

AFRO BAROMETER

Working Paper No. 83

ETHNICITY AS A POLITICAL CLEAVAGE

by Nicholas Cheeseman and Robert Ford

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November 2007

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AFROBAROMETER WORKING PAPERS

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

Managing Editor: Carolyn Logan

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Ethnicity As A Political Cleavage

Abstract

This paper examines the significance of ethnicity as a political cleavage across African nations over time. While scholars have studied the influence of ethnicity in structuring party politics in Africa, those studies have largely been limited to an examination of ruling party support. This work develops a measure of ‘ethnic voting’ that is reflective of all significant parties and ethnic groups. This measure of ‘ethnic voting’ allows us to compare reliably across countries within the Afrobarometer sample. Adopting measures that have been employed in class analyses in developed countries over the past twenty years, we construct two measures, ‘ethnic polarization’ and ‘ethnic diversity’. The former captures the importance of ethnicity in determining party support levels while the latter captures variations in the ethnic diversity of the support base of different parties. Together, these two measures show variation in the salience of ethnicity as a political cleavage across African countries over time.

INTRODUCTION

Ethnicity has long been understood as playing a crucial role in structuring party politics in Africa (Horowitz 1985; Palmberg 1999; Posner 2005). However, recent research has suggested that the impact of ethnic identities is extremely complex and variable. Norris and Mattes (2003) find that ethnicity does play key role in determining support for ruling parties, but that ethnicity is not always the primary cleavage in African polities. Scarrit and Mazaffar (2005) demonstrate that both ethno-political fragmentation and the geographical concentration of ethnic groups are important factors in explaining the number of political parties. Wombin Cho (2007) has argued that the relationship between ethnic fractionalization and popular trust in political institutions varies in response to electoral design. Bannon, Miguel, and Posner (2004) demonstrate that there is no simple relationship between ethnic fractionalization and the likelihood that individuals will identify themselves first and foremost in ethnic terms. Clearly, there is a pressing need for a systematic and comparative evaluation of the significance of ethnicity for political behaviour both between political parties and ethnic groups in any one country, across the range of African countries, and over time.

Despite this, there have been relatively few attempts to study the significance of ethnicity as a political cleavage using the data collected by the Afrobarometer. To the best of our knowledge the work of Norris and Mattes is the only attempt to use Afrobarometer data to undertake a comparative analysis of the importance of ethnicity for political affiliation across sub-Saharan Africa. While their paper broke important ground by revealing the large variations in ‘ethnic voting’ among the countries surveyed by the Afrobarometer, it had a number of significant limitations. Most obviously, by only focussing on support for the ruling party Norris and Mattes’ analysis only provides a partial picture of the significance of ethnicity as a political cleavage. We therefore lack a measure of ‘ethnic voting’ that is reflective of all significant parties and ethnic groups. This is a considerable limitation because ruling parties, which usually need to have multi-ethnic support in order to gain power, are likely to be more ethnically diverse than opposition parties. Furthermore, Norris and Mattes concentrate on the impact of membership of the largest linguistic group on party affiliation. Given the important variations in political behaviour between ethnic groups, and the fact that many countries in the Afrobarometer sample do not feature a numerically dominant ethnic group, this approach has the potential to generate misleading results. Finally, Norris and Mattes only had access to the results from the First Round of the Afrobarometer, and so there has been no work done on how the relationship between ethnic identity and party affiliation is developing over time.

The main contribution of this paper is that we develop new measures of ‘ethnic voting’ that allow us to compare reliably across countries within the Afrobarometer sample, and over time. To do this we adopt measures employed over the last twenty years to analyse class voting in developed democracies. Borrowing from this literature allows us to construct two measures, ‘ethnic polarization’ and ‘ethnic diversity’. The former captures the level of ‘ethnic voting’ - the importance of ethnicity in determining party support levels, which can be measured either for one individual party or across a country’s party system. This is calculated using an adaptation of the ‘Kappa’ measure first introduced by Hout, Brookes, and Manza (1995), a measure which employs logistic regression techniques to provide a measure of polarisation in party support which is not influenced by shifts in the overall popularity of different parties. The latter captures variations in the ethnic diversity of the support base of different political parties. We calculate this by using a modified form of the ethno-linguistic fractionalization index at the party level. Taken together, these two measures provide a range of perspectives on the salience of ethnicity as a political cleavage across African nations and over time.

Comparing ‘ethnic polarization’ and ‘ethnic diversity’ across types of party, between countries, and over time, we find support for three hypothesis of real significance to the study of political mobilization and the process of democratization in Africa. First, in-line with the work done by Scarritt (2006), we find that the vast majority of political parties in Africa are not ‘ethnic parties’. Second, our results demonstrate that on average opposition parties are less ethnically diverse than ruling parties. This finding calls into

question analysis of party systems and ethnic voting in Africa which focus on ruling parties. Third, trends in the levels of ‘polarization’ and ‘diversity’ across the three rounds of the Afrobarometer suggest that ruling and opposition parties are diverging. While ruling parties are becoming increasingly ethnically diverse and less ethnically polarised, the reverse is generally true of opposition parties. This suggests that the evolution of ethnicity as a political cleavage is complex. On the one hand, the need for ruling parties to build large coalitions in order to retain power appears to have encouraged the development of multi-ethnic political alliances which are becoming increasingly representative of the national population. This trend is like to continue as aspirant leaders recognise the (electoral) need to present themselves as national, rather than sectional or regional, leaders. If it does continue, it is likely to undermine the salience of ethnic cleavages. On the other hand, many opposition parties have responded to electoral defeat by mobilizing increasingly ethnically homogenous communities. It may be that aspirant leaders who do not have the support or political resources to compete for high office are attempting to establish and maintain their position within the political landscape by securing the support of their ‘home’ communities. What is clear is that the greater reliance of opposition parties on a core ethnic support base exaggerates the salience of ethnic cleavages.

It is too early to tell how these two trends will play out, and what the net effect will be on African party systems. It is plausible that the success of multi-ethnic alliances, and the increasing diversity of support for ruling parties, will envelop opposition parties and create the conditions for the emergence of party systems in which ideologies, rather than ethnicities, take centre stage. But it is equally as plausible that increasingly ‘diverse’ ruling parties are masking political systems in which small pockets of ethnic and regional opposition are being isolated from power and are growing increasingly resentful of their exclusion. This may foster underlying tensions between the ‘included’ and the ‘excluded’ which, if not dealt with, could prove divisive in the future. In the final section of the paper we combine our measures of ‘polarization’ and ‘diversity’ to develop a model which illustrates how ethnically representative ruling parties are across Africa. The level of ethnic representation is significant because it is likely to have a strong impact on questions of regime legitimacy, trust, and ultimately political stability. While we find that the majority of ruling parties between 2001 and 2006 have been ethnically ‘unrepresentative’ of the populations they serve, many countries – including Malawi, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, Nigeria, Botswana, Mali, and Senegal – have ruling parties which are at least ‘partially representative’. Furthermore, because ruling parties are becoming more ethnically diverse and less ethnically polarized, they are also becoming more representative over time. This trend promises to further reduce the significance of ethnicity as a political dividing line, and suggests that multi-party elections may promote, rather than hinder, the emergence of a ‘non-ethnic’ politics.

THE DATA

Our data comes from the Afrobarometer survey which collects data from a number of African countries, with a minimum of 1,200 respondents of voting age in each country. The Afrobarometer conducts face to face interviews on the basis of a random representative national sample. The first round (1999-2001) consisted of 12 cases: South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Zambia, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, and Mali. In the second round (2002-2003) Cape Verde, Kenya, Mozambique, and Senegal were added to make 16 cases. The third round (2005-2006) also included Benin and Madagascar, bringing the number of cases up to 18. In this paper we use data from all three rounds, giving us a total random sample of over 70,000 respondents. For the sake of brevity we shall generally refer to these rounds by their end date, i.e. Round One: 2001, Round Two: 2003, Round Three: 2006.¹

¹ The exact timing and conditions of each survey is recorded at www.afrobarometer.org.

Due to concerns with the data on ethno-linguistic identity, we leave Tanzania and Madagascar out of our analysis (see below). Because they feature almost no ethno-linguistic variation, we also leave out Cape Verde, Madagascar, and Lesotho. Clearly political mobilization in these countries is not occurring on the basis of ethno-linguistic identities – at least not those captured by the Afrobarometer ‘home language’ question. Finally, we exclude Benin because political affiliation is recorded with reference to individual political leaders rather than political parties. This makes it extremely problematic to use the data on party affiliation in Benin, because our unit of reference is the party rather than individual political leaders.

Removing these countries leaves us with a ‘core group’ of 10 countries which we can track over time from 2001-2006. When presenting the data from the most recent two rounds of the Afrobarometer (2006), we also include Kenya, Mozambique, and Senegal, giving us a total of 13 cases. It is important to note that the data provided by the Afrobarometer is not representative of Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. While the Afrobarometer does conduct surveys in countries with low levels of democracy (for example, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe), it out of necessity focuses on Africa’s more democratic and liberal political systems. However, this is not a significant limitation for this project, which is mainly concerned with the relationship between the holding of (relatively) free multi-party electoral competition and the salience of ethno-linguistic identities.

Core Group

South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Zambia, Uganda, Malawi, and Mali

2006 Cases

South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Zambia, Uganda, Malawi, and Mali, Kenya, Mozambique, and Senegal

MEASURING PARTY AFFILIATION

To ascertain voting preferences we use the question “*Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?*” (If yes) “*Which party is that?*” (see Norris and Mattes 2003). The vast majority of respondents do specify a party, although a significant number of respondents claim not to feel close to any particular party, (see Appendix 2). Of course, the division between ‘affiliated’ and ‘non-affiliated’ respondents may provide important clues as to the most relevant political cleavages and sources of political exclusion. In forthcoming research we intend to investigate the characteristics of ‘non-affiliated’ respondents, and to see if it is possible to identify common ethnic/regional/economic themes linking those who do not feel close to any particular party.

Because our measures of ethnic voting are sensitive to small changes in the distribution of the support base of political parties (see below), we focus our analysis on parties which receive the affiliation of 5% or more of ‘affiliated’ respondents from that country. Using a 5% threshold gives a distribution of party systems for our cases set out in Table 1 (as the number of parties in some countries varies over the three rounds of the Afrobarometer, each country has a separate entry in the table for each round). The 5% threshold is also a useful device because it provides a very close approximation of the number of effective electoral parties. In-line with the findings of Scarritt and Mozaffar, we find that the average number of effective electoral parties in elections in third-wave democracies is 3 (2005: 403).

