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*International Political Science Review* 2012 33: 5 originally published online 16 June 2011

DOI: 10.1177/0192512110391770

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# How ethnic are African parties really? Evidence from four Francophone countries

International Political Science Review

33(1) 5–24

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DOI: 10.1177/0192512110391770

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## Abstract

Though African party systems are said to be ethnic, there is little evidence for this claim. The few empirical studies rarely rely on individual data and are biased in favour of Anglophone Africa. This paper looks at four Francophone countries, drawing on representative survey polls. Results reveal that ethnicity matters, 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 virtually absent. In particular, the voters' location seems more important than ethnic affiliation. Other determinants such as regional ties, elite strategies, cross-cutting cleavages, and rational preferences deserve more attention in the future study of voting behaviour in Africa.

## Keywords

ethnicity, Francophone Africa, political parties, regionalism, voting intentions

## Introduction

Despite a mixed balance sheet in terms of democratic quality, multiparty systems have obviously taken root in sub-Saharan Africa. As of mid-2009, 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, electoral violence in Kenya and other countries seemingly confirms 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. Fridy, 2007; Lindberg and Morrison, 2008) or a comparative perspective (e.g. Mozaffar et al., 2003; Norris and Mattes, 2003) paint a far more nuanced picture. Ethnicity often plays a role, but this role differs across countries and is just

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one out of a number of factors (e.g. Cheeseman and Ford, 2008; Erdmann, 2007; Norris and Mattes, 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 article aims to contribute to this debate by looking at Francophone Africa – an area widely neglected by the Anglophone dominated literature (cf. Gazibo, 2006). It does not aim at explicitly comparing former French and British colonies, but at complementing and enriching the debate. The paper therefore 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 partners 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 voting intentions 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 take 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' or rather 'regional'. Third, we discuss the relative weight of ethnicity in the four party systems under investigation and try to find preliminary explanations for the differences between the cases. Finally, conclusions for theory and future research are drawn.

## Current research

In the general debate on ethnicity in Africa, a purely essentialist or primordial notion of ethnicity has been widely abandoned in favour of an understanding that includes constructivist ideas. Ethnic identity results from differences in a variable set of identity markers such as language, religion, culture and the like (Chandra and Wilkinson, 2008; Horowitz, 1985), but finally ethnic identity is a matter of external and self-ascription (Kasfir, 1976; Lemarchand, 1972). Though being principally subject to manipulation and change, the ethnic identity of individuals does not change on a daily or arbitrary basis and usually remains stable over time.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, if we conceptualize ethnicity as a group phenomenon which means more than a residential neighbourhood, we must not equate region and ethnic affiliation. The regional concentration of ethnic groups is a feature of certain, particularly rural areas, but is so, far less often than assumed and is apparently a declining feature in Africa (e.g. Bierschenk, 2006).

How, then, is ethnicity related to political parties and the party system in Africa? Since all major theories on determinants of voting behaviour include social affiliations, ethnicity can be easily integrated. The micro-sociological approach argues that 'a person thinks politically as he is socially' (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968: 27), which can imply ethnic voting. The same holds true for the macro-sociological cleavage approach (Erdmann, 2004; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967) or a sociopsychological approach which conceptualizes party preferences as a product of social ties (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000). Rational choice is compatible with ethnic voting because voting for a candidate with the same ethnic affiliation may be expected to best serve the voter's interests.

Concerning African party systems, Horowitz's (1985) seminal work on ethnic groups in conflict had a large impact on the scholarly discussion. He strongly reinforced the postcolonial suggestion that African parties were best conceptualized as 'ethnic parties'. According to Horowitz, an 'ethnic party' receives at least 85 per cent of its support from one single ethnic group.<sup>2</sup> When party research

on Africa regained momentum 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 politics. 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.

For Francophone Africa, Fomunyoh (2001) distinguishes 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. This distinction suggests two conclusions. First, there is a need to question how common ethnic parties really are if large ruling parties are different. Second, parties and party systems are different phenomena. An ‘ethnicized’ or ‘ethnically dominated’ party system certainly consists of ‘ethnicized’ parties.<sup>3</sup> 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 (2003) includes two types of political parties based principally on ethnic support: the ‘ethnic party’, which draws support from one single ethnic group, and an ‘ethnic congress party’, which tries to build a winning coalition of different ethnic electorates. In contrast to mono-ethnic parties, ethnic congress parties rely on ethnic alliances but still divide into ethnically disjoint 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. According to Gunther and Diamond, such congress parties ‘may take the form of a single, unified party structure’ (p. 184); 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.

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 (1985) 85 per cent 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 per cent of the party’s voters. 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 ‘multi-ethnic’ 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 composition. 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 per cent majority group, the Batswana. Unless we control for society’s overall composition, these shares have limited meaning.

