distributional mechanisms from which regional residents, possibly independently of their ethnic identity, will benefit. Thus, neopatrimonial and clientelistic ties may be crucial to explaining the apparent role of region in determining voting behavior.

All this is not to say that ethnicity does not play a role at all. It has been argued that the role of ethnicity depends on the mobilization strategies of elites and that in some cases ethnicity will be used and in other cases not (Osaghae 2003, Posner 2007). However, it must not be forgotten that our findings fall short of sufficiently explaining the determinants of party preference in at least two country cases (Mali and Niger). In general, it seems promising to further investigate the interaction of elite behavioral patterns and structural variables including ethnicity, region, and others.

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Annex

Table A1: Party Abbreviations, Full Names, and Countries

Country	Party
Benin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCBE—Force Cauris pour un Bénin Emergent • PRD—Parti pour le Renouveau Démocratique • PSD—Parti Social-Démocrate • RB—Renaissance du Bénin
Burkina Faso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADF/RDA—Alliance pour la Démocratie et la Fédération/Rassemblement Démocratique Africain • CDP—Congrès pour la Démocratie et le Progrès • UNIR/MS—Union pour la Révolution/Mouvement Sankariste
Mali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADEMA—Alliance pour la Démocratie au Mali • RPM—Rassemblement pour le Mali
Niger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANDP—Alliance Nigérienne pour la Démocratie et le Progrès • CDS—Convention Démocratique et Sociale • MNSD—Mouvement National pour la Société de Développement • PNDS—Parti pour le Socialisme et la Démocratie au Niger

Table A2: Ethnic Support Base: Thresholds for Index of Overall Assessment

	“share” (s)	“proportionality” (p)	“likelihood” (l)
Weak (0)	$s \leq 50\%$	$p < 0.125$	$l < 2.0$
Medium (1)	$50\% < s < 66.7\%$	$0.125 \leq p < 0.25$	$2.0 \leq l < 3.0$
Strong (2)	$s \geq 66.7\%$	$p \geq 0.25$	$l \geq 3.0$

Values are summarized in an index ranging from 0-6; overall assessment: 0-1 = weak; 2-4 = medium; 5-6 = strong.

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