It is important to note that there is very little electoral turnover between 2001 and 2006 among our cases. This is important, because it means that the trends we identify are occurring within ruling and opposition parties, and are not simply the result of changes in the ruling/opposition parties. We record the ‘ruling party’ as the party which wins the most seats in the legislature. We use this measure rather than focussing on the party of the incumbent president because the party affiliation question in the Afrobarometer specifically asks respondents which party they feel closest too, not which political leader or presidential

candidate. Only in Mali and Malawi was there a change in the largest legislative party in the period under review. In Mali the Alliance for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA) was replaced by the Rally For Mali (RPM/IBK) alliance as the ruling party for rounds two and three. In Malawi, the United Democratic Front (UDF) was replaced as the ruling party by the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) for round three.² In these two cases, shifts in the ethnic polarization and diversity of the ruling party may reflect a change of government. In all other cases, trends over time solely reflect changes in incumbent ruling parties.

Table 1: Distribution of Countries by Number of Political Parties

No. of Parties	Country (Round)			
1				
2	Ghana (01/03/06)	Mozambique (03/06)	Zimbabwe (01/03/06)	
3	Botswana (01/03/06) Senegal (03/06) Uganda (01/03)	Namibia (01/03/06)	Malawi (01/03/06)	Kenya (03/06) Mali (01)
4	Nigeria (03/06) Zambia (06)	South Africa (01/03)	Mali (03)	Uganda (06)
5	Mali (06)			

MEASURING ETHNO-LINGUISTIC IDENTITY

We use the question “*Let’s think for a moment about the languages that you use. What language do you speak most at home?*” as a proxy for ethnic identity. However, how to use the data generated by this question is problematic. Any study of the impact of ethnicity in Africa faces the vexed problem of how to group ethno-linguistic units (see Scarritt & Mozaffar 1999; Posner 2004). This problem is particularly acute when calculating levels of ethnic polarisation and diversity, because these measures are sensitive to the number and size of ethno-linguistic groups. The specification of ethnic cleavages/groups is compounded when using the Afrobarometer data by the plethora of answers given to the ‘*what language to you speak at home*’ question. In particularly difficult cases, such as Kenya and Nigeria, respondents identify over thirty languages as their ‘home language’, some of which are not recognised as being living languages or dialects by sources such as the Ethnologue encyclopaedia.

There are clear advantages and disadvantages to merging ethno-linguistic groups *and* to leaving the data as we find it. Merging groups may enable us to focus on politically relevant units and avoid having our results skewed by small ethno-linguistic communities who may not be politically relevant. On the other hand, combining language groups into supra-ethnic or regional blocks may obscure important variations. Furthermore, using our knowledge of historical political cleavages, alliances, and enmities, to create supra-identities threatens to introduce a dangerous endogenously given that we want to test for the salience of ethnicity as a political cleavage. In contrast, leaving the groups as they are accommodates the fact that the decision of respondents to identify a particular language/ethnicity may have significant implications for their identity and hence their political affiliation. However, leaving the sample more

² The case of Malawi is particularly difficult because in 2004 the president did not come from the largest party in the legislature. To be consistent we count the MCP as the ‘ruling party’, while recognising that the dominant role of the president in most African polities means that the UDF may be considered to be the ‘ruling party’ by Malawian voters.

fragmented will necessarily make political parties appear to be more ethnically diverse, and may underestimate the significance of ethnicity as a political cleavage.

In forthcoming research we intend to sidestep this problem by calculating our measures of ethnic ‘polarization’ and ‘diversity’ using both ‘merged’ and ‘unmerged’ data. In this version of our analysis, we concentrate on the unmerged data-set, although we have subsumed dialects into their parent languages (for example ‘Setswana’ includes Tswana). Again, because our measures are sensitive to small variations in the distribution of the support of all ethnic groups, we only include ethnic groups that represent 3% or more of the population in any given round. The resulting distribution of ethno-linguistic groups for 2006 is provided in table 2. We recognise that in a small number of cases, particularly Uganda and Nigeria, the use of a 3% threshold results in the loss of a considerable amount of data. When we repeat our analysis using larger ethno-regional blocks we will be able to assess the impact of including these groups in our findings. However, we have repeated our analysis using higher and lower thresholds for ethnic groups and are confident that our findings are robust.³

The level of ethno-linguistic fractionalization in each country is calculated on the basis of the Afrobarometer sample for that year. As the sample varies from round to round, the ELF scores and the distribution of ethno-linguistic groups also vary from year to year. It is worth noting that there is a large jump in the level of ethno-linguistic fractionalization between the first and second round of the Afrobarometer, suggesting that the recording of ‘home language’ may have become more precise in the second and third round. For this reason we mainly focus on trends from the second to the third round of the Afrobarometer survey, although in all cases we also present data for round one. However, we leave out Tanzania and Madagascar because the great fluctuations in the distribution of ethno-linguistic groups between rounds render them unreliable cases to track over time.⁴

³ We have replicated our analysis with a higher (5%) threshold for the language groups, and found estimates of both our measures are affected only slightly by this change in the language threshold. Both the trends in our measures overtime and their distribution between different African countries were unaffected by the change in threshold.

⁴ For example, 44% of Tanzanians are classified as ‘Swahili’ in the first round. This rises to 95% in the second round and then falls to just 16% in the third round.

Table 2: Distribution of language groups by size, All Countries 2006, %

	Largest Grp	2 nd largest	3 rd largest	4 th largest	5 th largest	6 th largest	7 th largest	Other s	ELF
Benin	Fon 42.6	Adja 15.1	Yoruba 12.2	Bariba 10.4	Ditimari 6.9			12.8	0.749
Botswana	Setswana 84.9	Sekalanga 9.1						6.1	0.271
Ghana	Akan 52.6	Ewe 13.5	Dagaare 19.4	Ga/Dangbe 5.8				12.4	0.664
Kenya	Kikuyu 17.8	Kalenjin 12.2	Luo 11.1	Luhya 10.7	Kamba 10.5	Kisii 7.5	Meru/Embu 7.1	23.1	0.908
Malawi	Chewa 58.8	Yao 11.6	Nyanja 7.2	Lomwe 6.7	Tumbuka 9.8			6.1	0.622
Mali	Bambara 49.5	Sonrha 9.7	Peugl 9.4	Malink 6.4	Sonink 6.2	Dogon 4.7		14.1	0.727
Mozambique	Makua 31.6	Changana 16.9	Portuguese 15.4	Chuabo 7.9	Sena 7.3			20.9	0.836
Namibia	Oshiwambo 52.1	Nama 14.2	Afrikaans 8.9	Ojiherero 7.2	Rukwangali 6.8	Silozi 4.7		6.2	0.689
Nigeria	Housa 25.2	Yoruba 22.1	Igbo 17.2					35.2	0.857
Senegal	Wolof 59.2	Pular 20.3	Serer 7.6	Mandinka 4.2				12.8	0.727
South Africa	Zulu 20.0	Xhosa 15.5	Afrikaans 13.5	Setswana 10.2	Spedi 10.3	English 8.7	Sesotho 7.3	14.5	0.884
Uganda	Luganda 19.4	Luo 12.6	Runyankole 10.9	Lusoga 9.7	Atego 6.7	Rukiga 6.4	Lugbara 5.2	29.1	0.914
Zambia	Bemba 35.2	Tonga 15.4	Nyanja 14.8	Lozi 8.8	Nsenga 6.1			19.7	0.819
Zimbabwe	Shona 78.6	Ndebele 16.2						5.1	0.356

MEASURING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ETHNICITY AS A POLITICAL CLEAVAGE

Donald Horowitz (1985, 1993) provides perhaps the strongest account of the relationship between ethnicity and political affiliation. For Horowitz, the psychological association between certain ethnic groups and political parties in ethnically-segmented means that ethnicity has a direct and unidirectional impact on political behaviour. As a result, Horowitz sees elections in countries such as Kenya and Nigeria as little more than an ethnic census. The notion of an ethnic census has been hugely influential but rarely empirically tested – in part because commentators on African politics have not had access to reliable survey data with which to test this hypothesis. Consequently, where scholars have attempted to measure whether or not African political parties are ‘ethnic’ they have been forced to infer conclusions by comparing census data with the geographical distribution of electoral support to indicate whether parties are recruiting support from a broad or narrow ethnic base (see Scarritt 2006).

The data generated by the Afrobarometer offers a first chance to study the relationship between ethnicity and political affiliation at the individual level. Our aim is to provide an improved measure of the extent to which ethnicity constitutes a political cleavage across Africa. To do this we follow Horowitz in understanding the significance of ethnicity as a political cleavage to be expressed by the extent to which ethnic groups give all their support to one particular party, and the extent to which parties recruit all of

their support from one particular ethnic group (these two ways of looking at ‘ethnic voting’ are related but offer significantly different perspectives on the political role of ethnicity, as will be explained below). To operationalize this framework we create two measures of ‘ethnic voting’.

Ethnic polarization: the extent to which support for a given party varies between a country’s ethnic groups.

Ethnic diversity: the range of ethnic groups represented within any one party/party system.

The ‘ethnic polarization’ measure we employ is informed by the debates over the significance of class voting in developed countries, and the development of methodological innovations designed to measure “class voting” in a more rigorous fashion (see Heath et al 1985, 1995; Manza, Hout and Brookes 1995; Evans 1999, 2000). Early measures of class voting, such as the “Alford Index”⁵ — conflated two very different sources of variation. As well as measuring changes in the *associations* between class and party, such measures are also influenced by changes in the *size* of different classes and in the *popularity* of different parties. In order to isolate the relationship between class and voting that interested them from these general shifts in the class structure and political environment, researchers have turned to logistic regression modelling, which employs odds ratios in order to isolate the strength of the relationship between class background and voting behaviour from shifts in the size of different classes and the general popularity of parties.

This approach has obvious advantages for the analysis of ethnic voting in Africa, where similar problems of measurement apply. The level of ethnic diversity and the popularity of government and opposition parties is subject to considerable variation between countries and over time, while the popularity of the same party can also be subject to large shifts over short periods of times. These large differences and changes in ethnic diversity and popularity introduce a large potential for bias in the estimates of African ethnic voting. We therefore employ logistic regression models to isolate the relationship between ethnicity and party support, and in order to generate a summary “ethnic polarisation” measure for different parties and countries, we utilise the ideas of Manza, Hout and Brookes (1995), who propose the “kappa score”: “an index of class voting based on the [logistic] approach...that can be easily compared over a long time series or between countries”. The ethnic polarisation score is a direct adaptation of the kappa index for class voting, and is calculated in the same way: by taking the standard deviation of the ethnic differences in party affiliation at a given time point, as measured by the logistic regression method. Polarisation indices are the calculated for the ruling party, opposition parties and overall party system on the basis of the logistic regression models.