### *Party-system approaches*

For about a decade, solid empirical studies have raised doubts about earlier assumptions regarding the central role of ethnicity in African party systems. On a national aggregate level, Mozaffar et al.

(2003) 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. 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 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 12 cases under consideration. However, their analysis is limited to the biggest ethnic group in relation to the respective country's biggest ruling party; ethnicity is just one among several other significant determinants and only one Francophone country is included.

### *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 recent studies hence focus on country cases in which more detailed data is available. However, these studies cover an astonishingly narrow selection of examples. Ghana and Zambia seem to be the best explored 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 base their analysis on 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,<sup>4</sup> and – less frequently – campaign rhetoric (e.g. Mayrargue, 2004). 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, 2007). 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) 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). While country experts generally agree on the ethnic appeal of Zambia's political parties, it is rather difficult to support the qualitative impression with the help of survey data (Erdmann, 2007).

Findings from South Africa, where ethnic cleavages should be neither ignored nor overemphasized (McLaughlin, 2007); or the former Zaire,<sup>5</sup> 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 pre-war Côte d'Ivoire, where 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. Marcus and Ratsimbaharison (2005) prefer to use types such as 'catch-all' or 'elite-personalistic' to describe Madagascar's principal political parties. Hence, the strong evidence for ethnic voting recently found in Kenya (Bratton and Kimenyi, 2008; Elischer, 2008) appears exceptional rather than typical of voting patterns in Africa.

Studies driven less by empirical data generally tend to make the ethnic argument stronger (Manning, 2005; Marty, 2002; Mustapha, 2004; Scarritt, 2006). 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 favour of Anglophone Africa.

## Empirical strategy

There has been a lively debate on how to adequately measure ethnicity and its impact on political processes at the national aggregate level (Chandra and Wilkinson, 2008; Posner, 2004). However, data on the individual level are best-suited to explore the link between ethnicity and party preference. In order to integrate the different approaches discussed in the previous section, we employ a multistep analysis combining multivariate regression models and bivariate descriptive statistics drawn from survey polls.

### *The surveys and the database*

The four representative survey polls were conducted in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. Though the four cases are of course not representative of all the 14 Francophone countries in Africa, the sample includes cases with relatively similar conditions. We have aimed to select cases that share many important similarities but demonstrate differences with regard to the characteristics of the party system. While the cases differ with regard to party-system fragmentation (Benin: highly fragmented; Burkina: dominant; Mali: formerly dominant; Niger: moderately fragmented), the countries systematically share a wide range of socioeconomic, historical, and political similarities. As former French colonies that became independent in 1960, they all lapsed into authoritarianism after independence, which resulted in single-party regimes. Moreover, the military played a key role in politics until the democratization processes of the early 1990s led to the institutionalization of multiparty politics. In socioeconomic terms all four countries are among the poorest nations on earth, ranking at the very bottom of the Human Development Index. Consequently, they have had

to accept structural reforms and have been struggling with them since their introduction. Finally, all the countries are ethnically fairly diverse with high levels of ethnic fractionalization.<sup>6</sup>

Each survey comprises a sample of at least 1000 respondents of voting age, all of whom were selected according to a two-step procedure. First, the selection was stratified in relation to regions, urbanization and gender. Second, respondents were randomly selected down to the individual level.

The questionnaires consisted of around 50 questions, including several items intended to measure the independent variables. As regards ethnicity, respondents were asked to name their ethnic affiliation,<sup>7</sup> which captures the aspect of self-ascription fairly well. All the involved scholars from Africa and Europe agreed that this survey question is not offensive. However, we employed a control question asking for the language spoken most regularly in daily life.<sup>8</sup> Answers to both questions correlate strongly.<sup>9</sup>

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 behaviour.

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.<sup>10</sup> 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 (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’ (Cheeseman and Ford, 2007; Horowitz, 1985). 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 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. In order to control for a competing explanation we repeat the same exercise for the degree of regionalization by substituting ethnic affiliation by residence in a particular region. Finally, the results of all individual parties are aggregated and evaluated at the country party-system and cross-national level.

### **The role of ethnicity in multivariate regressions**

Multivariate regression models<sup>11</sup> allow for the detection of the most important variables for party preference, which we measure as voting intention.<sup>12</sup> In order to avoid the risk of overestimating the role of ethnicity, we control for a set of ten possible determinants: besides ethnic affiliation we

include geographic region, urban residence, formal education, age, gender, religious affiliation, satisfaction with one's personal economic situation and with the government in general as well as democratic attitude.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup>

The full regression models in which we entered all the abovementioned variables – shown in Table 1 – allow the following main observations with regard to the role of ethnicity. First, for nine out of 13 political parties ethnicity proves significant, though in four cases only at the 10 per cent level. Second, the relevance of ethnicity varies across countries. While there are only relatively weak significant findings in Benin and only slightly stronger results in Burkina Faso and Mali, all four parties in Niger show at least one significant ethnic variable at the 5 per cent level.