This measure of ethnic polarisation in party affiliation has several advantages. Like the class voting measures on which it is based, it controls for differences in party popularity and ethnic diversity within and between nations, allowing consistent and comparable indices of ethnic voting to be created even in complex and fragmented nations or party systems. The ethnic polarisation measure also does not require us to identify in advance the “natural” parties ethnic groups are expected to support. Instead, the degree to which ethnic groups have a “natural” party can be determined from the logistic regression results which form the polarisation index. The ethnic polarisation index can also be calculated for different contrasts and at different levels of aggregation, enabling researchers to disaggregate changes in the ethnic polarisation of support given to ruling and opposition parties, and enables the measurement of polarisation in the overall political mobilisation of different groups (as measured by the decision to affiliate with any political party, rather than none at all). The index can also be adapted with little

⁵ Defined as the difference between the percentage of working class voters voting for a left wing party, and the percentage of middle class voters voting for such parties

difficulty to measure polarisation in turnout and voting behaviour, which the Afrobarometer has begun to measure in its third wave.

While our ethnic association measure captures the degree to which different ethnic groups associate with particular parties, we are also interested in the other face of ethnic partisanship – the degree to which parties draw their support exclusively from one ethnic group or cut across groups – which we here refer to as the degree of ‘ethnic diversity’. This is related to, but distinct from, ethnic association. For example, in some cases several small groups may associate closely with the same political party, which then functions as a multi-ethnic alliance, such as NaRC in Kenya. In this case a party may feature high levels of ethnic polarization (because it secures the vast majority of support from those groups which support it) but *also* high levels of ethnic diversity (because it is a multi-ethnic coalition). We may also see one ethnic group splitting its vote between two parties, one of which has multi-ethnic support, and one of which draws support only from this group, for example Zulus in South Africa who divide their support between the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). The Zulus may contribute support to both parties equally, but do not make an equal contribution to each parties’ support: the ANC has a far more diverse support base than the IFP, as it also draws strong support from a range of other ethnic groups. Consequently, to get a rounded picture of the importance of ethnicity as a political cleavage we need to look at both ethnic polarization and ethnic diversity.

To measure the ethnic diversity of parties we deploy a slightly modified version of the ethnic fractionalisation index at the party level – we measure the probability that two randomly drawn individuals from a party’s support base are from the same group⁶. Ethno-linguistic fractionalization is calculated as one minus the Herfindahl index of ethno-linguistic group shares, and represents the probability that two randomly selected individuals belong to different ethnic groups. It therefore represents a useful measure of the level of ethnic ‘homogeneity’ or ‘diversity’ of a party’s support. Using this measure we are able to compare levels of ethnic diversity across parties, across countries, and over time. By comparing the level of ethnic diversity of political parties with the level of ethnic diversity in the national population we can also ascertain how representative the ruling party and the party system as a whole really is; parties may have a high level of ethnic diversity but still be significantly less diverse than the wider electorate.⁷

ETHNIC POLARIZATION IN PARTY SUPPORT

Table 3 provides an overview of the levels of ethnic polarisation in different African party systems, and the trends in these polarisation levels over the three waves of the Afrobarometer survey. The kappa scores are here rescaled onto a 0-1 scale for ease of interpretation. Ethnicity is an important factor influencing party affiliation in nearly all of the sampled countries. This is clear from the individual country scores, the overall sample mean, and from the logistic models which are used to generate the polarisation scores: in these models ethnicity is a significant factor influencing party affiliation in every country except Senegal and Botswana after 2001. While the overall level of polarisation is high, confirming the importance of ethnicity to African politics, there is a great deal of variation in polarisation levels between countries.

⁶ The modifications are that party fractionalisation is calculated using Afrobarometer data, while national ELF will usually employ census or other official data, and the imposition of the previously discussed 3% language cut-off, which has very little influence on ELF scores.

⁷ In contrast to the measure of ‘ethnic polarization’, our measure of ‘ethnic diversity’ does not control for shifts in the overall popularity of different political parties. However, this does not undermine the suitability of the measure for tracking trends in the diversity of parties over time because the measure is principally designed as a way of examining the diversity of parties, not the strength of association between parties and ethnic groups. It is therefore of little relevance whether parties become more diverse by increasing their popularity or shifting their support between groups.

Botswana, Senegal, and Zimbabwe and Mali after 2001 have relatively low levels of polarisation, with scores below 0.250, suggesting ethnicity is not the predominant political influence in these countries. At the other end of the spectrum, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa have very high polarisation scores suggesting ethnicity plays a central role in structuring politics in these countries.

Table 3: Party system ethnic polarisation levels 2001-6

	2001	2003	2006	Ch 2001-6	Ch 2003-6
Botswana	0.168	0.088	0.136	-0.032	+0.048
Ghana	0.508	0.340	0.352	-0.156	+0.012
Kenya	*	0.548	0.660	*	+0.112
Malawi	0.808	0.596	0.376	-0.432	-0.220
Mali	0.652	0.216	0.244	-0.436	+0.028
Mozambique	*	0.412	0.300	*	-0.112
Namibia	0.520	0.468	0.384	-0.136	-0.084
Nigeria	0.600	0.528	0.524	-0.076	-0.004
Senegal	*	0.320	0.132	*	-0.188
South Africa	0.736	0.636	0.572	-0.164	-0.064
Uganda	0.472	0.644	0.484	+0.012	-0.160
Zambia	0.576	0.448	0.592	+0.016	+0.144
Zimbabwe	0.148	0.192	0.264	+0.116	+0.072
AB mean					
(10)	0.519	0.415	0.393	-0.223	-0.022
AB mean					
(13)	*	0.418	0.386	*	-0.032

The importance of ethnicity clearly varies between different African nations, but we can also discern a general trend of declining ethnic polarisation in the majority of countries surveyed. In a first group of countries – Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa, there is a steep decline in ethnic polarisation, suggesting that the maturing of democracy in these countries has reduced the importance of ethnicity in determining party affiliation across the whole party system. In a second group of countries – Botswana, Ghana and Uganda – the trend is more ambiguous. Botswana is a mature democracy with very low overall levels of polarisation, while Ghana is also a relatively old and free democracy by African standards, where ethnic polarisation falls and then rebounds slightly. In Uganda, legal restrictions on political activity were only gradually being relaxed between 2001 and 2006, resulting in an exceptionally young and unstable party system. Finally a third group of countries – Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe - see increases in the overall ethnic polarisation of the party system. In these countries, contrary to the continental trend, the salience of ethnicity to political decisions has increased.

Ranking the core ten African nations provides a different way to visualise comparative polarisation levels, and how they are changing. Certain diverse highly polarised nations such as South Africa and Nigeria feature consistently near the top, while mature and relatively depolarised societies such as Botswana and Ghana feature consistently near the bottom (see table 4). There are some countries, however, where the salience of ethnicity has shifted rapidly relative to the continental average. Mali moves from near the top of the table to near the bottom, following a very rapid decline in the importance of ethnicity for party choice. Zambia, by contrast, moves from the middle of the table in 2001 and 2003 to the very top, a shift which coincides with the mobilisation of a highly ethnically concentrated opposition party, the PF.

The evidence here suggests that overall levels of ethnic political division are falling over time. Only three countries show evidence of an upward trend in ethnic polarisation. In one, Zambia, this is largely the result of the emergence of a new and ethnically homogenous party, while in a second, Zimbabwe,

democratic institutions and processes were radically curtailed over the period we examine. In contrast to the bleak forecasts of ethnic conflict made by some incumbent African leaders on the eve of transition from authoritarian rule,⁸ the salience of ethnicity as a political cleavage appears to be falling as African democracies mature and experience more electoral cycles.

Table 4: Ranking of core countries by party system ethnic polarisation 2001-6

2001	2003	2006
Malawi	Uganda	Zambia
South Africa	South Africa	South Africa
Mali	Malawi	Nigeria
Nigeria	Nigeria	Uganda
Zambia	Namibia	Namibia
Namibia	Zambia	Malawi
Ghana	Ghana	Ghana
Uganda	Mali	Zimbabwe
Botswana	Zimbabwe	Mali
Zimbabwe	Botswana	Botswana

The overall pattern of ethnic polarisation at the national level may, however, mask important differences between governing and opposition parties. Table 5 and 6 show the polarisation levels and trends for the governing and principal opposition parties in the Afrobarometer nations. These two tables reveal two key findings. The first is that support for governing parties is less ethnically polarised than opposition parties in the majority of countries and surveys,⁹ and in both the ten country and thirteen country sample means. This pattern is found in Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia. In all of these countries, support for the governing party is less polarised between the various national ethnic groups than it is support for the principal opposition. This pattern is not found everywhere, however. In a second group of countries – Botswana, Ghana, and Zimbabwe – support for both government and principal opposition shows a similar level of ethnic polarisation. It is worth noting that all of these countries have a majority ethnic group. Finally, in a third group of countries – Malawi, Mali and Namibia – we find higher levels of ethnic polarisation in the support for the ruling party than for the principal opposition. However, there is evidence that this situation may not be stable in the mid-to long-term as in two of these three countries – Malawi and Mali – the governing party lost its legislative majority during the surveyed period.

The second major finding is that the polarisation of ruling and opposition parties is diverging over time. While ruling parties are becoming less ethnically polarised, the polarisation levels of opposition parties are either stable or increasing. In eight of the our ten core countries the ethnic polarisation of support for ruling parties falls between 2001 and 2006, suggesting that incumbent governments are recruiting support from across the societies they rule. A downward trend is also observable between 2003 and 2006 in nine of the thirteen countries surveyed, including seven of our ten core cases. This finding provides evidence for the contention that the salience of ethnic cleavages in Africa is declining. By contrast, the ethnic polarisation of opposition party support rises in six of the ten countries surveyed between 2001 and 2006, and in eight of the thirteen between 2003 and 2006. Furthermore, there is a positive increase in the average polarization of opposition party support between 2003 and 2006. Notwithstanding our findings for the overall party system and the ruling party, this suggests that the salience of ethnicity as a political cleavage remains extremely relevant as a predictor of support for the opposition party.

⁸ President Moi of Kenya, for example, claimed that multi-party politics would lead to widespread ethnic conflict (Brown 2001).

⁹ This government-opposition split is magnified if we add in the smaller opposition parties, whose support tends to be even more ethnically polarised than the principal opposition party.