Third, 'region'<sup>15</sup> clearly outperforms 'ethnicity'. In 11 out of 13 cases there are significant relationships most often at least at the 5 per cent level (in seven cases even at the 1 per cent level with strong effects). Due to the obviously competing explanatory power of 'ethnicity' and 'region' we tested all party models with and without 'region' and 'ethnicity' respectively. Generally, Nagelkerke's pseudo- $R^2$  values increased substantially when we included region regardless of whether replacing ethnicity or adding the variable to the models.<sup>16</sup> In five cases (RB, PRD, PSD, CDP, UNIR/MS) ethnicity turns insignificant when controlling for region while merely in the case of the Nigerien CDS region does it become insignificant when entering ethnicity.

Concentrating on 'region' and 'ethnicity', however, we should not forget that other variables proved significant as well, pointing to rationalist voting behaviour or classical socio-structural determinants, particularly 'satisfaction with the government' (seven cases), 'education level' (six cases) and 'urban residence' (five cases). Finally, the general explanatory power of the models seems to vary as well: though it is difficult to assess the overall explanatory value of the logit models by looking at pseudo- $R^2$  values, the voting intentions for Malian and the larger Nigerien parties seem to be either more arbitrary than science can capture or based on other factors beyond what the model can cover.<sup>17</sup>

## 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 and 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'?

For instance, in Niger, it is correct in statistical terms that Djerma-Songhai intend significantly less to vote for CDS or PNDS, and significantly prefer ANDP and MNSD (see Table 1). However, this does not automatically mean that ANDP or MNSD are ethnic Songhai parties; nor does it indicate that the Nigerien party system is structured mainly along ethnic lines. Indeed, the appearance of two-party models which show a significant preference for the same ethnic group points to competition for Songhai votes. This obviously stands in contrast to a clear-cut ethnic cleavage in society. Hence, we employ three simple analytic control tools on the basis of absolute frequency distributions in the support bases of the parties under investigation.



Table 1. Binary Logit Models on Voting Intentions

Variables	Benin (N = 650)				Burkina Faso (N = 780)			
	FCBE	RB	PRD	PSD	ADFRDA	CDP	UNIR/MS	
<b>Ethnic group (a)</b>								
Adja	-0.098 (0.907)	0.122 (1.129)	-0.170 (0.844)	0.885 (2.422)	0.188 (1.207)	-0.479 (0.620)	1.114 (3.045)	
Yoruba	0.406 (1.501)	-0.770 (0.463)	-0.133 (0.876)	0.209 (1.232)	-2.430 (0.088)	0.492 (1.635)	0.811 (2.251)	
Bariba	-1.543* (0.214)		-0.347 (0.707)	0.789 (2.201)	-0.432 (0.650)	-0.175 (0.840)	-0.630 (0.533)	
Ditamari + Yom	-1.033 (0.356)		0.634 (1.885)	1.432 (4.185)	-0.443 (0.642)	-0.371 (0.690)	0.894 (2.446)	
Other	0.850 (2.340)	-0.787 (0.455)	-1.051 (0.350)	-0.370 (0.690)	-0.334 (0.716)	0.773** (2.167)	-0.902* (0.406)	
<b>Region</b>								
Littoral	1.557** (4.743)	2.821*** (16.791)	1.953*** (7.053)	0.223 (1.250)	-1.489 (0.226)	0.527 (1.694)	-1.349 (0.260)	
Atlantique	0.790 (2.203)	3.451*** (31.528)	0.642 (1.901)	0.095 (1.099)	-0.767 (0.465)	-0.415 (0.660)	2.489** (12.045)	
Plateau	2.619*** (13.727)		0.333 (1.395)			-0.011 (0.989)	-1.376 (0.253)	
Mono	3.172*** (23.867)	2.323** (10.212)	-0.405 (0.667)	1.467 (4.338)	1.059 (2.885)	0.516 (1.675)	-0.611 (0.543)	
Couffo	0.273 (1.314)	0.399 (1.490)	0.170 (1.186)	3.843*** (46.648)	-0.133 (0.876)	-0.109 (0.897)	0.272 (1.312)	
Zou	1.881*** (6.562)	3.749*** (42.488)	-1.936 (0.144)	-0.143 (0.867)	-0.197 (0.821)	1.214 (3.365)	-2.169 (0.114)	
Borgou	1.559** (4.753)	2.801*** (16.455)	-0.422 (0.655)	-0.653 (0.521)	-0.241 (0.786)	-0.015 (0.985)	1.199 (3.318)	
Alibori			0.356 (1.427)		0.679 (1.972)	0.456 (1.578)	-0.991 (0.371)	
Atakora	4.329*** (75.893)		-0.936 (0.392)	-1.597 (0.203)	1.162 (3.196)	-1.411* (0.244)	-0.794 (0.452)	
Donga	2.780*** (16.116)		-0.761 (0.467)	-0.579 (0.561)	0.803 (2.232)	-0.107 (0.899)	0.196 (1.217)	