Table 5: Party system ethnic polarisation levels, governing parties 2001-6

	2001	2003	2006	Ch 2001-6	Ch 2003-6
Botswana	0.184	0.092	0.120	-0.064	+0.028
Ghana	0.560	0.368	0.340	-0.220	-0.028
Kenya	*	0.384	0.420	*	+0.036
Malawi	0.960	0.476	0.364	-0.596	-0.112
Mali	0.448	0.336	0.220	-0.228	-0.116
Mozambique	*	0.384	0.268	*	-0.116
Namibia	0.508	0.508	0.440	-0.064	-0.064
Nigeria	0.388	0.196	0.204	-0.192	+0.008
Senegal	*	0.108	0.068	*	-0.040
South Africa	0.700	0.528	0.428	-0.272	-0.100
Uganda	0.244	0.472	0.408	+0.164	-0.064
Zambia	0.360	0.280	0.332	-0.028	+0.052
Zimbabwe	0.160	0.276	0.260	+0.100	-0.016
AB mean					
(10)	0.451	0.353	0.319	-0.132	-0.034
AB mean					
(13)	*	0.339	0.298	*	-0.041

Table 6: Ethnic polarisation in support for principal opposition parties 2001-6

	2001	2003	2006	Ch 2001-6	Ch 2003-6
Botswana	0.128	0.036	0.264	+0.136	+0.228
Ghana	0.452	0.312	0.364	-0.088	+0.052
Kenya	*	0.684	0.700	*	+0.016
Malawi	0.480	0.396	0.508	+0.028	+0.112
Mali	0.684	0.148	0.096	-0.588	-0.052
Mozambique	*	0.436	0.328	*	-0.108
Namibia	0.580	0.320	0.344	-0.236	+0.024
Nigeria	0.392	0.508	0.576	+0.184	+0.068
Senegal	*	0.236	0.164	*	-0.072
South Africa	0.884	0.800	0.712	-0.172	-0.088
Uganda	0.568	0.860	0.720	+0.152	-0.14
Zambia	0.564	0.468	0.680	+0.116	+0.252
Zimbabwe	0.136	0.108	0.264	+0.128	+0.156
AB mean					
(10)	0.487	0.396	0.453	-0.034	+0.057
AB mean					
(13)		0.409	0.440	*	+0.031

The overall trends in the polarization of ruling and opposition parties masks important variations which help to make sense of the role of ethnicity as a political dividing line across Africa. Three different trend patterns can be identified in the Afrobarometer sample, as shown in figure 3. The first and largest group of countries – Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda¹⁰ - have declining

¹⁰ Uganda is included here despite the notable rise in ethnic polarisation between 2001 and 2003, because this rise is seen equally in support for the governing and principal opposition parties, and is likely the result of the gradual loosening in restrictions on party association during the 2001-6 period. Ethnic polarisation in government and opposition support falls sharply between 2003 and 2006

ethnic party systems: ethnicity is becoming a less important determinant for all political choices. In these countries, ethnicity is in decline as a factor deciding affiliation with the nation's most important political actors. This suggests that the salience of ethnicity as a political cleavage is genuinely falling and that more inclusive multi-ethnic party systems are gradually developing.

In a second group of countries – Botswana, Malawi, Nigeria and Zambia – ethnicity is declining as an influence on support for ruling parties, but becoming a more powerful influence on support for the main opposition. The party system in these countries is diverging – while the ruling parties are increasingly building support from across the ethnic spectrum, support for the opposition is becoming more concentrated among particular groups. It is not clear whether these countries are experiencing a net increase or decrease in the role of ethnicity in political mobilization, and further case study work is required to investigate this on a case-by-case basis. In the third pair of countries – Kenya and Zimbabwe – ethnic polarisation is increasing across the board. Here the ethnic support base for both government and opposition has narrowed, and the importance of ethnicity in determining political choices has increased. Clearly, for these countries ethnic cleavages are becoming entrenched, rather than diluted.

Figure 1: Classification of countries by trends in government and opposition polarisation

		Opposition Polarisation	
		Increasing	Decreasing
Government Polarisation	Increasing	<p><i>Rising ethnic party systems</i></p> <p>Kenya, Zimbabwe</p>	
	Decreasing	<p><i>Divergent ethnic party systems</i></p> <p>Botswana, Malawi, Nigeria and Zambia</p>	<p><i>Declining ethnic party systems</i></p> <p>Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda</p>

ARE AFRICAN PARTIES ‘ETHNIC’ PARTIES?

A second, more straightforward way to measure of the extent to which political parties are ‘ethnic’ is to look at the proportion of a party’s support that is provided by the largest ethnic base. This is a crude measure of the extent to which ethnicity shapes political parties, but provides an accessible way to compare political parties. Following Horowitz (1985:291-292) and Scarritt (2006: 237), we define an ethnically based party as one which ‘derives its support overwhelmingly from an identifiable ethnic group (or cluster of groups) and serves the interests of that group.’ Based on this definition we classify ethnic parties into five categories (see Table 7). Parties which receive 85% to 100% of their support from one ethnic group clearly fit the criteria laid out by Horowitz and Scarritt and are classified as ‘ethnic parties’.¹¹ Following Scarritt, we classify parties that receive less than 85% but more than 66.6% of their support from one ethnic group as ‘potentially ethnic’ parties (2006: 237). Such parties are neither so dominated by one group that they will be encouraged to tailor policies solely to that community, nor

¹¹ Scarritt chooses a tighter threshold of 90%-100% (2006:238). We have opted for 85%-100% on the basis that, with the high level of ethno-linguistic fractionalization of the Afrobarometer sample in many countries, a 90% threshold would result in there being very few, if any, ethnic parties. Even with this lower threshold we find a very small number of ethnic parties in Africa.

independent enough of the support of the group that the party leadership can risk alienating this support base.

Parties which receive between 33.3% and 66.6% of their support from one ethnic group are classified as ‘multi-ethnic’ parties – these are genuinely broad based alliances in which the party is reliant on support from a number of different ethnic groups. The importance of cross-ethnic support to these parties must offer policies which are attractive to a range of communities. In recognition of the fact that when an ethnic groups makes up the majority of a party’s support it will be able to exert greater independent influence over the selection of leaders and policy we further subdivide the ‘multi-ethnic’ category into ‘multi-ethnic parties – majority ethnic group’ (50%-66.6%) and ‘multi-ethnic party – no majority ethnic group’ (33.3%-50%). Finally, we assume that where the largest ethnic group constitutes less than a third of the parties total support the party is ‘non-ethnic’.

As throughout this paper, parties are only included over a 5% threshold for the years in which they compete in elections. Parties are included as independent units and are not subsumed into coalitions unless a formal merging of parties occurs. For example, in Kenya the National Rainbow Coalition (NaRC) and its sometime member the Liberal Democratic Party are included as separate parties. In order to not allow the high numbers of small language reported for some countries (see above) to mask the significance of larger ethno-linguistic groups, we only use ethnic groups equal to or above 3% of the sample population to calculate the ethnic distribution of party support.¹²

Even using this threshold we find remarkably few ‘ethnic’ parties among the Afrobarometer sample. As shown in table 7, in 2006 just 19.5% of parties were ‘ethnic’. Furthermore, the three parties from Botswana are ‘ethnic’ out of necessity rather than choice, given the ethno-linguistic homogeneity of the national population. The remainder of the ‘ethnic’ parties are generally smaller opposition parties that have little chance of making it into government. For example, the IFP in South Africa and the National Congress for Democratic Initiative (CNID) in Mali only just make the 5% threshold for inclusion in our analysis. This suggests that the need to piece together multi-ethnic support to build a winning coalition has encouraged the vast majority of electorally competitive parties to recruit support from *at least* two ethnic groups. Indeed, it is noticeable that the only ‘ethnic’ ruling party other than the BDP in Botswana is ZANU-PF, a party whose status as ‘ruling party’ may no longer reflect the support of the majority of the population.

¹² Employing this threshold significantly increases the proportion of party support recruited from its largest ethnic support base considerably for cases such as Nigeria and Kenya, and to a lesser extent increases the significance of larger ethnic blocks across all our cases, and so we have repeated the analysis presented here using all ethno-linguistic groups in Appendix 3 for comparative purposes.

Table 7: Classification of Parties By Largest Ethnic Support Base 2006

Size of largest ethnic support base	Party (Country)	% of Parties
Non-Ethnic Party 0.0 - 33.3%	PCP (GHA)/ NARC (KEN) /DTA (NAM)/CD (NAM)/ ANC (SA) / NRM (UGA) /FDC (UGA)/	17.1
Multi-Ethnic Party: No Majority Ethnic Group 33.4 - 50.0%	UDF (MALA)/URD (MALI)/FRELIMO (MOZ)/ PDP (NIG) /DA+DP (SA)/ MMD (ZAM) /UNIP (ZAM)/	17.1
Multi-Ethnic Party: Majority Ethnic Group 50.1 - 66.0%	LDP (KEN)/KANU (KEN)/DPP (MALA)/ADEMA (MALI)/ RPM+IBK (MALI) /Citoyen (MALI)/RENAMO (MOZ)/ PDS (SEN) /PS (SEN)/AFP (SEN)/UPND (ZAM)/	26.8
Potentially Ethnic Party 66.6 - 84.9%	NPP (GHA) / MCP (MALA) /SWAPO (NAM)/AG (NIG)/UPC (UGA)/DP (UGA)/PF (ZAM)/MDC (ZIM)	19.5
Ethnic Party 85 - 100%	BNF (BOT)/ BDP (BOT) /BCP (BOT)/CNID (MALI)/AGPA (NIG)/IFP (SA)/ ZANU-PF (ZIM) /ANPP (NIG)	19.5

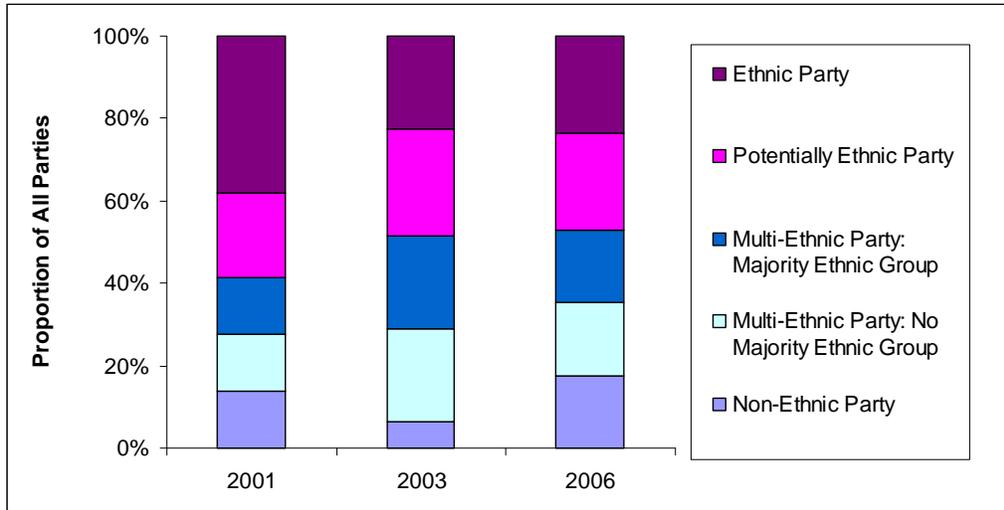
The distribution of ruling and opposition parties (ruling parties in bold) within this classification demonstrates the need for African parties to develop cross-ethnic alliances in order to secure and retain office. In 2006 just 45.5% of ruling parties featured a majority ethnic group, compared to 71.9% of all opposition parties. While 27.3% of ruling parties are ‘non-ethnic’ this applies to just 15.6% of opposition parties. The result is all the more significant given that parties have not been grouped into their electoral coalitions. Indeed, when multi-party coalitions fragment it does not necessarily result in an increase in the importance of ethnic blocks to the parties’ support. To continue with the Kenyan example, there was a small decrease in support for NaRC and an upswing in the support for the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in the Afrobarometer data for 2006. This suggests that LDP voters were switching their allegiance away from the ‘alliance’ following the collapse of NaRC in 2004-5. If NaRC’s diverse appeal had only resulted from the coalition of smaller parties originally included in the alliance, the break-up of the coalition should have resulted in the party becoming more ‘ethnic’. However, despite the loss of a significant number of Luo voters to the LDP, NaRC remained a ‘non-ethnic’ party in 2006. The low number of ‘ethnic’ ruling parties is not simply the result of election motivated alliance building between a number of mono-ethnic parties. Rather, it reflects the remarkable ethnic diversity within the support base of individual parties.¹³

Comparing the distribution of parties within the five party types over time reveals that political parties in Africa are becoming less dominated by single ethnic groups. As shown in figure 2, between 2001 and 2006 the number of ethnic parties fell while the number as non-ethnic parties increased. Leaving aside

¹³ Of course, it may be that in a select number of cases respondents are confused by the co-existence of governing coalitions and the relevant constituent parties. For example, it is plausible that many of those who respond that they feel closest to NARC do so only because the LDP was a member of the NARC alliance that won the 2002 elections. However, if this were the case we would expect that the main party of the governing coalition would receive considerably more support as respondents ‘mistakenly’ declare their affiliation for the coalition rather than their representatives within the coalition. While this may serve to increase the diversity of support for ruling parties, the distribution of support for parties that are junior members in the ruling coalition is usually close to their vote share at the last election.

the figures for 2001, the proportion of parties with no majority ethnic group increased slightly from 51.6% in 2003 to 52.9% in 2006. In some cases, such as Malawi, all parties have seen a significant fall in their reliance on their main ethnic support base. In Namibia the share of support for the ruling South West Africa People’s Organization (SWAPO), contributed by the Oshiwambo fell from 79.1% in 2001 to 70.9% in 2003 and 2006. Similarly, although the proportion of support of the opposition Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) coming from the Ojjiherero increased from 29.9% in 2001 to 43.9% in 2003, it then fell to just 24.6% in 2006. This trend provides further evidence that in many cases multi-party elections may be diluting, rather than entrenching, the significance of ethnicity as a political cleavage.

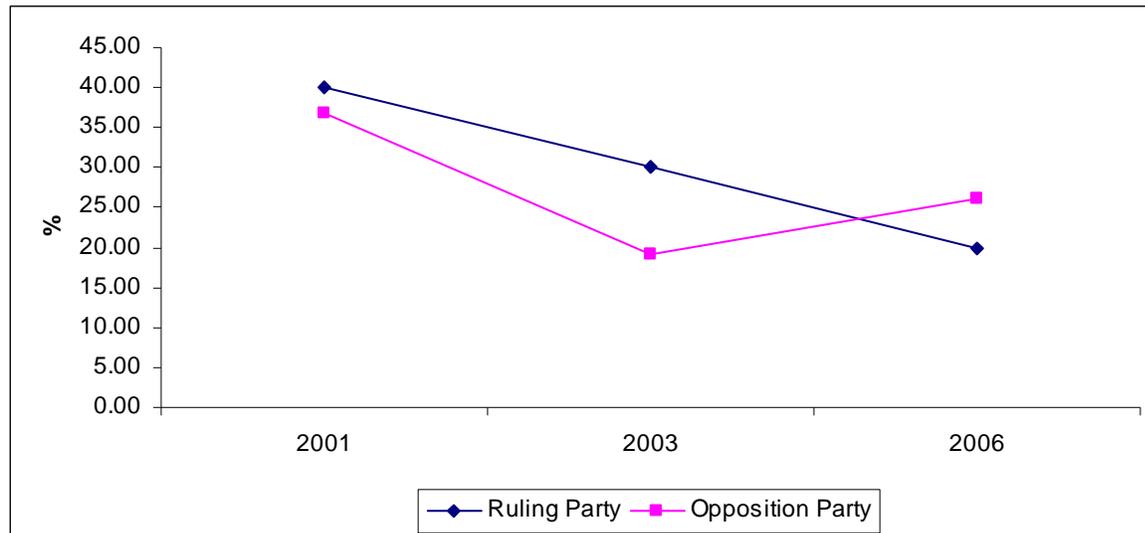
Figure 2: Distribution of Political Parties By ‘Type of Party’, Core Group 2001-6



Shifts in the ethnic composition of ruling and opposition parties over time also support the conclusion that ruling parties are becoming less ethnically polarised over time. The proportion of ‘ethnic’ ruling parties fell from 40% in 2001 to 30% in 2003 and to 20% in 2006, as illustrated by figure 3. The trend is less clear in the case of opposition parties as the proportion of parties featuring a majority ethnic group continues to hover around the 70% mark.¹⁴ However, the proportion of ‘ethnic’ opposition parties increased between 2003 and 2006. It therefore seems that while ruling parties are becoming less dependent on the support of one ethnic group, opposition parties remain just as dependent on their core ethnic support base, if not more so. The pattern of increasingly diverse ruling parties and static or increasingly homogenous opposition parties is well illustrated by the case of Nigeria. The proportion of support for the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) given by the Housa, the party’s largest ethnic base, fell from 64.3% in 2001 to 43.5% in 2006. Over the same time period, some of Nigeria’s opposition parties have become more homogenous. While the Alliance for Democracy (AD) saw a decline in its reliance on one ethnic group (the Yoruba), the proportion of support for the All Nigeria People’s Party (ANPP) given by the Housa increased from 72.9% in 2001 to 79.9% in 2003 and 88.2% in 2006.

¹⁴ The proportion of opposition parties featuring a majority ethnic group increased from 73.7% in 2001 to 76.2% but fell to 69.6% in 2006.

Figure 3: Proportion of Ruling and Opposition Parties that are ‘Ethnic’, Core Group, 2001-2006



ETHNIC DIVERSITY

A more subtle picture of the ethnic diversity of African political parties can be drawn by comparing the diversity of political parties to the wider population using the ethno-linguistic fragmentation measure. Using ELF reflects both the share of a party’s support held by one ethnic group and the number and size of smaller ethnic groups the party draws support from. By comparing the ELF scores of parties to the wider population we can see whether political parties are more or less ethnically diverse than the voting public, and hence gain an insight into how ethnically representative certain political parties are. Tables 8 and 9 show the ELF scores and differences for each country and each year. ELF scores for opposition parties are averaged while ELF scores for ruling parties are shown separately. ELF differences are calculated by simply subtracting the national ELF score from the party’s ELF score. Where the ELF difference is positive the party’s support is more diverse than the national average. The value of the ELF difference measure is that it allows us to control for the ethnic diversity within the wider population to measure the extent to which political parties are nationally inclusive. For example, the ANC in South Africa has a high ELF score of 0.878 in 2006 while the BDP in Botswana has an ELF score of just 0.302. However, the ANC has an ELF difference figure of -0.005, meaning that the party is actually slightly less diverse than the national population. In contrast, the BDP has an ELF difference figure of 0.031, which demonstrates that the party is rather more diverse than the voting public. In the case of the BDP, this means that Botswana’s minority ethnic group (Sekalanga) actually enjoys a larger share of the party’s support than it does of the national voting population.

Table 8: ELF Scores 2001-2006, All Countries

Country	Type of Party	2001	2003	2006
Botswana	Ruling Party	0.044	0.303	0.302
	Opposition Parties	0.074	0.365	0.312
Ghana	Ruling Party	0.360	0.511	0.554
	Opposition Parties	0.756	0.796	0.796
Kenya	Ruling Party		0.878	0.868
	Opposition Parties		0.683	0.791
Malawi	Ruling Party	0.427	0.676	0.661
	Opposition Parties	0.537	0.514	0.499
Mali	Ruling Party	0.773	0.801	0.762
	Opposition Parties	0.787	0.814	0.651
Mozambique	Ruling Party		0.777	0.825
	Opposition Parties		0.002	-0.103
Namibia	Ruling Party	0.553	0.547	0.533
	Opposition Parties	0.823	0.747	0.818
Nigeria	Ruling Party	0.745	0.906	0.887
	Opposition Parties	0.513	0.525	0.505
Senegal	Ruling Party		0.713	0.675
	Opposition Parties		0.707	0.613
South Africa	Ruling Party	0.833	0.869	0.879
	Opposition Parties	0.342	0.436	0.309
Uganda	Ruling Party	0.900	0.901	0.920
	Opposition Parties	0.619	0.597	0.559
Zambia	Ruling Party	0.828	0.871	0.827
	Opposition Parties	0.923	0.781	0.525
Zimbabwe	Ruling Party	0.283	0.270	0.257
	Opposition Parties	0.257	0.434	0.481

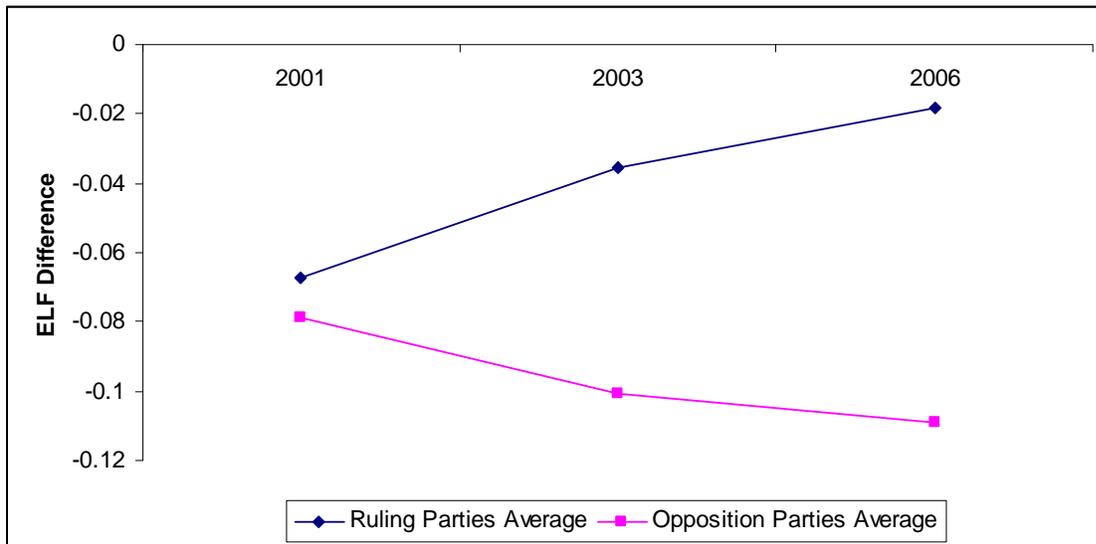
Table 9: ELF Differences 2001-2006, All Countries