Table 1. (Continued)

Variables	Benin (N = 650)					Burkina Faso (N = 780)				
	FCBE	RB	PRD	PSD	ADFRDA	CDP	UNIR/MS			
Ouémé	1.292** (3.641)	0.714 (2.041)	2.643*** (14.062)	0.111 (1.117)						
Religion										
Muslim	-0.131 (0.877)	-2.908*** (0.055)	0.330 (1.391)	-0.735 (0.480)	0.815** (2.258)	-0.021 (0.979)	-0.528 (0.590)			
Other or none	-0.558* (0.572)	-0.269 (0.764)	0.334 (1.396)	-0.059 (0.943)		0.152 (1.164)	0.788 (2.199)			
Female sex	0.182 (1.200)	-0.082 (0.921)	-0.251 (0.778)	0.324 (1.383)	0.301 (1.351)	0.067 (1.069)	-0.595* (0.552)			
Youngest age quartile	-0.098 (0.907)	-0.060 (0.942)	0.557** (1.745)	0.418 (1.520)	-0.008 (0.992)	-0.108 (0.898)	0.088 (1.092)			
Urban residence	-0.056 (0.945)	0.702** (2.019)	0.121 (1.128)	-0.920* (0.399)	0.974 (2.648)	-0.569 (0.566)	-2.101*** (0.122)			
Formal education	0.009 (1.009)	0.015 (1.015)	-0.274*** (0.760)	-0.003 (0.997)	0.012 (1.012)	-0.539*** (0.583)	0.682*** (1.978)			
Satisfaction with own economic situation	-0.214 (0.807)	-0.221 (0.802)	-0.043 (0.958)	0.332 (1.394)	0.089 (1.094)	0.280 (1.303)	-0.498 (0.608)			
Satisfaction with the government	0.608** (1.836)	-0.184 (0.832)	-0.314 (0.731)	0.294 (1.342)	-0.806** (0.446)	0.992*** (2.697)	-0.592* (0.553)			
Democratic attitude	-3.107 (0.972)	0.212* (1.236)	0.014 (1.014)	-0.119 (0.888)	0.039 (1.040)	-0.062 (0.940)	0.072 (1.075)			
Constant	-3.107***	-4.602***	-2.056**	-3.383***	-3.281***	1.375**	-3.376***			
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup> (Nagelkerke)	0.265	0.395	0.317	0.468	0.123	0.310	0.319			

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

Variables	Mali (N = 804)			Niger (N = 907)		
	ADEMA	RPM	ANDP	CDS	MNSD	PNSD
<b>Ethnic group (a)</b>						
Peul	-0.579* (0.560)	-0.290 (0.748)	0.936 (2.551)	-0.590 (0.554)	-0.378 (0.685)	0.889** (2.433)
Dj-Songhai	-0.713 (0.490)	0.299 (1.349)	1.813*** (6.128)	-1.533*** (2.216)	0.763*** (2.145)	-0.969*** (0.380)
Soninke	0.190 (1.209)	-0.359 (0.698)		-0.298 (0.742)	0.642 (1.900)	-0.348 (0.706)
Malinke	-0.592 (0.553)	0.662* (1.938)	1.063 (2.894)	-2.500** (0.082)	1.107*** (3.025)	-0.568 (0.567)
Dogon	-0.020 (0.980)	-0.534 (0.586)				
Senoufo	-0.214 (0.808)	-0.321 (0.726)				
Other	0.210 (1.233)	-0.767* (0.464)				
Bamako	-0.894** (0.409)	0.380 (1.462)		-1.366 (0.255)	-0.432 (0.649)	2.182*** (8.868)
Gao	-0.240 (0.786)	0.396 (1.486)	4.087*** (59.566)	0.299 (1.349)	-1.425*** (0.240)	1.167 (3.212)
Kayes	0.719** (2.052)	-0.937*** (0.392)	2.471** (11.830)	0.288 (1.333)	-0.484 (0.616)	1.699*** (5.471)
Koulikoro	-0.027 (0.973)	-0.101 (0.904)		-0.243 (0.784)	-0.795 (0.452)	2.570*** (13.066)
Mopti	0.286 (1.332)	0.172 (1.187)	0.705 (2.024)	-0.922 (2.549)	-0.279 (0.757)	1.551** (4.715)
Ségou	-0.445 (0.641)	0.649* (1.913)	0.527 (1.694)	0.936 (2.549)	-0.885* (0.413)	1.069* (2.911)
Tombouctou	0.620 (1.860)	-0.689 (0.502)	2.314* (10.114)	-0.043 (0.958)	-0.840 (0.432)	1.678** (5.355)
Muslim	0.589** (1.802)	-0.166 (0.847)				
<b>Religion</b>						
<b>Female sex</b>	-0.026 (0.974)	-0.192 (0.826)	0.120 (1.192)	0.176 (0.868)	-0.141 (0.946)	-0.056