Country	Type of Party	2001	2003	2006
Botswana	Ruling Party	-0.030	0.001	0.031
	Opposition Parties	0.000	0.063	0.041
Ghana	Ruling Party	-0.266	-0.156	-0.110
	Opposition Parties	0.130	0.129	0.132
Kenya	Ruling Party		-0.011	-0.040
	Opposition Parties		-0.206	-0.118
Malawi	Ruling Party	-0.074	-0.004	0.039
	Opposition Parties	0.036	-0.167	-0.123
Mali	Ruling Party	0.053	0.022	0.035
	Opposition Parties	0.067	0.035	-0.076
Mozambique	Ruling Party		-0.010	-0.010
	Opposition Parties		0.002	-0.103
Namibia	Ruling Party	-0.177	-0.166	-0.156
	Opposition Parties	0.093	0.034	0.129
Nigeria	Ruling Party	-0.057	0.045	0.030
	Opposition Parties	-0.289	-0.336	-0.352
Senegal	Ruling Party		-0.014	0.078
	Opposition Parties		-0.020	0.016
South Africa	Ruling Party	-0.020	0.003	-0.005
	Opposition Parties	-0.511	-0.430	-0.576
Uganda	Ruling Party	0.003	-0.018	0.006
	Opposition Parties	-0.279	-0.323	-0.355
Zambia	Ruling Party	-0.015	0.019	0.045
	Opposition Parties	0.080	-0.072	-0.036
Zimbabwe	Ruling Party	-0.089	-0.103	-0.099
	Opposition Parties	-0.115	0.062	0.125

The trend in ELF scores and differences over time confirms the hypothesis that ruling parties are becoming increasingly ethnically diverse, while the reverse is true of opposition parties. Overall, African political parties tend to be slightly less diverse than the national population although there are important exceptions to this rule, most notably in Botswana, Mali, and in 2006 Senegal. However, despite this general picture, ruling parties are becoming more diverse over time. As shown in figure 4, the ELF difference figure for ruling parties has fallen in every round of the Afrobarometer, indicating that the overall ethnic diversity level of ruling parties is becoming ever closer to that seen in the population they represent. In Botswana, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, and Zambia, the ruling party's support has

become increasingly ethnically diverse to the point where, in 2006, the party's support base is more ethnically fractionalized than the voting public. In many cases the explanation for this is that minority groups are actually over-represented in the support base of ruling parties. This suggests that there is a dominant strategy being employed by ruling parties to use the advantages of incumbency to recruit a multi-ethnic support base. The only ruling party in our sample that becomes less diverse over time is ZANU-PF. It seems likely that ZANU-PF is able to retain power without following the dominant strategy of other ruling parties because of its use of coercion and electoral manipulation.

Figure 4: ELF Differences 2001-2006



At the same time, the ELF difference figure for opposition parties is becoming increasingly negative over time, demonstrating that opposition parties are becoming less diverse. There are some exceptions to this rule – in Kenya, Senegal, and Zimbabwe opposition parties are becoming more diverse over time. However, the majority of opposition parties are as diverse or less diverse now than they were in 2001. In Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Mali, and Mozambique, opposition parties became more homogenous in every round of the Afrobarometer. This suggests that the dominant strategy for many opposition parties is not to compete with ruling parties by appealing to a cross-ethnic support base, but to fall back on appeals to ethnically homogenous communities. This is most clearly the case for parties such as the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) in Nigeria and the IFP in South Africa. That the strategies employed by dominant and ruling parties differ suggests that the costs of creating a multi-ethnic alliance are considerably higher for opposition parties. Ruling parties have access to the (often limited) state infrastructure and can use development expenditure to reward supporters, making it feasible to create a genuinely multi-ethnic coalition. In contrast, opposition parties typically have inferior organizational capacity and severely reduced access to funds.

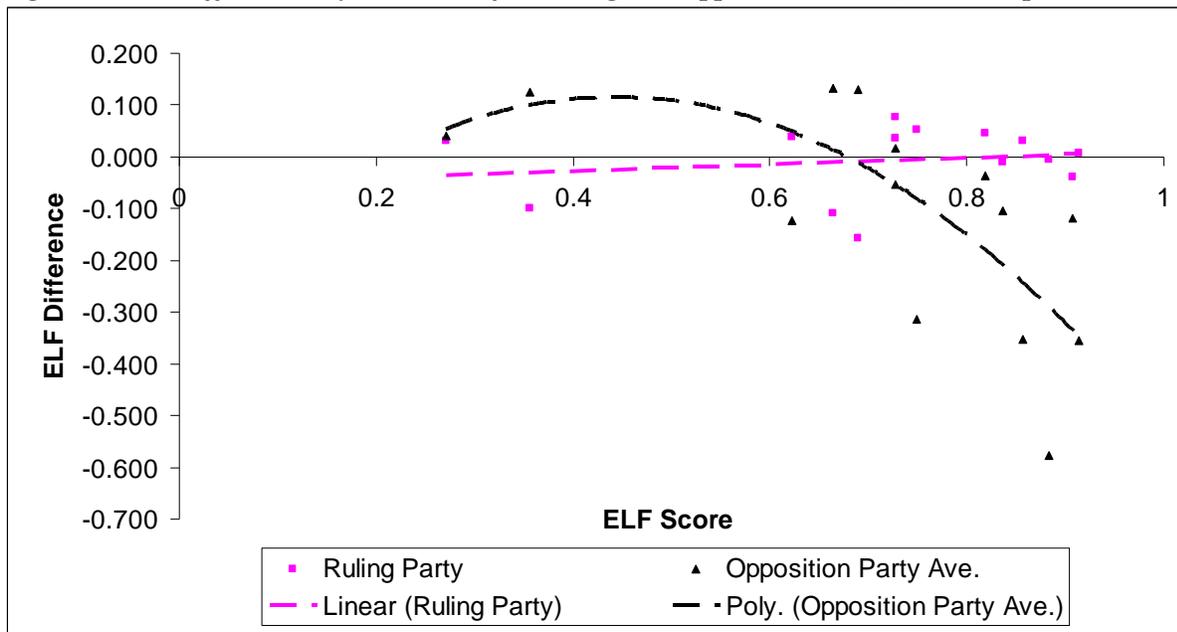
Comparing ELF differences for opposition and ruling parties at different levels of national diversity reveals two important trends. Firstly, the relative diversity of ruling and opposition parties is heavily influenced by the level of ELF among the wider population (see figure 5). At low levels of national ELF, opposition parties are frequently more diverse than ruling parties. This is true of Ghana where the opposition People's Convention Party (PCP) is significantly more diverse than the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP). Zimbabwe and Namibia also fit into this pattern. However, at high levels of national ELF (greater than 0.68), opposition parties are uniformly less diverse than ruling parties. This is most pronounced in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa. The most obvious explanation of this phenomenon is that in countries with a low level of ELF ruling parties are able to secure a minimum winning coalition by

mobilizing a smaller number of ethnic groups, and so ruling parties tend to be less diverse in countries with low levels of ELF.

The success of a ruling party that is dominated by a small number of ethnic groups is likely to inspire a more multi-ethnic opposition as communities group together fearing exclusion from access to government resources. At the same time, a lower national level of ELF, combined with the ruling party's ambivalence towards minority ethnic groups, creates the conditions under which opposition parties can construct multi-ethnic support bases. On the one hand, where the national population is less diverse the costs of mobilizing a cross-ethnic support base are lower. On the other hand, where ruling parties are not seeking to recruit a multi-ethnic support, the competition for the loyalty of minor communities will be reduced. If ruling parties are able to rely on the support of a small number of ethnic groups they may neglect minority groups, who in turn may become disaffected and actively seek to align themselves with opposition parties.

In contrast, where the national population is very diverse, ruling parties must appeal to a broad cross-section of different ethnic groups in order to retain power. The inclusive nature of the ruling party reduces the imperative for smaller communities to form multi-ethnic opposition coalitions. At the same time, higher levels of ethno-linguistic fractionalization render it more problematic to mobilise diverse communities while the strategy of the ruling party to recruit a multi-ethnic support base increases the costs of building a support base across ethnic lines. Under these circumstances, opposition parties are more likely to concentrate on mobilizing their 'home communities'.

Figure 5: ELF differences by ELF score for Ruling and Opposition Parties, All Groups 2006



The second trend is that the gap between the diversity of ruling and opposition parties increases as the level of national ELF increases. While both ruling parties and opposition parties tend to be bunched around '0' ELF difference for ELF scores between 0 and 0.8, the gap widens considerably for ELF scores between 0.8 and 1. This point is well illustrated by table 10, which ranks countries according to the gap in ethnic diversity between the ruling and opposition parties in 2003 and 2006 (countries in which the opposition party is more diverse than the ruling party are highlighted in bold). In both years the three countries with the greatest 'diversity gap' are South Africa, Nigeria, and Uganda, countries which, along with Kenya, have the highest national ELF scores in the Afrobarometer sample.

The explanation of this pattern is two-fold. Firstly, countries with a much higher level of ELF also have a much greater potential for variation in the diversity of opposition and ruling parties. Secondly, the same set of strategic considerations introduced above to explain the diversity of ruling and opposition parties for various levels of national ELF also bears on the diversity gap. At the highest levels of ELF there are the greatest incentives for ruling parties to construct multi-ethnic coalitions and for opposition parties to resort to mobilising their ‘home communities’. The combination of diverse ruling parties and relatively homogenous opposition parties results in a greater diversity gap at higher levels of national ELF.

Table 10: The ‘Diversity Gap’ – Core Group 2003-2006

	2003	2006
1*	South Africa	South Africa
2	Nigeria	Nigeria
3	Uganda	Uganda
4	Ghana	Namibia
5	Namibia	Ghana
6	Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe
7	Malawi	Malawi
8	Zambia	Zambia
9	Botswana	Mali
10	Mali	Botswana

*1=largest gap

ETHNIC REPRESENTATION

How ethnically representative ruling parties are is a question of great importance.¹⁵ Where ruling parties are ethnically representative we can expect the wider population to have a greater trust in government institutions, and to feel more included in the political game. More representative parties are also less likely to divert resources towards a small number of ethnic groups, and so are less likely to inspire a divisive zero-sum politics. Other things being equal, this should help to minimise ethnic competition over spoils, prevent minority groups from becoming disaffected, and, in the long-run, reduce the salience of ethnicity as a political cleavage.