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

Variables	Mali (N = 804)			Niger (N = 907)			
	ADEMA	RPM		ANDP	CDS	MNSD	PNSD
<b>Youngest age quartile</b>	0.129 (1.138)	-0.244 (0.784)		0.107 (1.214)	0.194 (0.980)	-0.021 (0.853)	-0.159
<b>Urban residence</b>	-0.455** (0.634)	0.820*** (2.271)	(1.113)	-0.223 (0.925)	-0.077 (0.721)	-0.327 (1.714)	0.539*
<b>Formal education</b>	-0.216** (0.806)	0.248** (1.282)	(0.800)	-0.048 (0.964)	-0.037 (0.976)	-0.024 (1.012)	0.012
<b>Satisfaction with own economic situation</b>	0.020 (1.020)	0.306 (1.357)	(0.953)	-0.072 (1.347)	0.298 (0.928)	-0.074 (1.495)	0.402**
<b>Satisfaction with the government</b>	-0.002 (0.998)	-0.749*** (0.473)	(0.931)	-0.103 (0.682)	-0.383 (2.399)	0.875*** (0.564)	-0.573***
<b>Democratic attitude</b>	-0.052 (0.950)	0.158 (1.171)	(0.902)	-0.076 (1.107)	0.102 (0.971)	-0.029 (1.133)	0.125*
<b>Constant</b>	-0.506	-2.311***	(0.926)	-5.450***	-1.948**	-0.147	-3.167***
<b>Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup> (Nagelkerke)</b>	0.130	0.167		0.452	0.190	0.131	0.178

Source: Authors' compilation

Levels of significance: \*\*\* 1%, \*\* 5%, \* 10%

Notes: Chart represents B coefficients and Exp(B) in parentheses (for example, living in Couffo (Benin) increases the likelihood of intending to vote PSD by the factor 46.648; however, high exponents may rely on small numbers of respondents). Empty fields indicate no voting intentions in this category. (a) Categories of reference (largest group) - Benin: Fon - Burkina Faso; Mossi - Mali; Bambara - Niger; Hausa.

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 the 'Botswana problem' cited above. Using a measure of proportionality, we may better estimate whether the ethnic composition of the supporters mirrors that of the society. Following Gallagher (1991), we calculate a least squares index which theoretically runs from 0 to 1, where 0 would indicate a perfect ethno-demographic proportionality of society and supporters 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 per cent 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 per cent 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 (1985) 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 look at the party preferences of the entire ethnic group. The support base of a party can be overwhelmingly composed by one group whereas this ethnic group's members do not exclusively – or not even predominantly – vote for this particular party. We need to know the probability with which a member of the largest support group prefers the respective party.

Consequently, we assess the overall degree of ethnicization in three dimensions: (1) If a party's largest ethnic support group accounts for less than 50 per cent 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 is strongly ethnicized. This threshold is below Horowitz's 85 per cent and, thus, is in favour of the ethnicity argument. A share between 50 per cent and 66.7 per cent will indicate medium ethnicization. (2) We consider values of the proportionality index above .25 – half of the possible maximum – as 'strong', while values below .125 point to a weak ethnic support base. Again, values between these thresholds indicate the assessment 'medium'. (3) The ethnic character of the party is considered 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, and 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 7 out of 13 parties – including at least one case from each country – are parties with a weak degree of ethnicization. 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

**Table 2.** Level of Ethnicization in Support Bases of Major Political Parties

Party	Share of party's support among all respondents <sup>a</sup>	Largest ethnic group among supporters		Proportionality index <sup>b,c</sup>	Likelihood of ethnic support <sup>b,d</sup>	Overall degree of ethnicization of support <sup>b</sup>
		Name	Share <sup>b</sup>			
<b>Benin</b>						
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)
<b>Burkina Faso</b>						
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)
<b>Mali</b>						
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)
<b>Niger</b>						
ANDP	7.8%	Djerma-Songhai	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)

<sup>a</sup> Share of voting intentions among those respondents willing to vote.

<sup>b</sup> Ethnicization index value in parentheses (all columns). For operationalization see main text.

<sup>c</sup> Proportionality of ethno-demographic shares among the party support base and among all respondents.

<sup>d</sup> Likelihood that a member of the strongest ethnic group among the supporters of the party in question favours this party over all other parties.

Source: Authors' compilation based on GIGA survey polls, 2006

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 per cent threshold, just one party – the RB in Benin – would have met the 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.