By combining our measures of ethnic polarization and ethnic diversity, we can develop a complex picture of how ethnically representative African parties are of the wider population. Of course, any such classificatory schema represents a simplification of a sizeable amount of variation among our cases, but it also provides a useful illustration of the distribution of African ruling parties in terms of their representativeness, and the trends in the level of ethnic representation over time. We classify how representative ruling parties are according to the each party’s Kappa score and ELF difference, as shown in figure 6. Parties are considered to be ‘ethnically diverse’ if their ELF difference figure is positive or zero. This is because such parties are at least as diverse as the national population. There is no such theoretically obvious ‘turning-point’ which can be used to identify parties whose support is ethnically polarised. We have chosen to classify parties as being relatively ‘polarised’ if they have a Kappa score above the average Kappa score in 2003 - the mid-point of our three rounds of data.

¹⁵ Note that in all cases we refer to ruling parties and not the ‘government’. Where there is a genuine coalition government made up of an alliance of independent parties, the government may be significantly more ethnically diverse than the largest political party. In cases such as these, for example in Kenya, our framework may significantly underestimate the how representative the ruling coalition is.

Figure 6: Classification of Ruling Parties Model

		ELF Differences	
		Diverse (Positive)	Homogenous (Negative)
Kappa Score	Polarised (above 2003 average)	Partially Representative Ruling Party	Unrepresentative Ruling Party
	Not Polarised (below 2003 average)	Representative Ruling Party	Potentially Unrepresentative Ruling Party (Dominant Party/ Dominant Ethnic Group)

‘Representative’ ruling parties are both more diverse than the national population they represent, and have a relatively low level of ethnic polarization. Such parties are recruiting support from a range of ethnic groups, and are likely to receive support from minority ethnic groups. Other things being equal, such parties should enjoy comparatively high levels of legitimacy and preside over relatively inclusive political systems. ‘Partially Representative’ ruling parties are also more diverse than the national population, but have high levels of ethnic polarization. Although such parties may receive support from a range of ethnic groups, ethnicity remains a significant factor in the choice of individuals to vote for the party. Consequently, these parties are more representative of some ethnic groups within the population than others, and this may enhance the salience of ethnic cleavages despite the ethnic diversity of the parties support.

‘Unrepresentative’ ruling parties are both less diverse than the national population, and have high levels of ethnic polarization. This suggests that ethnicity is a strong factor in determining their support, and that such parties are only recruiting support from a narrow section of the population. Other things being equal, ‘unrepresentative’ ruling parties are the most likely to inspire disaffection in minority/opposition ethnic groups. ‘Potentially Unrepresentative’ ruling parties represent a strange case. Their support is not ethnically polarised, and so they do not exclusively recruit support from certain communities. Yet their support is also less ethnically diverse than the national population, suggesting that there are ethnic groups which are being underrepresented. This combination is possible if those groups who are underrepresented in the support of the ruling party are also not ethnically mobilised and affiliated to political parties. In turn, this appears to be more likely where there is a dominant ruling party or ethnic group, where opposition to the party/group is futile because of the in-balance in the size of ethnic groups/party members. For example, ruling parties in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Botswana, all fall into this category during at least one round of the Afrobarometer.

Significantly, if minority groups prove unwilling to be underrepresented in the long-term, it is highly unlikely that ruling parties will remain ‘potentially unrepresentative’ indefinitely. There are two likely outcomes if minority groups become mobilised. If the ruling party reaches out to assimilate minority ethnic groups, the party will become more diverse and transform over time into a ‘representative’ party.

However, if minority groups remain outside of the ruling party and are then mobilised by a rival political party, ethnicity will become a significant factor in the distribution of party support, and so the party will transform over time into an ‘unrepresentative’ ruling party. Either way, the ruling party concerned will cease to be ‘potentially unrepresentative’, and so we should see a fall in the number of ‘potentially unrepresentative’ parties over time.

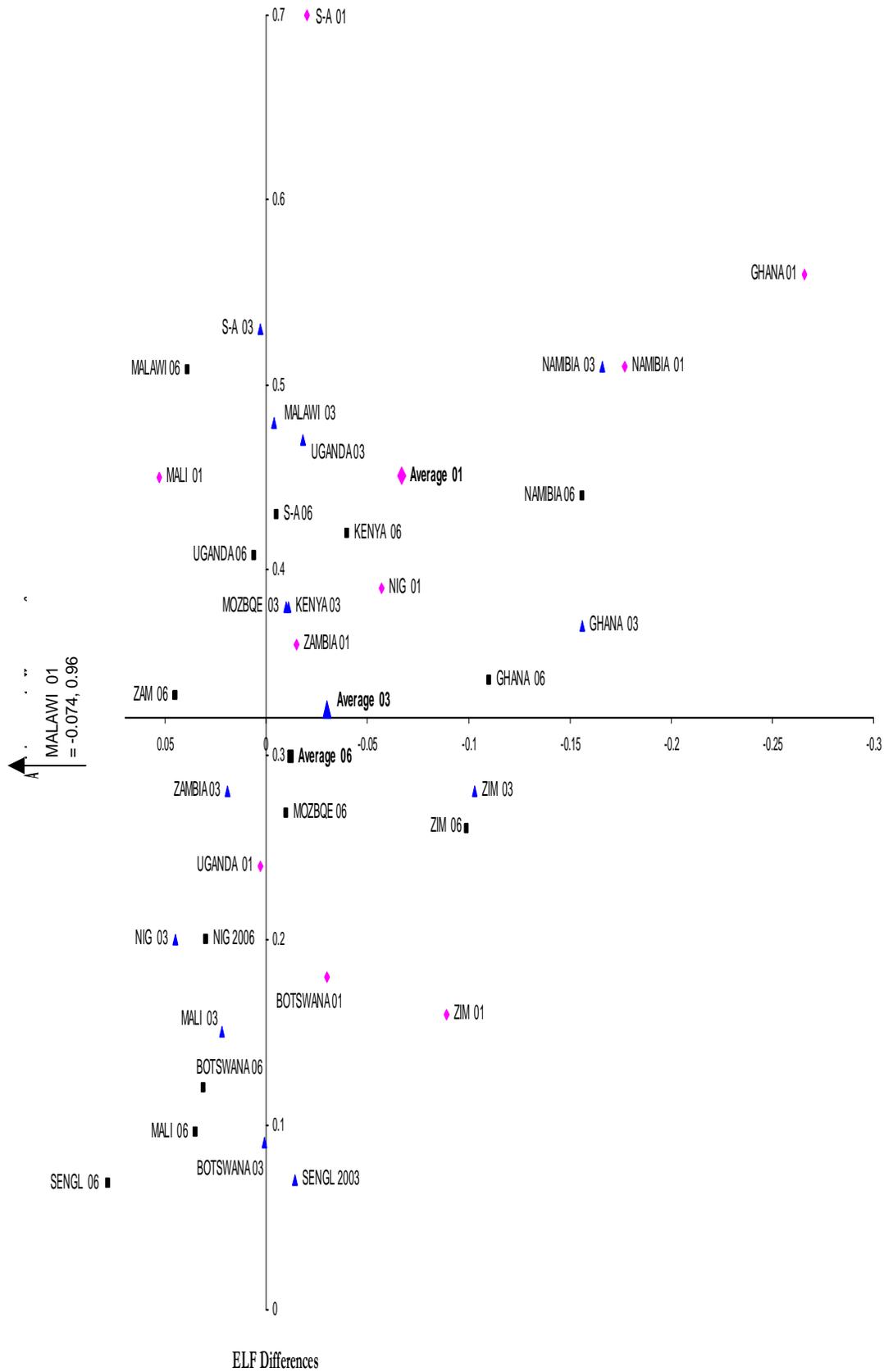
The distribution of Africa ruling parties within this classificatory schema is shown in figure 7. The only country to feature a ‘potentially unrepresentative’ party in all three rounds of the Afrobarometer is Zimbabwe. This reflects the fact that countries which begin in the ‘potentially unrepresentative’ category tend to move towards the ‘representative’ category over time. The ruling parties in Botswana and Senegal start off as ‘potentially unrepresentative’ parties but over time their support base becomes more ethnically diverse so that they emerge as ‘representative’ parties in 2006. The category of ‘unrepresentative party’ appears to be more stable. Both Ghana and Namibia feature ‘unrepresentative’ ruling parties for all three rounds of the Afrobarometer. Furthermore, ruling parties in South Africa, Malawi, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, Nigeria and Mozambique were ‘unrepresentative’ in either 2001 or 2003. In total 16 ruling parties were classified as ‘unrepresentative’ over the three rounds of the Afrobarometer, out of a total of 36 cases.

However, the overall picture of the extent to which African ruling parties is ethnically representative is far from bleak. Although only one ruling party was classified as ‘partially representative’ in 2001 (Adema in Mali), ruling parties in Malawi, Uganda, and Zambia moved into the ‘partially representative’ category in 2006. Similarly, although only one party was classified as ‘representative’ in 2001 (the NRM in Uganda), ruling parties in Nigeria, Botswana, Mali, and Segal moved into the ‘representative’ category in 2006. Indeed, the combined effect of African ruling parties becoming more ethnically diverse and less ethnically polarised over time has been to render them more representative. In other words, there is a general drift of ruling parties from the top-right of the scatter plot towards the bottom left. This trend can be illustrated by taking the case of South Africa and Ghana.

In South Africa, although the ANC was a fairly ethnically diverse party in 2001, polarisation levels for the ruling ANC were extremely high. This reduced the party’s overall ethnic representativeness. However, a drastic fall occurred in the polarization of the party’s support between 2001 and 2006, with kappa scores falling from 0.7 to a little over 0.4. In Ghana, the opposite problem is seen in 2001 – ethnic polarisation was low but the ruling party was relatively unrepresentative because it was not ethnically diverse. Subsequently, a mirror image trend to that in South Africa occurred – the ruling NPP become dramatically more representative of the nation’s diversity, with ELF scores falling from -0.266 to -0.110. These two extreme cases illustrate the general trend, which is that ruling parties are becoming increasingly representative of the national population over time. This suggests that in democratic conditions neither high polarisation nor low diversity represents stable equilibria for ruling parties. If this is correct, then future rounds of the Afrobarometer should reveal that an increasing number of ruling parties are ethnically representative of the wider population.

It is important to note that this classification of parties solely refers to ethnicity as recorded using the ‘home language’ question of the Afrobarometer. Our framework says nothing about other cleavages that may be more politically relevant in some cases. For example, while we find that the ruling party in Nigeria is ‘representative’ ethnically, it may be unrepresentative in terms of region and religion. Similarly, while we find that political parties in Ghana and Namibia are ‘unrepresentative’, this may not have a significant effect on the wider political landscape *if* ethno-linguistic groups are not the dominant cleavages around which politics revolves. Figure 7 provides an indicative illustration of the position of ruling parties in terms of ethnicity, but further case study analysis is required to ascertain the real significance of this result for each country.

Figure 7 Classification of Ruling Parties by ELF Difference and Kappa Score, All Cases, 2001-2006



CONCLUSION

This paper has established a new measure of the level of ethnic polarization in Africa, and extended an established measure of ethnic diversity so that it can be used to illuminate the variations in the ethnic composition of parties across Africa. We have also operationalized a way of classifying political parties by the size of their largest ethnic support base. Using these three techniques, we have compared the level of ethnic voting and the salience of ethnicity as a political cleavage across types of party, countries, and over time. All three measures suggest that ruling parties are becoming more ethnically diverse and less ethnically polarised over time. The trend is less clear for opposition parties, but there is considerable evidence that on average they are becoming less ethnically diverse and more ethnically polarised.

It seems clear that the salience of ethnicity as a political cleavage is falling in those countries in which the polarization of both government and opposition support is declining, such as Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda. Of course, this does not mean that ethnicity is not important, just that it is less important now than it was in 2001. However, there is great variation in this trend across Africa. Indeed, there are still countries where ethnic polarization is increasing across the board, such as Kenya and Zimbabwe. In these cases ethnicity is becoming more powerful over time. For a middle-group of countries including Botswana, Malawi, Nigeria and Zambia, the picture remains decidedly unclear. On the one hand, ruling parties are generally becoming more diverse and less polarised. On the other hand, the reverse is true of opposition parties. Further research is required to investigate how these 'divergent' party systems are evolving, and the impact this is having on the overall political salience of ethnic identities.

The measures presented in this paper represent a work in progress. We recognise that much more research needs to be done, both into the relationship between ethnicity and political behaviour at the individual level, and into the minutia of each case included here. We welcome thoughts, criticisms, and suggestions of how these measures can be made more accurate and useful, and of how the trends in party affiliation in Africa can best be explained.

Appendix 1: Party Names and Acronyms

Party	Acronym	Country
African National Congress	ANC	South Africa
All Nigeria People's Party	ANPP	Nigeria
All Progressives Grand Alliance	APGA	Nigeria
Alliance for Democracy	AD	Nigeria
Alliance for Democracy	AD	Malawi
Alliance for Democracy in Mali	ADEMA	Mali
Alliance of Forces for Progress	AFP	Senegal
Botswana Congress Party	BCP	Botswana
Botswana Democratic Party	BDP	Botswana
Botswana National Front	BNF	Botswana
Congress of Democrats	CD	Namibia
Democratic Alliance	DA+DP	South Africa
Democratic Party	DP	Uganda
Democratic Progressive Party	DPP	Malawi
Democratic Turnhalle Alliance	DTA	Namibia
Forum for Democratic Change	FDC	Uganda
Inkatha Freedom Party	IFP	South Africa
Kenya African National Union	KANU	Kenya
Liberal Democratic Party	LDP	Kenya
Liberation Front of Mozambique	FRELIMO	Mozambique
Malawi Congress Party	MCP	Malawi
Movement Citoyen	Citoyen	Mali
Movement for Democratic Change	MDC	Zambia
Movement for Democratic Change	MDC	Zimbabwe
Mozambican National Resistance	RENAMO	Mozambique
National Congress for Democratic Initiative	CNID	Mali
National Rainbow Coalition	NaRC	Kenya
National Resistance Movement	NRM	Uganda
New National Party	NPP	South Africa
New Patriotic Party	NPP	Ghana
Party for National Renewal	PARENA	Mali
Patriotic Front	PF	Zambia
People's Convention Party	PCP	Ghana
People's Democratic Party	PDP	Nigeria
Rally For Mali	RPM/IBK	Mali
Senegalese Democratic Party	PDS	Senegal
Socialist Party	PS	Senegal
South West Africa People's Organisation	SWAPO	Namibia
Uganda People's Congress	UPC	Uganda
Union for Republic and Democracy	URD	Mali
United Democratic Front	UDF	Malawi
United National Independence Party	UNIP	Zambia
United Party for National Development	UPND	Zambia
Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front	ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe

Appendix 2: Breakdown of Affiliated and Non-Affiliated Groups

Level of political mobilization by country and year

	2001	2003	2006
Botswana	76.6%	62.7%	78.7%
Ghana	67.0%	67.3%	66.3%
Kenya	*	68.5%	64.1%
Malawi	82.2%	68.4%	61.2%
Mali	51.5%	62.4%	61.1%
Mozambique	*	69.6%	81.0%
Namibia	71.0%	79.6%	81.5%
Nigeria	36.8%	52.8%	46.3%
Senegal	*	55.3%	53.1%
South Africa	45.5%	72.3%	64.3%
Uganda	33.7%	49.6%	61.8%
Zambia	36.6%	39.9%	52.5%
Zimbabwe	44.3%	48.6%	64.4%
<i>Total</i>	<i>54.1%</i>	<i>62.0%</i>	<i>61.1%</i>

Level Of Political Mobilization By Language Group 2006

	Largest group %	2 nd largest	3 rd largest	4 th largest	5 th largest	6 th largest	7 th largest
Botswana	78.4%	Sekalana					
Ghana	65.1%	Ewe	Dagaare	Ga/Dangbe			
Kenya	68.5%	Kalenjin	Luo	Luhya	Kamba	Kisii	Meru/Embu
Malawi	58.0%	Yao	Nyanja	Lomwe	Tumbuka		
Mali	60.8%	Sonrha	Peugl	Malink	Sonink	Dogon	
Mozambique	87.3%	Changana	Portugese	Chuabo	Sena		
Namibia	87.5%	Nama	Afrikaans	Ojiherero	Rukwangali	Silozi	
Nigeria	58.5%	Yoruba	Igbo				
Senegal	46.8%	Pular	Serer	Mandinka			
South Africa	54.8%	Xhosa	Afrikaans	Setswana	Spedi	English	Sesotho
Uganda	63.9%	Luo	Runyankole	Lusoga	Atego	Rukiga	Lugbara
Zambia	41.5%	Tonga	Nyanja	Lozi	Nsenga		
Zimbabwe	62.1%	Ndebele					

	2001	2003	2006
Non-Ethnic Party	DTA (NAM)/CD (NAM)/ANC (SA)/NRM (UGA)/	ANC (SA)/NRM (UGA)/	PCP (GHA)/ DTA (NAM)/CD (NAM)/ANC (SA)/NRM (UGA)/FDC (UGA)/
Multi-Ethnic Party: No Majority Ethnic Group	ADEMA (MALI)/DA+DP (SA)/MMD (ZAM)/UNIP (ZAM)/	ADEMA (MALI)/RPM+IBK (MALI)/Citoyen (MALI)/DTA (NAM)/CD (MALI)/PDP (NIG)/UNIP (ZAM)/	URD (MALI)/UDF (MALA)/ PDP (NIG)/DA+DP (SA)/MMD (ZAM)/UNIP (ZAM)/
Multi-Ethnic Party: Majority Ethnic Group	PCP (GHA)/PARENA (MALI)/PDP (NIG)/UPND (ZAM)/	PCP (GHA)/UDF (MALA)/PARENA (MALI)/DA+DP (SA)/DP (UGA)/MMD (ZAM)/UPND (ZAM)/	DPP (MALA)/ADEMA (MALI)/RPM+IBK (MALI)/Citoyen (MALI)/UPND (ZAM)/
Potentially Ethnic Party	URD (MALI)/SWAPO (NAM)/ANPP (NIG)/NNP (SA)/UPC (UGA)/DP (UGA)/	BCP (BOT)/MCP (MALA)/SWAPO (MALI)/ANPP (NIG)/AD (NIG)/NNP (SA)/UPC (UGA)/MDC (ZIM)	NPP (GHA)/MCP (MALA)/SWAPO (NAM)/AG (NIG)/UPC (UGA)/DP (UGA)/PF (ZAM)/MDC (ZIM)
Ethnic Party	BDP (BOT)/BNF (BOT)/BCP (BOT)/NPP (GHA)/UDF (MALA)/AD (MALA)/MCP (MALA)/AD (NIG)/IFP (SA)/ZANU-PF (ZIM)/MDC (ZIM)	BDP (BOT)/BNF (BOT)/NPP (GHA)/AD (MALA)/APGA (NIG)/IFP (SA)/ZANU-PF (ZIM)	BNF (BOT)/BDP (BOT)/BCP (BOT)/CNID (MALI)/AGPA (NIG)/IFP (SA)/ZANU-PF (ZIM)/ANPP (NIG)

Appendix 4 – Party Classification by Size of Largest Ethnic Group With No Threshold
(Core Group, 2001-2006)

	2001	2003	2006
Non-Ethnic Party	DTA (NAM)/CD (NAM)/ANC (SA)/URD (MALI)/	ANC (SA)/	PCP (GHA)/DTA (NAM)/CD (NAM)/ANC (SA)/PDP (NG)/
Multi-Ethnic Party:	ADEMA (MALI)/PDP (NG)/DA+DP (SA)/PCP (GHA)/	PCP (GHA)/ADEMA (MALI)/RPM+IBK (MALI)/Citoyen (MALI)/CD (NAM)/ANPP (MALI)/DA+DP (SA)	URD (MALI)/UDF (MALA)/ADEMA (MALI)/RMB+IBK (MALI)/DA+DP (SA)
No Majority Ethnic Group			
Multi-Ethnic Party:	PARENA (MALI)/ANPP (NG)/SWAPO (NAM)	UDF (MALA)/PARENA (MALI)/SWAPO (NAM)/DTA (NAM)/AD (NG)/	NPP (GHA)/DPP (MALA)/Citoyen (MALI)/ANPP (NG)/AD (NG)
Majority Ethnic Group			
Potentially Ethnic Party	AD (NG)/BDP (BOT)/NPP (GHA)/UDF (MALA)/MCP (MALA)/AD (NG)/NPP (SA)	BNF (BOT)/BCP (BOT)/NPP (GHA)/MCP (MALA)/AD (NG)/NPP (SA)	BCP (BOT)/MCP (MALA)/SWAPO (NAM)/CND (MALI)/
Ethnic Party	BNF (BOT)/BCP (BOT)/IFP (SA)	BDP (BOT)/APGA (NG)/IFP (SA)	BDP (BOT)/BNF (BOT)/APGA (NG)/IFP (SA)

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