Evidently, our indicators are primarily designed to detect monoethnic parties. However, 'ethnic congress parties' can also be captured. Although such parties appeal to more than one ethnic group, their multiparty support base must be exclusive in terms of a number of ethnic groups to make sense of the concept. Otherwise it would be hard to distinguish them from non-ethnic 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? Since party systems are about interparty relations and the relative size of political parties, the

**Table 3.** Degree of Ethnicization and Regionalization at the Party-system Level

Ethnicization/ Regionalization <sup>a</sup>	Benin	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger
Medium or strong	44.0% / 67.6%	7.1% / 14.8%	0.0% / 0.0%	23.5%/48.2%
Undetermined	32.4%	6.9%	35.9%	9.3%
Weak	23.6% / 0.0%	86.0% / 78.3%	64.1% / 64.1%	67.2% / 42.5%

<sup>a</sup> The table shows the cumulative shares of parties per national party system distinguished by their degree of ethnicization and regionalization. 'Undetermined' is the share of parties which could not be included in statistical tests because of their low number of supporters. These shares are identical for ethnicization and regionalization.

relative weight of the parties in the 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 (labelled 'undetermined'). Although we measured rather in favour 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 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'.

Given the prominent role of 'region' in the multivariate regressions we controlled for the 'regionalization' of the support bases of political parties. Identical procedures as detailed above were applied except that we replaced ethnic groups by administrative subunits below the central state. Results confirm that region outperforms ethnicity as a determinant of party support (see Table 4).

While seven parties showed a rather weak overall 'ethnicization', there are only four parties that show weak 'regionalization' (CDP, MNSD, ADEMA and RPM). The majority of seven parties display 'medium regionalization' compared with only three parties with medium 'ethnicization'. 'Strong regionalization' produces somewhat more ambiguous results since this applies only to two parties (ANDP and PSD) – one less than with ethnic support bases – due to findings on the RB, which is strongly ethnicized but only moderately regionalized (all other cases showing equal or stronger results for regionalization). At the party-system level, however, regional support bases are stronger than ethnic ones (Table 3). Especially in Benin and Niger the ratio of medium and strong regionalization increases substantially when compared to the level of 'ethnicization' (68 vs. 44 per cent and 48 vs. 25 per cent). In Burkina Faso, the ratio doubles, though remaining at about 15 per cent only. It is just Mali where no indications can be found that there is either a substantial ethnic or regional support base of the parties. This also reminds us that it would be misleading to speak of 'regionalist parties' all over the place. Regional support seems higher in general, but few parties are 'regionalist' in the strict sense.

## Explaining differences

Both in the multivariate regressions and the bivariate analysis, 'region' outperforms 'ethnicity'. Region is significant in 11 out of 13 cases – ethnicity only in 9 – and often at higher levels of significance. In a number of cases ethnicity becomes insignificant when controlling for region. Regional support bases are generally at least equal and frequently stronger than ethnic ones, something which is also mirrored at the party-system level. But what does explain the higher salience of region vis-à-vis ethnicity? One promising explanation is that ties between voters and parties may

**Table 4.** Level of Regionalization in Support Bases of Major Political Parties

Party	Share of party's support among all respondents <sup>a</sup>	Largest regional group among supporters		Proportionality index <sup>b,c</sup>	Likelihood of regional support <sup>b,d</sup>	Overall degree of regionalization of support <sup>b</sup>
		Name	Share <sup>b</sup>			
<b>Benin</b>						
FCBE	23.6%	Atakora-Donga	25.5% (0)	0.16 (1)	2.44 (1)	Medium (2)
RB	18.4%	Zou	31.8% (0)	0.23 (1)	3.56 (2)	Medium (3)
PRD	15.9%	Ouémé	42.3% (0)	0.26 (2)	5.38 (2)	Medium (4)
PSD	9.7%	Couffo	57.4% (1)	0.39 (2)	17.69 (2)	Strong (5)
<b>Burkina Faso</b>						
ADF/RDA	7.1%	Nord	19.6% (0)	0.15 (1)	2.33 (1)	Medium (2)
CDP	78.3%	Boucle du Mouhoun	15.9% (0)	0.06 (0)	1.27 (0)	Weak (0)
UNIR/MS	7.7%	Centre	30.0% (0)	0.22 (1)	5.34 (2)	Medium (3)
<b>Mali</b>						
ADEMA	44.8%	Kayes <sup>**</sup>	19.8% (0)	0.08 (0)	1.34 (0)	Weak (0)
RPM	19.3%	Bamako	22.2% (0)	0.11 (0)	2.24 (1)	Weak (1)
<b>Niger</b>						
ANDP	7.8%	Dosso	74.3% (2)	0.48 (2)	17.78 (2)	Strong (6)
CDS	15.7%	Zinder	40.4% (0)	0.19 (1)	2.81 (1)	Medium (2)
MNSD	42.5%	Tillabéri	23.1% (0)	0.06 (0)	1.77 (0)	Weak (0)
PNDS	24.7%	Tahoua	36.8% (0)	0.16 (1)	2.68 (1)	Medium (2)

<sup>a</sup> Share of voting intentions among those respondents willing to vote.

<sup>b</sup> Regionalization index value in parentheses (all columns). For operationalization see main text.

<sup>c</sup> Proportionality of regio-demographic shares among the party support base and among all respondents.

<sup>d</sup> Likelihood that a member of the strongest regional group among the supporters of the party in question favours this party over all other parties.

Source: Authors' compilation based on GIGA survey polls, 2006

not work so much through common ethnic identity as through geographical proximity (cf. Stroh, 2010). Party leaders may rely on personal networks in their region of origin. These networks may include distributional mechanisms from which regional residents will probably benefit more than ethnic kinsmen in other regions. This would also be consistent with the observation that the most popular – yet rarely realized – campaign pledges in Africa refer to local infrastructure such as roads and school buildings.

Another important question arises from the differences between country cases, that is, the party systems. Why are the party systems of Benin and Niger substantially more ethnicized or regionalized than those in Burkina Faso and, particularly, Mali? Although a thorough investigation is beyond the scope of this paper we will discuss some tentative explanations.

First, these differences may be due to path dependence. While differences in the levels of ethnic fractionalization and regionalization are certainly not a function of demographics – the level of ethnic fractionalization is fairly similar in all countries – ethnicity has been markedly more strongly politicized in postcolonial Benin and Niger than in Burkina Faso and Mali. Benin's postcolonial history until the early 1970s can be described as a permanent political struggle among three ethnicized but mainly regionalist groups (roughly, South-east, South-west, North). This was interrupted only by the authoritarian balancing of regional representation under President Kérékou's military-marxist regime, which eventually collapsed into an even more fragmented party system after 1990.



In Niger, the Djerma-Songhai dominated the Hausa and other groups until the political opening in the early 1990s. The French had favoured the Djerma over the majoritarian Hausa. The one-party regime from 1960 to 1974 and the military regime after the 1974 coup were both led by Djerma, who favoured Djerma kinsmen over other groups.

Large N datasets (PREG by Posner, 2004; EPR by Cederman et al., 2009) and relevant case studies (e.g. Banégas, 2003; Boudon, 1997; Dunning and Harrison, 2010) reveal that the politicization of ethnicity and the political exclusion of ethnic groups after independence were stronger in Benin and Niger than in Mali and Burkina Faso. In Burkina Faso, the PREG value is 0, and no excluded ethnic group can be identified for the period since independence. In Mali ethnic tensions derive exclusively from the Tuareg conflict, which can be described as a rather peripheral conflict in the country.

Another possible explanation refers to the transition processes in the early 1990s (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997). The founding elections resulted in different party systems. In both Mali (ADEMA) and Burkina Faso (CDP) dominant parties emerged which – in the absence of a demographically dominant ethnic group – had to appeal to a multiethnic following if they wanted to maintain their leading position, which in both cases had emerged out of a pre-existing political movement (see Boudon, 1997; Villalón and Idrissa, 2005). In contrast, in Benin and Niger no political organization active in the transition period managed to transform into a dominant party with large absolute majorities. As a consequence, moderately (Niger) or extremely (Benin) fragmented party systems emerged.

This explanation matches with our finding that bigger parties tend to be less ethnic than smaller ones. No political party with more than 20 per cent support in the surveys comes close to being an ethnic party. This partially confirms Fomunyoh's view (2001) that big government parties are less ethnic than other parties. Yet we also find junior government parties that are strongly ethnized (e.g. ANDP/Niger) and smaller opposition parties (e.g. Burkina's UNIR/MS) that are not ethnic at all.

One might also think that the type of electoral system has contributed to sustained ethnic or regionalist politics in Benin and Niger. However, the electoral systems of the most and the least ethnicized cases (Benin and Burkina Faso, respectively) are similar; they both have a proportional representation (PR) component in small to medium multimember constituencies. At the same time, Anglophone cases such as Kenya or Zambia which operate with the classical British plurality systems in single-member constituencies ('first past the post') are often seen as having highly ethnized party systems.

The strongest explanation for the differences between the cases probably derives from other social and political determinants of voting behaviour. In Mali and Burkina, so-called joking kinship effectively reduces the salience of ethnicity (Badini, 1996; Dunning and Harrison, 2010). Individual members of different ethnic groups consider themselves 'cousins' and regularly exchange jokes about each other when they meet, without raising tensions. This may indeed explain Mali's (and possibly Burkina's) exceptionalism.

Moreover, rationalist and socio-structural determinants of party preference other than ethnicity and region play a particular role in Mali and Burkina Faso. The logit regressions for most Malian and Burkinabè parties show 'education' and 'urban residence' to be statistically significant. Strikingly, almost all weakly ethnicized and regionalized parties show evidence for rationalist voting: 6 out of 7 weakly ethnicized parties indicate 'satisfaction with the government' to be a significant determinant in the expected direction. Government parties and alliances enjoy more support from satisfied respondents whereas dissatisfaction increases the preference for opposition parties.

## Conclusion

The findings of both the multivariate logit 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 rather weak and differs with regard to cases. These findings corroborate results on the (limited) role of ethnicity as a determinant of voting behaviour in recent studies on (mostly) Anglophone African countries and, hence, they contribute to balancing a biased debate. A probably novel finding, however, is that the degree of ethnicization turns out to be even less convincing if we take a closer look at the support bases of the individual parties and if we compare ethnicity with region.

The greater salience of 'region' compared with 'ethnicity' suggests that ties between voters and parties work through geographical proximity, which allows leaders to exploit personal networks in their region of origin rather than the idea of shared ethnic identity. Mainly, regional residents may benefit from locally determined, clientelistic distributional mechanisms. Such neopatrimonial and clientelistic ties deserve attention in the future study of party preference.

When explaining the differences in the salience of ethnicity and regionalism between Benin and Niger on the one hand and Mali and Burkina Faso on the other hand, tentative causes include historical legacies, sociocultural relationships, and rationalist voting behaviour. The role of ethnicity appears to depend on the mobilization strategies of elites rather than on the collective interests of identity groups. However, it must not be forgotten that the statistical models and bivariate research tools fall short in sufficiently explaining the determinants of party preference in at least one country case (Mali). Hence, it seems particularly fruitful to further investigate the interaction of elite behaviour with sociocultural phenomena such as 'joking kinship' and rationalist determinants, which are able to reduce or replace the impact of ethnicity and regionalism.

## Acknowledgements

We owe a lot to our survey partners: IREEP Benin, CGD Burkina Faso, GREAT Mali, INS Niger, and LASDEL Niger. We are particularly grateful to Walter Fuchs for his much appreciated statistical assistance, and the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* for funding our research.

## Notes

1. For Kasfir (1976: 77) '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'.
2. Inevitably, cut-off points appear somewhat arbitrary. While a comparative approach can hardly avoid this methodological problem, other scholars have set different thresholds (e.g. Scarritt, 2006).
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.
4. This attitudinal approach usually refers to an understanding of 'ethnic parties' used by Chandra (2004) in the Indian context.
5. Today 'Democratic Republic of Congo'.
6. Alesina et al. (2003) fractionalization index values: Benin: 0.79, Burkina Faso: 0.74, Mali: 0.69, Niger: 0.65 (range: 0–1).
7. The survey question reads, 'Quel est votre groupe ethnique?'
8. 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). More sophisticated attempts to

measure an individual's ethnic identity in the survey turned out to be much more problematic. Downplaying the importance of ethnic identities seems to be socially desirable (see Basedau and Stroh, 2008).

9. An 80.3 per cent congruence of ethnic groups and their expected native languages increases to 94.4 per cent 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.
10. We use the parties' acronyms in the main text. A comprehensive list of full party names is available at the GIGA website: <http://www.giga-hamburg.de/african-parties/party-names>
11. Generally, we performed both enter and forward regressions. If not indicated otherwise, results of the enter method are reported.
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 per cent of party identifications are equal to the respondents' voting intentions.
13. Region indicates the first subnational administrative level. The category of reference is the country's region which comes closest to national averages. 'Christian' is the religious category of reference in Benin and Burkina Faso while Islamic affiliation is dichotomized in Mali and the religious variable is excluded from the Nigerien models due to a near completely Muslim society. Formal education is clustered into seven categories running from 'none' to 'doctoral degree'. Gender and urban vs. rural residence were simply dichotomized. Age is dichotomized along the youngest quartile. Satisfaction variables are dichotomized (rather satisfied or rather unsatisfied). Democratic attitudes are measured by an index including six survey questions on basic democratic values which builds an ordinal scale ranging from 0 (very undemocratic) to 6 (very democratic). Further details are available from the authors upon request.
14. Multinomial regression models would have been an alternative. However, we follow Cohen et al. (2003: 520) who argue that binary logit models in a 'nested-dichotomies approach' are easier to interpret. We calculated six models per political party using two statistical approaches: the automatic forward entering method and the simple enter method which forces the model to include all chosen variables. We compared three models per method: one full model with all abovementioned variables and two excluding 'region' and 'ethnicity' respectively.
15. The danger of statistical interference with ethnic affiliations is low since in most cases the most geographically concentrated 80 per cent of one ethnic group is spread over three or four regional units.
16. Due to the large number of models we cannot report all of them. However, the full set is obtainable from the authors upon request.
17. We are well aware of the fact that Nagelkerke's  $R^2$  is no measure of 'variance accounted for' in a strict sense. However, it is a commonly reported figure. Moreover, it is a measure of the 'null deviance accounted for' by the model's set of predictors. As the null deviance expresses the discrepancy from the worst possible to the best possible model, an increase in Nagelkerke's  $R^2$  clearly indicates an increase in explanatory power (cf. Cohen et al., 2003).

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